

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Which employee groups can participate in the Greenhouse project?

A. Full-time non-instructional employees (paraeducators, food service, maintenance, custodial, clerical...) who are seeking an **Education degree with the intent to teach in Polk County.**

Q. What does the School Board of Polk County expect of employees who access reimbursement payments through the Greenhouse Project?

A. It is expected that participants will seriously and diligently pursue a teaching degree. The Board expects continued employment commensurate with reimbursed hours (as outlined in the Collective Bargaining Agreement for paraeducators).

Q. About how long might it take me to obtain my degree?

A. It depends on how many classes you take during any given semester...A very do-able plan would be to take one course during the spring and winter semesters and three during the summer term. That plan entails completing 15 hours annually, taking four years to earn an AA degree (60 credit hours). The BA requires an additional 60 hours.

Q. What if I don't have the money to pay for the first semester?

A. We have limited "start up" scholarships available thanks to a grant from Polk Works. Eligibility is based on financial need as determined through a TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) application. *Availability is limited. For more information, contact Joanna Johnson (see back for contact information)

For more information or to request an application please e-mail Joanna Johnson at:

JoannaL.Johnson@polk-fl.net



Professional Development
Professional Growth Is Our Business



The AA degree for "other" (non-para) employees is funded through a generous grant from Progress Energy in partnership with The Polk Education Foundation.



Polk Education
FOUNDATION
& BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP, INC.

Funding "start up" scholarships for qualified applicants.

The School Board of Polk County

Joanna Johnson, TRST
Professional Development Specialist
The School Board of Polk County
Professional Development Department

Phone: 863-647.4277

Fax: 863-647.4269

Email: JoannaL.Johnson@polk-fl.net

The School Board of Polk County

GREENHOUSE PROJECT...

... "Growing our own educators" through tuition reimbursement for non-instructional employees



Professional Development Dept.

Professional Growth is Our Business.



What is Greenhouse?



This is a tuition-reimbursement project designed to help The School Board of Polk County recruit quality teachers by helping our own non-instructional employees earn their Education degree.



Participants must...

- be current full-time non-instructional employees within our district.
- enroll in an accredited college's Education degree-seeking program.
- be responsible to submit all required paperwork on time.
- make a "C" or higher in all courses to receive reimbursement.
- apply for a Pell Grant each school year.
- recognize the many hours of investment needed to complete a degree and therefore secure support from family members who may have to "share the load" of household "chores" during this time.
- commit to teaching for up to three years in a Polk County public school after degree completion.

For those truly committed to their goals, this could be the opportunity of a lifetime!

8 STEPS FOR SUCCESS

1. Complete a Greenhouse Project Application.
2. Apply to the college of your choice.*
3. Apply for a Pell Grant. You should apply online at the college's Financial Aid Office. The financial aid advisors at the college can help you with the FAFSA application. If you apply online you will learn immediately whether or not you qualify for a Pell Grant. If you qualify for a full Pell Grant, or another full grant, that will pay your tuition. If you don't receive a full grant, send a copy of the *non-funding* letter to us for your file. That will let us know that you qualify for tuition reimbursement.
4. See an academic advisor to determine your course of study. You'll need to take an official transcript from high school, and an official college transcript if you have any previous college credit hours.
5. Register for a class or classes and get your textbooks. You will need to pay for this up front if you are denied federal aid. Ask for a separate receipt for each class in which you enroll. In the event you must drop a class, we will know how much reimbursement is appropriate.
6. Successfully complete your classes with a grade of "C" or higher.
7. Send the following documentation, *attached to the "Application for Tuition Reimbursement" form*, to Joanna Johnson, Human Resource Development (within 30 calendar days of the posting of grades each term):
 - a. Copy of your paid* tuition receipts.
*Must show proof of payment.
 - b. Itemized textbook receipts (if applicable). Paraeducators also receive reimbursement for 50% of their books. Other non-instructional employees receive reimbursement for 50% of books once they have completed AA level courses.
 - c. FAFSA - Pell Grant eligibility letter
 - d. Copy of the grades sheet.
8. Receive reimbursement! *Tuition is reimbursed at 100% of the current State Tuition Rate.

