

GETTING YOUR DISTRICT TO PAY FOR RUTGERS COURSEWORK

A Guide for History and Social Studies Teachers

Most New Jersey school districts have a tuition reimbursement clause in their teacher contract, and almost all of them will cover Rutgers coursework because it's an accredited university. Courses offered by the Rutgers History Department generally should count as subject-relevant coursework for History and Social Studies Teachers. The challenge is usually how much the district will pay for a course vs. Rutgers tuition price. Your district may only cover a portion of Rutgers tuition, so you should find out the exact terms of tuition assistance so that you can make an educated decision. Your reimbursement process and regulations will vary with each district and each union contract negotiation, so these are constantly changing.

The easiest way to get this info is to contact the HR administrator in your district and ask them to help you through the process. Your union representative can also probably help you find the relevant information. If you are just exploring, you can try to find the information online. This is somewhat more complicated, but we've created the following guide to help.

Step 1: Find your teacher contract

Your tuition reimbursement terms live in your *collective negotiations agreement* (CBA) — the contract between your local education association (usually the NJEA union) and your Board of Education. It's usually NOT on the main district website's parent-facing pages. Look in the staff/HR section, or contact your union representative.

Please be aware that information posted online is frequently out of date. Make sure any contract you are reviewing applies to the year you are applying to take courses! Double-check with HR in your district and/or your union to confirm that the terms still apply.

Try these methods of finding the relevant contract info:

1. **Search directly:** “[your district] education association + contract PDF” or “[your district] teacher contract + tuition reimbursement”
2. **District HR page:** Most districts post the current CBA under Departments → Human Resources, or under a "Staff/Employee Portal."
3. **Your union's website:** Local NJEA affiliates (e.g., "Newark Teachers Union," "Union Township Education Association") often post the contract themselves — sometimes more up to date than the district site. If you know the name of your union rep or someone involved in your union, you can ask them to help you find this info.
4. **Ask your Human Resources or Professional Development administrator for:**
 - a. Current Tuition reimbursement clause in contract
 - b. Pre-approval form
 - c. confirmation that Rutgers Graduate History courses will qualify.

Step 2: Find the right clause

Once you have the contract, search (Ctrl+F) for these terms — reimbursement language is rarely under a heading called "tuition" alone:

- "Tuition Reimbursement"
- "Graduate Studies" / "Graduate Credit"
- "Professional Improvement" or "Professional Development Fund"
- "Continuing Education"
- "Advancement on the Guide" (sometimes reimbursement is bundled with salary enhancements for additional education)

Read carefully — there are two different things that look similar:

Tuition reimbursement = a one-time payment/refund for money you spent on a course.

Salary guide / lane movement credit = a permanent raise for accumulating credits beyond your degree (e.g., "\$50 per credit toward BA+30"). This is valuable too, but it's a different benefit with different rules, and the two are sometimes confused because they cite similar per-credit numbers.

Step 3: Identify the four things that determine your payout

1. Rate structure: Is it a flat dollar amount per credit (e.g., "\$300/credit"), a flat annual cap (e.g., "\$2,700/year"), or a percentage of a benchmark rate (e.g., "50% of the Kean University rate")?
2. Credit/course cap: Most districts cap you at 6–9 credits per year or 2–3 courses per year.
3. Subject-relevance requirement: Many contracts require the course to be "in your field of certification" or "related to your current assignment" — for a certified history/social studies teacher, Rutgers history, education, or social studies coursework should qualify, but check whether it needs prior approval from your supervisor or superintendent.
4. Grade minimum/pre-approval process: Common requirements: minimum grade of "B" (sometimes "C" for partial reimbursement), and a pre-approval form submitted **before** you register — reimbursement is often denied if you file after the fact.

Step 4: Do the math against Rutgers' actual tuition

Rutgers graduate tuition varies by residency/enrollment status. As of the 2026–2027 schedule, part-time NJ-resident graduate tuition at the Graduate School–New Brunswick is \$929/credit. Because many district caps are below this, your reimbursement will often cover part of the cost rather than all of it. Before enrolling:

1. Get the exact current per-credit or per-course cost for the specific Rutgers program/course you're considering (contact the program directly — tuition varies by school).
2. Compare it to your district's cap using the structure you identified in Step 3.
3. If your district's clause is pegged to a "state college rate" or another university's rate rather than a flat dollar figure, ask your business office what that dollar figure currently translates to.

Step 5: Ask about state-level programs that stack on top of district reimbursement

Beyond your local contract, New Jersey has run supplemental tuition programs for teachers in specific high-need areas. These are administered separately (often through the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority) and have their own applications, deadlines, and service commitments. If your Rutgers coursework overlaps with a state-designated shortage area you might be able to access these funds. It's worth a quick check with your district's HR office to see if a course might qualify.

Step 6: Submit your pre-approval paperwork BEFORE you register

This is the step teachers most often get wrong. Reimbursement is **frequently denied automatically** if you didn't get sign-off before the course started, no matter how well you did in it. Typical pre-approval packet includes:

- A tuition reimbursement/pre-approval form (get this from HR — don't rely on an old version you find online, since forms change)
- Course description or syllabus showing relevance to your certification/assignment
- Supervisor or department head signature
- Sometimes a written statement of intent to remain in the district for a set period after reimbursement (a "stay or repay" clause, usually 2–3 years)

Step 7: Keep your paperwork for the claim

After the course, you'll typically need to submit:

- An official grade report or transcript showing you met the minimum grade
- An itemized, paid tuition bill (a zero-balance receipt, not just registration confirmation)
- The original approval form, referenced back to your claim

Submit through your district's designated office (often the Business Administrator's or Superintendent's office, not the building principal) by whatever internal deadline the contract specifies — some districts set a hard cutoff (e.g., "requests due by June 30").