

**North Orange County Regional Occupational Program
PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PROGRAM
AR 4231.5**

AR 4231.5 (a)

Administrative Regulation

Classified Personnel

Classified employees constitute an integral part of the ROP and a significant portion of the total staff. High-level accomplishment by classified employees is essential to ROP success.

Continuous education and professional growth is necessary to keep up with our rapidly changing technologies and society. Professional growth is the continuous, purposeful engagement in study and related activities to retain and extend high standards of performance on the job.

Professional growth should be a joint enterprise between the employee and the supervisor and should be planned together to ensure maximum gain for the employee and the ROP.

Eligibility

All regular classified employees who have served one year with the ROP are eligible to enter the professional growth program.

Once professional growth stipends have been earned, a classified employee who changes position within the ROP classified service will continue to receive the stipend in the new position.

Classified employees, on leave of absence as a full-time student, will not be eligible to participate in the program nor will the employee be able to receive future credit for courses taken during that leave, as it is assumed the effort is being made for the purpose of qualifying for an advancement in job classification.

If a classified employee terminates employment with the Program for any reason and is subsequently reemployed in a classified position, the former employee will not be entitled to credit or payment for previous professional growth increments.

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Adopted: July 16, 2001

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AR 4231.5 (b)

Professional Growth Stipend

A stipend for professional growth shall be earned upon verification of completion of 9 semester units or equivalent units (180 hours of approved credit or a combination of both).

Of these 9 units 6 must be job related. A maximum of 3 of these 9 units may be elective units toward a high school diploma or college degree.

The total stipend shall be in the amount of \$600 per year. The stipend shall be divided by the number of months employed and distributed on a monthly basis. The stipend is prorated by percent of employment.

Limitations

1. The total number of stipends which can be earned and accumulated is three.
2. A maximum of one stipend shall be approved for payment in any one calendar year.
3. No more than a total of 15 semester units will be allowed for professional growth stipends during one calendar year. If more than 9 semester units or equivalent units are earned in one calendar year, a maximum of 6 units may be applied to the next stipend.
4. Units earned prior to November 14, 1989, are not applicable to this program.

Evaluation of Courses and Activities

Courses will be evaluated by the supervisor and the Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services as 'related' or 'elective' as defined below.

1. Related courses and activities are specifically related to the employee's work assignment.
2. Elective courses and activities are those not related to the employee's work assignment but are applicable toward a high school diploma or college degree or meet the standard of growth in our rapidly changing society.

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Types of Credit Allowed

1. College course work - taken at an accredited community college, college or university.

All courses must be passed with a grade of 'C' or better. Credit/No Credit classes may be authorized with prior approval, and 'credit' must be earned as verified by transcript.

All units are equated as semester units. Quarter units will be converted to semester units on a ratio of 1 quarter unit equaling 2/3 of a semester unit.

2. Equivalent units - may be earned for successful completion of ROP Brown Bag Workshops, ROP or adult education courses, inservice training programs on non-duty time, industry-sponsored courses, or job related workshops or conferences.

Twenty hours of approved attendance is equal to 1 semester unit. Satisfactory verification of the hours attended must be provided.

Equivalent units will not be granted for professional growth activities that are completed during release time from the regular work assignment. With prior approval by the supervisor, vacation days may be used.

Employees may receive credit for technology courses as follows:

- a. Up to 60 hours of credit may be given for learning each of the Microsoft Office programs, Word, Access, Excel, and PowerPoint. If you have already received 60 hours of credit for any of these, you may earn 20 more hours for learning a new version. Up to 30 hours may be given for learning Windows and only 15 hours for a new version. Each software must be listed separately by name on the plan form.

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- b. Other courses such as computer repair, plumbing, HVAC, CAD, digital photography or others will be evaluated by the supervisor and Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services on a case-by-case basis.

It is important for staff to have all courses approved before taking them to avoid not receiving credit for all hours completed. Courses/activities not approved within 12 months of completion will not be approved.

3. Courses or activities may not be repeated for credit unless sufficient time has passed or documentation is provided to verify that the content or curriculum is different. This should be approved in advance.

Amount of Professional Growth Stipend

A monthly stipend will be paid to employees who successfully complete the 9 semester units or 180 hours of equivalent activities or a combination of the two. The \$600 stipend is based on \$50 month for a full-time employee working 40 hours per week. The monthly stipend is prorated for employees who work less than 40 hours per week or fewer than 12 months per year.

A maximum of three \$600 stipends may be earned.

Development of a Professional Growth Plan

Development of a professional growth plan should be a joint enterprise between the employee and the supervisor. A part of the evaluation goal setting conference should be dedicated to determining what activities the employee could undertake to enhance effectiveness on the job and further professional growth.

Once the employee has decided to begin accumulating credits toward a professional growth stipend, the 'Classified Professional Growth Plan Form' should be completed. The form can be obtained in the Human Resources Department.

All courses/activities should be approved in advance. However, courses/activities not approved within 12 months of completion will not be approved. When the form has been completed by the employee and signed and dated by the employee and supervisor, it must be sent to the Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services, for approval and

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signature. A copy of the completed form will be sent to the employee and the original will be kept in the employee's professional growth file in the Human Resources Department.

If approval is denied by either the supervisor or Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services, the employee may within 10 work days of receipt of the denial submit a written request to meet with the employee's next higher administrator. The content and validity of the course or activity in question will be reviewed. The final decision or approval or disapproval will rest with this administrator.

Verification of Professional Growth Credits.

The Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services, must receive verification of completion of all courses or activities. Transcripts or grade reports with dates of the courses, certificates of completion including the total hours completed, must be sent to the Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services. After receipt, the employee will receive a copy of the plan form indicating the receipt of verification and the number of hours credited.

Application for Payment

The employee must request the Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services, to tally the number of units and activities that have been completed. Once it has been determined that the stipend has been earned, a change in payroll status form will be completed and forwarded to the payroll department. The stipend will begin on the first of the month following completion.

The monthly stipend shall be paid in addition to the employee's regular salary and shall be subject to customary payroll deductions for retirement, withholding tax, and time off with loss of salary, etc.

An employee must be in a paid status to receive any portion of the payment for the professional growth stipend, and such payments will end when employment is terminated for any reason.

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