

Fees to Students and Financial Hardship

-POLICY-

The ability of British Columbia School Boards to charge fees to students and parents for goods and services provided by school boards is regulated by the *School Act* (Section 82) including definitions of terms found in the School Regulations, School Board Fees Order (29/09/06) and the School (Student Achievement Enabling) Amendment Act 2007.

While the District supports the philosophy that an educational program and resource materials be provided free of charge to every student of school age, resident in the District and enrolled in an educational program in a District school, the District also believes that there are instances when it is appropriate that a fee be charged for goods and services, or when materials should be provided by a student's home.

The District authorizes charges for optional curricular and extra-curricular activities, or other goods and services provided by the District in order to enrich curricular and school life for students. The District also supports the provision from home of basic supplies or materials (e.g. pencils, pens, notebooks, running shoes). In addition, the District believes parents must be informed of the process whereby fees may be waived.

The purpose of this Administrative procedure is to clarify the fees, materials, field trip and extra-curricular activity charges which may or may not be charged by schools. A secondary purpose is to provide a process to ensure that students are not excluded from participation in school activities due to financial hardship.

-REGULATION-

1. Fees Which Are Not Permissible:

- 1.1 The Board will not charge any course fees. Basic course supplies required to meet the learning outcomes must be provided free of charge.
- 1.2 Workbooks must be provided to students free of charge. If students choose to write in the workbook, a purchase option can be made available.
- 1.3 Secondary schools will provide a set of graphic calculators for math courses if the calculator is a course requirement. Schools may charge a refundable deposit for a graphic calculator.

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- 1.4 Schools may not charge fees for physical education activities that are required as part of the course learning outcomes. Schools may charge for optional activities which enhance and support the learning outcomes.
 - 1.5 Outdoor education activities form the essence of an outdoor education program. Fees for mandatory activities are not permissible. Fees for optional activities are permissible.
 - 1.6 Students will not be required to pay fees for basic materials for projects necessary to meet course requirements in elective courses such as woodworking, home economics or art. Students may choose to upgrade materials and either bring them from home or be charged a fee for the upgraded materials.
 - 1.7 K-12 Ministry funded students will not be charged fees for optional courses of study through summer school.

2. **Permissible Fees**

- 2.1 The Board expects that students will attend school with:
 - a) appropriate personal clothing for school activities such as gym strip, footwear, outerwear and personal safety equipment, and
 - b) appropriate materials, supplies and equipment for the student's individual use (i.e., paper, writing tools, erasers, rulers, calculators).
- 2.2 On a cost-recovery basis, schools may continue to charge fees for optional activities or services such as yearbooks, athletics, extra-curricular activities and travel, optional field trips and graduation activities (i.e., cap and gown, dinner and dance).
- 2.3 Student activity fees will be charged for student agendas, student leadership activities, clubs, cultural performances and special events and student activities organized by the school.
- 2.4 A school wishing to assess students for permissible fees shall file a request with the Superintendent by May 15 of the preceding school year.

- 2.5 Students participating in a music class, course or program or a fine arts class, course or program with a music component, will be charged fees for the purchase or rental of a musical instrument for the student's personal use or the student will be required to provide their own instrument.
- 2.6 Certain school courses and programs offer the opportunity for students to acquire certification in areas such as First Aid, CPR, Food Safe and Super Host. These certifications are not curriculum requirements and student participation is optional. Students will be charged a fee to cover the cost of the certification cost if they choose to obtain it.
- 2.7 Students participation in International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement courses have the option of writing International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement final examinations in addition to the provincial examinations in these subject areas. Students who choose to write an International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement examination will be required to pay for the examination expenses.
- 2.8 Schools may require a deposit(s) for education resource materials, such as textbooks, locks and laptops. Deposits are refundable and students will be advised of the terms of the deposit at the time the deposit is required.

3. Specialty Academies/Trade Programs

A. Special Academies

- 3.1 A specialty academy is defined as an educational program that emphasizes a particular sport, activity or subject area and meets the prescribed criteria set out in the Administrative Procedure.
- 3.2 Schools offering a specialty academy must consult with their School Planning Council and Parent Advisory Council. There must be sufficient demand for the specialty academy.
- 3.3 Schools offering a specialty academy must make sufficient instruction available for students enrolled in the academy to meet the general requirements for graduation.

- 3.4 Students enrolled in a specialty academy may be charged fees related to the direct costs incurred in providing the specialty academy.
- 3.5 On or before July 1, a school offering a specialty academy must:
- a) Establish a schedule of fees and make the schedule of fees available to the public.
 - b) Consult with the School Planning Council and obtain their approval for the specialty academy schedule of fees.
 - c) Seek approval from the Board of Education for the specialty academy schedule of fees.

B. Trade Programs

- 3.6 A trades program is defined as an educational program that is designed to certify a student for a particular occupation and includes an apprenticeship for students registered with the Industry Training Authority Act.
- 3.7 Students participating in a trades program may be charged fees for the purchase or rental of necessary tools, equipment and materials or the student will be required to provide his or her own tools, equipment and materials for their participation in the trades program.

4. Field Trips and Extra-Curricular Trips

- 4.1 Schools may not charge fees where participation in a field trip is mandatory and participation is necessary in order for the student to meet the learning outcomes or assessment requirements of a course.
- 4.2 Schools may charge fees for optional field trips that enhance and add value to a student's learning experience but are not essential to the learning outcomes.
- 4.3 In accordance with Section 5 of the School Board Fees Order, "a board shall not charge fees in respect of field trips or special events except for expenses, including transportation, accommodation, meals, entrance fees and equipment rentals."

- 4.4 Extra-curricular trips or activities are not considered part of the educational program and do not relate to specific learning outcomes, therefore, fees, which are limited to expenses, may be charged. Excluding international trips, no student shall be denied an opportunity to participate through an inability to pay.

5. Financial Hardship

- 5.1 Principals are responsible for establishing a procedure to facilitate participation in school activities by students who would otherwise be excluded due to financial hardship. Principals will consult with teachers, students and parents in the development of such a procedure.
- 5.2 The hardship procedures must incorporate the principles of fairness, respect, dignity, confidentiality and sensitivity. Students, parents and staff will be advised on the procedure.
- 5.3 All communications with students and parents regarding fees and deposits must include a statement explaining that fees will not be a barrier to student participation in schools activities. No student will be denied education opportunities offered at the school due to financial hardship.
- 5.4 At all schools the statement explaining that no student will be denied educational opportunities offered at the school will be published in the school course selection handbook, student agenda or parent newsletters. The procedure for addressing financial hardship will also be included in the handbook, student agenda or parent newsletter.