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ARTICLE 23 UNPAID LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A. Any employee may, upon written request to the Superintendent **or designee** and with approval of the School Board, be granted an unpaid leave of absence for illness, professional study, ~~or~~ military duty, or for personal reasons. Unpaid leaves of absence may only be granted to employees who have completed ~~five (5)~~ **three (3)** years of service in the District. **At their discretion, the Superintendent may approve applications to the school board of employees with less than three years of service.**

B. An unpaid leave of absence is a benefit of the contract and not meant to incur the District the cost of unemployment insurance. An employee on an approved LOA may request to be assigned to an open position before their normal return time.

C. When granted unpaid leaves of absence, employees will only be guaranteed re-employment upon their return to duty if they return on the date specified in their request for leave. However, upon mutual agreement, any unpaid leave may be extended. Notification of such return must be given to the Superintendent in writing by February 1. Further, the employee, upon the employee's return, may be assigned to the same or comparable position within the employee's geographic area and continue on the same range and step on the salary schedule the employee was on when the leave was granted.

D. If an employee on unpaid leave of absence remains away from duty beyond the expiration of the employee's leave or renewal, the employee's position shall be considered vacant.

E. Leaves **under this Article** of two (2) weeks or less for extenuating circumstances may be approved by the Superintendent **or Designee**. This short-term unpaid leave may be granted to any employee, **including those** ~~beginning~~ in their first year of employment except when an administrator believes granting leave would make operation of a building impossible.

F. Employees may leave their contributions with the retirement system during leave of absence. ~~Also, the employee has~~ **, and will have** the option of maintaining health and life insurance at the employee's expense.