



STAFF CERTIFICATION TUITION ASSISTANCE

2026 – 2027 School Year

SUMMARY

Freire helps eligible full-time staff earn role-related certifications by contributing to tuition. In return, recipients commit to continued service at Freire.

WHAT TUITION ASSISTANCE COVERS

Freire provides tuition assistance for educational programs that lead to a certification in an employee's current role (or, with supervisor approval, a planned future role). Tuition assistance will not cover other coursework (including master's degrees) except where the coursework earns credit toward a certification. Awards for certification in high-need content areas will be prioritized.

Tuition assistance covers tuition and mandatory fees billed by an accredited institution.

Not covered: books, supplies, travel, application fees, exam retakes, costs to repeat failed or withdrawn courses, and conferences or other short-term professional development. For conference and short-term PD funding, please see your Head of School.

AWARD DETAILS

- **Annual limit:** Up to \$5,250 per academic year (July 1 – June 30). This amount is set at the IRS annual maximum for employer-provided educational assistance and is subject to change if the federal limit is adjusted.
- **Duration:** Support is available for up to two academic years.

ELIGIBILITY

To be considered for tuition assistance, candidates must meet all the following criteria:

- Be a full-time Freire employee.
- Have completed at least one full year of service at Freire by the program's start date. Staff may apply before reaching this threshold, provided they will have completed one full year of service by the time the program begins.
- Be in good standing.
- Have a demonstrated history of strong performance, as determined by the employee's Head of School (or supervisor), who may consider evaluations, student outcomes, leadership, overall contributions to the school community, and any other relevant factors.

HOW PAYMENT WORKS

- **Direct payment:** Freire pays the institution directly each term. Before each payment, the recipient must provide (1) verification of enrollment and (2) an itemized invoice or bill from the institution. No funds are paid to the recipient.



- **Transcripts:** Within 30 days after each term ends, the recipient must submit an official transcript to the Talent Office.
- **Academic standard:** Each funded course must be completed with a grade of B- or better. For pass/fail or non-letter-graded courses (including thesis, practicum, or fieldwork credits), a “Pass” or equivalent satisfactory mark is required.
- **If the standard is not met:** For any course that is failed, completed below a B-, dropped after the institution’s refund deadline, or left incomplete for more than 90 days, the recipient must repay Freire the amount paid for that course. Future tuition assistance payments are paused until the repayment is resolved.

WORK OBLIGATION

Each award year carries a commitment of one additional full year of full-time service immediately following that award year:

- **One-year award:** two years of service total (the award year plus one year following).
- **Two-year award:** four years of service total (the two award years plus two years following).

Funds from each award year are forgiven once the corresponding follow-on service year is completed. For example, a two-year recipient who leaves after three full years has fulfilled the obligation for the first award year and repays only the funds from the second. Partial service years are prorated monthly: a one-year recipient who leaves five months into a ten-month school year (or six months if a 12-month employee) repays 50% of the award.

REPAYMENT

If a recipient resigns before completing the work obligation, the unforgiven portion (calculated as described above) must be repaid within 90 days of separation, or under a repayment plan of up to 12 months arranged with the Finance Office. Job abandonment or failure to return from an approved leave is treated as a voluntary resignation for purposes of this section.

Repayment is waived in full if employment ends due to Freire-initiated termination, position elimination, layoff, or long-term disability. The only exception is termination for serious misconduct (such as dishonesty, theft, violence, harassment, or a significant violation of Freire’s policies or code of conduct, as defined in the employee handbook), in which case the unforgiven portion must be repaid on the same terms as a resignation.

TUITION ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT

Before any payment is made, the recipient and Freire will sign a tuition assistance agreement stating the award amount, the program and institution, the work obligation, and the repayment terms. No funds will be disbursed without a signed agreement.

TIMELINE & SELECTION

- **Application window:** Applications are accepted on a rolling basis, year-round. Applications for future academic years may be held until that academic year’s budget is developed.
- **Decisions:** Made by the Network Tuition Assistance Committee. In reviewing each application, the Committee weighs four factors:
 - *Candidate eligibility:* confirmation that the applicant meets all eligibility criteria, is in good standing, and has a demonstrated record of strong performance (e.g., evaluation ratings, student outcomes,



leadership, and contributions to the school community), as well as the applicant's commitment to remain at Freire and fulfill the work obligation.

- *Budget availability:* whether funds remain in the current year's tuition assistance budget, and how the request fits alongside other pending and anticipated applications.
- *School certification needs:* how well the certification addresses Freire's current staffing and certification gaps, with priority given to high-need content areas.
- *Program quality:* the rigor, accreditation, and relevance of the program, the reasonableness of its cost, how directly it will strengthen the applicant's impact in their current (or approved future) role, and the feasibility of completing it alongside a full-time role.

APPLICATION

To apply, please complete the [Certification Tuition Assistance Application](#). The following information will be required:

- Name of the certification program, degree program (if applicable), and the institution offering it.
- Any certifications or degrees you currently hold.
- What Praxis tests are required, your scores on those tests, and/or your plan for taking the tests.
- Estimated tuition and mandatory fees, broken down by term.
- How long you have served Freire Schools and how long you intend to remain within the network to serve our community.
- How this advanced learning will directly benefit Freire students.

If you have questions, please contact Gloria Lim, Talent Recruitment Manager, at gloria@freireschools.org.