

# REFERENCE COPY

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## EXPLANATION: TRAVEL EXPENSES

This is a NEW policy for the district's consideration. In an effort to reduce waste and prevent fraud, the federal government has implemented new regulations governing the use of federal funds. These regulations are often collectively referred to as Omni or the Omni Circular. Federal law now requires school districts and other recipients of federal funds to adopt specific policies and procedures as a condition of receiving those funds. Federal law also now requires school districts to have a Board-adopted policy on travel costs. Much of the information in this policy traditionally would have belonged in an administrative procedure, but districts must include the information in policy because the federal law requires a Board-adopted policy in this area.

The rules for payment of the costs for Board member travel and employee travel should be the same, so MSBA has included both in this policy and recommends that districts rescind policy BHD (included in this update).

Federal law does not dictate the specifics of this policy, and districts are encouraged to carefully review this policy and customize it to match the district's actual practices.

*MSBA recommends that copies of this document be routed to the following areas because the content is of particular importance to them. The titles on this list may not match those used by the district. Please forward copies to the district equivalent of the title indicated.*

X	Board Secretary	X	Business Office		Coaches/Sponsors
	Facility Maintenance		Food Service		Gifted
X	Human Resources	X	Principals		Library/Media Center
	Health Services		Counselor		Special Education
X	Transportation		Public Info/Communications		Technology

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## TRAVEL EXPENSES

The district will pay for travel expenses for district employees and Board members who travel outside the district for training, professional development, attendance at district-related meetings or for other approved reasons related to their positions with the district. All persons traveling at the district's expense **may**, in good judgment, differentiate between expenditures for business and those for personal convenience and avoid unnecessary fees and excessive charges. The district is tax exempt and **will** not pay Missouri sales or use tax to any vendor or reimburse an employee or Board member for Missouri sales or use tax.

The following rules will apply to district employees unless the superintendent or designee determines that unusual circumstances justify an exception. Board members will follow this policy as well unless the Board or the Board president determines that unusual circumstances justify an exception. All exceptions will be documented in writing for auditing purposes.

### Authorization for Travel

District employees must obtain prior authorization from a supervisor for district-related travel before the employee is allowed to incur travel expenses. Travel costs that are charged to a federal grant or fund award must first be approved in writing by the superintendent or designee who oversees that particular federal program and, when required, the state or federal contact overseeing the federal funds at the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

In general, the Board authorizes the superintendent to attend meetings and conferences in Missouri as long as the travel expenses are within the district's budget. However, the Board reserves the right to question all travel expenditures and, if necessary, limit future travel. The Board or the Board president must first approve the superintendent's out-of-state travel if such travel is at the district's expense unless the issue is otherwise addressed in the superintendent's contract.

### Payment Method

1. *Direct Payment by District* – Board members and employees are required to register for meetings and make travel arrangements through the district whenever possible so that vendors are receiving payment directly from the district or through a district-issued purchasing card when available and authorized.
2. *Reimbursement* – Board members and employees should only pay for travel costs and seek reimbursement from the district in situations where direct payment by the district is not possible or practical, such as mileage reimbursements or payment for parking fees. Under no circumstances will a Board member or employee be reimbursed above the amount

authorized by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as reimbursable non-income for an employee.

3. *Per Diem* – In order to avoid claims that the Board member is receiving compensation in violation of state law, the district will not pay Board members a per diem amount for travel expenses. Employees will only be paid per diem amounts if other methods are not available and the payment is authorized by the superintendent or designee.

### **Documentation**

Original itemized receipts are required for all travel reimbursements with the exception of mileage. All documentation must be submitted to the superintendent or designee within 30 days of the end of the travel.

#### ***Documentation for Use of Federal Funds***

When federal funds are used for travel, the district must be able to justify the necessity of the travel to the federal program and demonstrate that the costs incurred were reasonable and consistent with the district's travel policy. Therefore, district staff or Board members using federal funds for travel must provide sufficient documentation to the superintendent or designee who oversees the applicable federal program. Such documentation may include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. An agenda of the event attended.
2. A list of attendees at the event.
3. A written statement justifying the expense.
4. Evidence of prior written approval for the expense.

The superintendent or designee may require additional information when he or she determines it is necessary.

### **Specific Travel Rules**

#### ***Traveling by Personal Vehicle***

The district will pay for mileage when employees or Board members travel using their personal vehicles, but only for the actual distance necessary to attend the event and only if the employee or Board member is appropriately licensed to drive the vehicle and insured as required by law. The vehicle must be licensed as required by law. Employees and Board members transporting students will be reimbursed only if laws and district policies regarding the transportation of students are followed.

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Individuals who are traveling to the same destination are required to share transportation unless an exception is granted by the superintendent or designee or unless the employee or Board member is willing to travel at his or her own expense. When sharing transportation, only the person whose vehicle is used may claim mileage.

The mileage allowance rate represents full compensation for the costs of operating the vehicle, including fuel costs. The district will not cover physical damage to the private vehicle or loss of its personal property contents. Employees and Board members who choose to drive in lieu of flying when flying is considered more economical shall be reimbursed up to the amount of the air travel. Likewise, employees and Board members who choose to fly when driving is more economical will only be reimbursed for the amount that would have been incurred if the employee or Board member had driven.

## ***Traveling by District-Owned Vehicles or Rental Vehicles***

Employees and Board members may drive district-owned vehicles or rental vehicles only if they are appropriately licensed to drive the vehicle and insured as required by law. Employees and Board members transporting students must follow the laws and district policies regarding the transportation of students.

Employees and Board members are expected to use safe but inexpensive transportation services. Rental vehicles should be limited to mid-class or smaller economy vehicles unless a larger vehicle is needed to accommodate the number of persons attending or the price is the same or less to use a larger vehicle.

Employees and Board members who have been issued a purchasing card are required to use the card when purchasing fuel for district-related travel expenses using district-owned or rental vehicles; otherwise, the district will reimburse them for fuel purchased. The beginning and ending odometer reading for the trip must be included with the reimbursement request.

## ***Parking and Other Travel Expenses***

The district will reimburse employees and Board members for reasonable parking fees and road tolls incurred as a necessary part of the travel, as long as proper documentation is provided.

## ***Airplane or Other Transportation***

Employees and Board members are required to secure the lowest available fares for commercial airplane, train or other transportation services unless the fare would:

1. Require circuitous routing.
2. Require travel during unreasonable hours.
3. Excessively prolong the travel.
4. Result in additional costs that would offset the transportation savings.
5. Not meet the reasonable medical needs of the employee or Board member.

If a Board member or employee relies on one of the listed exceptions, that exception must be approved and documented.

***Business Travel Requiring Overnight Accommodations***

The district will not pay for hotel expenses unless an overnight stay is necessary to attend the function or returning to the district would be unsafe or cause the Board member or employee to travel late at night.

In general, lodging arrangements must be made prior to departure and paid by the district directly or through the use of a district purchasing card. If advanced planning is not possible, the district will reimburse employees and Board members for the reasonable cost of single occupancy hotel accommodations and a reasonable amount of gratuities. Conference or corporate rates must be utilized when available. Additional costs associated with higher-than-single-occupancy rates (spouse, children or guest) are not reimbursable and must be paid by the employee or Board member prior to check out.

***Meals***

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Employees and Board members are expected to limit meals to a reasonable expense amount. The district will reimburse for gratuity of up to 20 percent of the meal cost. The district will not reimburse employees or Board members for alcoholic beverages, nor will the district reimburse employees or Board members for the cost of meals that will be paid for or reimbursed by the district as part of the registration fees.

***Seminar and Registration Fees***

Employees and Board members should register for seminars and conferences in advance so that the district may pay directly for the registration. In unusual situations where an employee or Board member must pay directly for such expenses, the district will reimburse at the lowest rate available if an adequate reason is provided. Requests for reimbursement must be accompanied by a receipt. The district will only pay for late registration fees when there is a valid reason the Board member or employee did not register earlier.

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## Unauthorized Expenses

The district prohibits any expense that is unauthorized, excessive or unnecessary as determined by the superintendent or designee. Unauthorized expenses include, but are not limited to:

1. Costs associated with the travel of a spouse, child or other person accompanying an employee or Board member.
2. Care of a dependent of a Board member or employee during the course of the travel.
3. Alcoholic beverages.
4. Snacks in addition to regular meals.
5. Personal expenses, including personal telephone calls.
6. Entertainment, unless the entertainment expense is part of the registration for the event in which the employee or Board member is participating and the expense is business related and typical for the event. These expenses should be approved by the employee's supervisor before the trip begins.
7. Expenses for travel extending beyond the time required for the meeting or business unless it is in the district's financial interest to extend the travel to obtain rate advantages.
8. Expenses incurred by non-employees traveling with the staff member or Board member, including room surcharges.
9. Fines for parking or traffic violations.

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***Note: The reader is encouraged to check the index located at the beginning of this section for other pertinent policies and to review administrative procedures and/or forms for related information.***

Adopted:

Cross Refs: BHA, Board Training and Development  
GBCC, Staff Use of Communication Devices

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Legal Refs: 5 C.S.R. 30-261.045  
2 C.F.R. § 200.474

Camdenton R-III School District, Camdenton, Missouri

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