



## **SB 115, 20-4-134, MCA, Teacher Stipend Administrative Process Description**

### **Overview**

20-4-134, MCA, provides for a stipend from the state for up to \$2,000 for teachers holding a current certificate from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). The state stipend is paid by the OPI to the school district employing each certified teacher. The state stipend will be paid to the teacher by the employing school district. The state stipend consists of a base amount plus an amount matching the local school district's stipend for national board certification paid to each teacher.

19-20-101(8)(b), MCA, excludes stipends paid pursuant to 20-4-134, MCA, from earned compensation for the purposes of calculating benefits in the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS). The TRS issued comments on the interpretation of this exclusion in a bulletin dated July 1, 2017. The bulletin can be found at:

<https://trs.mt.gov/miscellaneous/PdfFiles/Employers/Memos/B-3-0617.pdf>

### **Eligibility**

To receive a state funded stipend, a teacher must:

1. Be a full-time classroom teacher, librarian or other full-time employee serving in an assignment covered by NBPTS certification. Teachers who move into administrative positions are not eligible for the state stipend.
2. Be certified to teach in Montana.
3. Be a full-time employee of
  - a. a Montana public school district,
  - b. an education cooperative,
  - c. the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind, or
  - d. a state youth correctional facility.
4. Hold a current certificate from the NBPTS that was issued after July 1, 2017. The first year of eligibility is the school year following the certificate award. A "current certificate" is defined for this process as meaning a certificate that is valid on September 1 of the school year in which payment is to be made.

Checking eligibility entails:

1. Checking TEAMS records from the current year and having employer affirm.
2. Checking MSEIS and having employer affirm.

3. Downloading info from NBPTS or manually searching the NBPTS website at the beginning of each school year and matching with teachers in MSEIS.

### **Determining Amount of State Stipend**

An eligible teacher is awarded a \$1,000 base amount and a \$2/\$1 state match of the local school district stipend up to a maximum state total contribution of \$2,000, if the teacher holds an instructional assignment in a school identified as:

- A school in a high poverty district eligible to participate in the community eligibility provision under Public Law 111-296 (this means that 40% or greater of the students are directly certified as eligible for free and reduced lunch; school nutrition publishes this [list](#) each April), or
- A school impacted by a critical quality educator shortage (this means the school is identified as such in the annual report prepared by the OPI for the Board of Public Education in the preceding October).

For teachers at schools not in either of the two categories above, the teacher is awarded a \$500 base amount and a \$1/\$1 state match of the local school district stipend up to a maximum state total contribution of \$1,000.

Teachers assigned to multiple schools will receive the higher stipend if any of their assigned schools is in either of the two categories above.

Determining the amount of stipend entails:

1. Determining the school where each eligible teacher is employed using TEAMS data from the current year.
2. Determining if the school is in either or both categories making the teacher eligible for the higher stipend.
3. Obtaining the amount of stipend the school district is awarding the teacher.

### **Distributing Funds to School Districts**

A grant accountant in Centralized Services of OPI will check that all the work above has been done and create a document for each eligible teacher to send to the district employing the teacher. The document will ask the business manager, clerk, or superintendent to affirm that all the eligibility criteria are true and fill in the amount of the local stipend to be paid. When that document is received at OPI, the grant accountant will calculate the state stipend and create a payable in that amount to the school district.

### **Transparency**

OPI will publish on its website the names of teachers receiving the stipend, their school districts, and stipend amounts awarded each year.

## **Timing**

Each April, the OPI will post a list of all schools in which teachers are eligible for the higher stipend in the following school year.

Statute requires the OPI to distribute the state stipends to the employing school districts by March 1 of each year. OPI will begin the process when the TEAMS data collection concludes. The expectation is that the OPI will send a form for each teacher to the employing school district by January 15. The schools will have two weeks to return the form allowing the OPI to issue checks to school districts in February.

## **School District Accounting Guidance**

1. The stipend paid to a teacher is subject to all state and federal taxation requirements.
2. Stipends paid pursuant to this statute are excluded from earned compensation for the calculation of benefits in TRS.
3. The state distribution to the school district for this stipend should be deposited as revenue 3245 into the district's miscellaneous programs fund (15).
4. The state portion of the stipend paid to the teacher should be coded as an expenditure in the miscellaneous programs fund (15), using program code 329-State Miscellaneous Grants, function code 1xxx, object code 152, under a clearly designated project reporter code (PRC). The PRC code will be determined by the district and the same PRC code should be used for both the revenues and expenditures.

## **Recognition**

The Superintendent's Office will determine appropriate recognition and communication each year when eligible teachers are known. The OPI will follow statute regarding the state stipend and will serve all teachers who achieve this noteworthy accomplishment.