

Cost-saving decision limits health coverage to employees who work at least 30 hours per week

Starting this summer, Grafton School District employees hired to work less than 30 hours per week will not be eligible for health insurance coverage.

The School Board on Monday approved a handbook change to reflect the new policy, which officials said will help the district pare costs for the 2013-14 school year.

The change — which was recommended by Director of Business Services Kristin Kollath and Supt. Mel Lightner — requires employees hired on or after July 1 to work at least 30 hours weekly to receive health insurance.

Previously, employees who worked between 50% and 80% of a full-time equivalent position were eligible to receive prorated benefits.

Kollath said the district currently has 14 part-time employees who will receive \$113,000 in insurance benefits in 2013-14.

With increased hours for three library media aides and the hiring of two additional aides, the district could face an additional \$100,000 in insurance costs, Kollath told the board.

The policy change will also make the insurance provision in the handbook consistent with the Affordable Care Act, Kollath said.

“As we add staff, there will be increased costs. This gives us a way to save money, which is something we have to continue to find ways to do,” Lightner said.

Lightner said the board should also consider applying the 30-hour weekly requirement to all employees regardless of their hiring date.

“It’s hard to pull benefits from people now, but in the future, it’s worth looking at,” he said.

Board Treasurer Paul Lorge voiced support for the policy change, which he said is needed at a time when the district is grappling with cost-saving challenges.

“I support going forward from this point and possibly going into the past,” Lorge said.

The board’s unanimous decision on the new policy came minutes after it agreed to increase the weekly hours for three library aides — one each at Kennedy, Woodview and Grafton elementary schools — from 15 to 28 and to hire two aides, at John Long Middle School and Grafton High School, at 28 hours per week.

The changes, which will cost \$50,288, are needed to help teachers incorporate new technology

Insurance pared for part-time school staff

Written by STEVE OSTERMANN
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devices into classrooms and transform school libraries into state-of-the-art learning centers.

The devices include iPads, netbooks, laptop computers and other tools.

“Libraries are no longer just quiet places to learn and study,” Lightner told the board. “Now we’re adding a lot of technology and need help with the transformation.”

By having a part-time aide at each district library, the library media specialist will have more time to work with teachers, Lightner said. That, in turn, should produce a more stimulating learning environment for students, he added.

“The level of enthusiasm for students in a technology-infused classroom is outstanding,” Lightner said. “We don’t want to throw technology into our classrooms without knowing how to use it.”

Expanding the use of aides was recommended as part of a district study coordinated by Michelle Garven, director of learning services, and Rick Seybold, technology coordinator.