



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PO Box 500

TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

BRET SCHUNDLER
Commissioner

May 12, 2010

Jay Doolan
Director of Professional Services
Foundation for Educational Administration
12 Centre Drive
Monroe Township, NJ 08831-1564

Re: Request for Waiver of Prohibition on Overnight Travel

Dear Mr. Doolan:

The New Jersey Department of Education is in receipt of the application you submitted on behalf of the Foundation for Educational Administration (FEA) for a waiver of the prohibition on overnight travel in order to facilitate the hosting of its 2010 Principals' Center for Educational Leadership Conference entitled *Dynamic Leadership: Transforming Students, Schools, and Systems*. This Conference is to be held on the campus of Princeton University from July 12, 2010 through July 16, 2010.

As you are aware, N.J.S.A. 18A:11-12 requires that boards of education must ensure that all school district travel expenditures are "in compliance with State travel payment guidelines as established by the Department of the Treasury" On March 17, 2008, the State Department of the Treasury issued *OMB Circular 08-19* that at Section X.B specifically prohibits reimbursement for in-State overnight travel. However, the circular authorizes the Commissioner of Education "to grant waivers for overnight travel for school board members and school district employees to attend in-state conferences pursuant to guidelines issued by the Department of Education." *OMB Circular 08-19 Section I.B.8*.

On April 17, 2008, the Department issued proposed guidelines on waivers for overnight travel. See Proposed Guidance on Overnight Travel (Proposed Guidance) http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/travel_overnight.pdf. Subsequently, after careful consideration, the Department revised the guidelines to reflect its determination that waivers of the overnight travel prohibition should be granted in only extremely limited circumstances, consistent with the clear Legislative intent to reduce non-instructional expenses of public school districts, particularly those related to travel. The revised guidelines were incorporated into regulations adopted on December 18,

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2008 at N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-7.11 and are posted on the Department's web site at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap23a.pdf>.

Pursuant to the regulations, waivers will not be granted for reimbursement for lodging prior to the first day of the event or after check-out time on the last day of the event. Moreover, waivers will be considered only where the sponsoring organization can demonstrate that the conference is broad and multi-disciplinary in scope, incorporates content offerings from numerous specialty areas, and includes important professional development opportunities and/or required training. In addition, the sponsoring organization must demonstrate that the conference's content, structure, and anticipated attendance necessitate that it be held on multiple consecutive days with overnight lodging.

In connection with your waiver application, you submitted an agenda for this conference, a conference brochure, a Q&A document addressing specific aspects of the conference, and a two-page document giving a brief overview of each speaker and his/her presentation. After carefully reviewing your submission, the Department finds that this Conference meets the criteria of the revised guidelines. First, I note that the Conference contains a comprehensive and intensive program that spans the five day period and offers a variety of topics in areas such as global learning, leadership skills and strategies to ignite student focus and motivation. I also note that the Conference accepts a limited number of participants and is scheduled during the summer so as to minimize disruption to school district business. Additionally, the FEA is providing courses that meet New Jersey's Professional Growth Requirements for continuing education. For all these reasons, I find that the content, structure and scheduling necessitate that the FEA Conference be held on multiple consecutive days with overnight lodging. I am, therefore, granting your waiver request for the 2010 Principals' Center for Educational Leadership Conference.

As a result of this waiver, school districts will be able to reimburse attendees for overnight lodging, provided that the remaining conditions delineated in this letter are met. Reimbursement for registration fees, mileage and meals, subject to the limitations and conditions set forth on *OMB circular 06-14*, may also be permissible. School districts should ensure that they approve attendance only of board members and employees whose duties are related to the purposes of the conference or who are required to attend to meet continuing education requirements.

Moreover, please be advised that the waiver of the prohibition for reimbursement for overnight lodging covers only those attendees whose home to event commute exceeds 50 miles. In other words, only those individuals whose one-way commute to the NJSBA Annual Workshop exceeds 50 miles may obtain reimbursement from their school district for overnight lodging.

Finally, I want to emphasize that I recognize the value and importance of the work performed by the Foundation for Education Excellence. As I am sure you are aware, in these difficult fiscal times it is incumbent upon everyone in the education

community to search for more efficient ways to deliver educational services. I encourage you and your organization to consider alternative means of providing professional development in the future to minimize the need for overnight stays, such as holding one day or regional events.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bret Schundler", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bret Schundler

Commissioner of Education

BS/KM/FEA 2010 Travel Waiver Request.doc
c: Executive County Superintendents
Senior Staff