

HURON-PERTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Policy 3E:29 – Fees for Learning Materials and Activities

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PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Procedure is to provide direction regarding fees for learning materials and activities.

PROCEDURE:

1.0 Administration of Fees:

In general, there should be no fees charged for day school programs. Successful completion of a required grade or course leading to graduation cannot be dependent on the payment of any fee. A fee shall be permissible for any activity, material, course or program if it is:

- Not required as part of the regular day school program;
- Voluntary and alternatives are offered;
- Non-essential or co-curricular in nature and is not required for graduation by an individual student;
- A voluntary upgrade or substitute of a more costly material to the material provided for course purposes.

Transparency in Fees

Fees charged should reflect actual costs to the school:

- A budget showing actual costs to the school shall be included with all requests from funds from students, or alternately the request may include a statement that a budget will be provided upon request;
- “Rounding up” should only occur where a small amount is added to the cost to avoid collection of small amounts of change;
- A budget may include a reasonable amount charged per pupil for protection against loss of uncollected amounts;
- Amounts collected through rounding up or protection against loss should be used to offset future goods and services.

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2.0 Principal/School Council Oversight

The principal shall:

- Have a communication/approval strategy to ensure they are aware of all fees;
- Ensure School Council is made aware of all fees through the provision of regular written reports;
- Shall ensure that the purposes for which funds are collected are consistent with the Board's mission and vision;
- Shall ensure that fees levied for school purposes complement and not replace public funding for education;
- Shall ensure that each student shall have an equal opportunity to benefit from all school programs and activities regardless of financial barriers;
- Shall ensure that a clearly communicated process is in place to make certain that families experiencing financial hardships have a confidential, discrete and dignified way of accessing financial support for learning materials and activities that require fees;
- Shall ensure that the Fee Schedule for an upcoming school year is made widely available to the school community (e.g. school newsletters, school website and student agenda books).

Discretionary Accounts

Individual teachers and departments shall not charge fees for the purpose of creating “discretionary accounts”.

- All money collected is to be for specific goods or services;
- Amounts received are to be remitted to the secretary for deposit in the school generated funds account.

Registration, Administration and Program Fees

Students shall not be charged a fee for registration, administration or program fee except:

- Where the program is by its very nature, a fee-paying program (eg: Visa students, Continuing Education), the appropriate fee may be charged.

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3.0 Examples of Eligibility for Fees Related to Activities, Programs or Materials

ELIGIBLE FOR FEES

- Optional programs such as Advanced Placement;
- Co-curricular trips, events or activities that are extensions to the curriculum and not required for graduation, (i.e., dances, school clubs, theme days, athletics, drama, student council activities);
- Extended student trips or excursions that are not necessary to meet the learning expectations of a particular grade or course;
- Optional art or music supplies or higher quality woodworking materials that students choose to use for course completion as long as the required materials are available at no cost);
- Student activity fees. (Voluntary amounts that are used to supplement a student's school experience through materials and activities such as student agendas, student recognition programs, yearbooks, extra-curricular activities, school dances or theme days.);
- Co-curricular activities, special events, program enhancements or field trips (e.g. for costs of participation, rental of equipment or travel), if alternative programming and assignments are offered to students who chose not to participate;
- Student agenda books and yearbooks.

INELIGIBLE FOR FEES

- Registration or administration fees to enroll in a regular day school program;
- A textbook fee or deposit. (Schools may recover the costs to replace or repair lost or damaged);
- Materials such as textbooks, library books, music supplies, or any loaned materials – (these charges should not exceed the replacement or repair cost.);
- Learning materials required for completion of the curriculum such as workbooks, cahiers, musical instruments, science supplies. Lab materials kits and safety goggles;
- Learning materials that are required to meet the learning expectations of the course but are consumed by the pupil and cannot be used again by another student in the next semester (e.g. chemical used in a chemistry experiment);

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- Mandatory flat fees for any course leading to graduation other than optional programming;
- A fee for a guest speaker, visiting teacher, or in-class field trip or presentation where the material being presented is a mandatory element of the subject or course;
- Items that are funded through the allocated budget of a school board including, but not limited to computers, workbooks, textbooks, staff development and training costs.

4.0 Question and Answers regarding Fees Related to Activities, Programs or Materials

1. What is meant by “required to complete the curriculum expectations of a particular grade or course”?

In each subject, the curriculum expectations identify what a student should know and be able to do at the end of the grade or course.

Students are expected to demonstrate their learning and must be evaluated on their achievement of the overall expectations in each grade or course. It is expected that materials required by students to demonstrate their learning and meet the curriculum expectations in a particular grade or course will be provided.

2. Can fees be charged for musical instruments? Can you provide some examples of enhanced materials in music or other courses that would be eligible for a fee?

There must be a no-fee option available for students who wish to enrol in these courses or programs to ensure they have access to the materials required to meet the learning expectations of the grade or course. For example, as part of a music course, sufficient instruments and required materials must be available at no cost for student use during the class although the type of instrument and the variety of instruments are at the discretion of the school and board.

Fees may be charged for enhanced materials that are voluntary enrichments beyond what is necessary to meet the curriculum expectations. For example, in a photography course, the school may provide cameras and paper for general use to meet the learning expectations; however, students may choose to bring their own camera, rent a higher grade camera or use higher grade paper for a fee.

Where fees are appropriate they should be minimized as much as possible, with the goal of supporting student participation in programs and activities regardless of individual economic circumstances.

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Schools may recover the costs for the replacement or repair of lost, damaged or broken materials such as textbooks, library books, music or science supplies or any loaned materials. These charges should not exceed the replacement or repair cost.

3. Can schools charge fees for field trips? What about in-class field-trips?

Field trips, co-curricular activities, special events and program enhancements (e.g. admission fees, rental of equipment or travel) may be eligible for fee charges if alternative programming and assignments are offered to students who do not participate or where the topic being covered is not a mandatory element of the subject or course. The fees guideline notes as a best practice for principals to minimize, where possible, costs related to enhanced programming and materials (for example, speakers, dance instructors, in-class field trips) that are optional to a course.

4. Are activity fees voluntary?

Student activity fees are voluntary amounts that are used to supplement a student's school experience through materials and activities such as student agendas, student recognition programs, yearbooks, extracurricular activities, school dances, or theme days.

Examples of inappropriate collection practices include denying students timetables, access to the library or a locker for non-payment of a fee.

5. Can schools charge fees for consumables such as workbooks? Can a school charge a student a flat fee for printing/photocopying?

Fees cannot be charged for workbooks or for printing or photocopying of materials required to meet the curriculum expectations of the course. Fees cannot be charged for:

- Learning materials that are required for completion of the curriculum such as workbooks, cahiers, musical instruments, art supplies, science supplies, lab material kits and safety goggles;
- Learning materials that are essential to meet the curriculum expectations of the course, but are consumed by the student and cannot be used again by another student in the next semester, e.g., a chemical used in a chemistry experiment.

The Ministry of Education provides funding for workbooks and classroom supplies as part of the Pupil Foundation Grant.

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6. What is optional programming? Can fees be charged for these programs?

Optional Programming refers to selected courses or activities that students normally choose to attend through an application process, with the knowledge that these programs are beyond the provincially mandated curriculum. Examples may include Advanced Placement® and Hockey Canada Skills Academy programs.

A fee charge shall be permissible for an activity, material, course or program if it is:

- Not required as part of the regular day school program;
- Voluntary, and alternatives are offered;
- Non-essential or extracurricular in nature and is not required for graduation by an individual student; or
- A voluntary upgrade or substitute of a more costly material to the material provided for course purposes.

Fees cannot be charged for materials or activities that are required to meet the curriculum expectations of any course or grade with the exception of optional programming.

When developing policies for fee charges, school boards should consult with the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) on any programming for students with special education needs where fees are being considered.

7. Can schools ask for textbook deposits?

Textbook deposits for students enrolled in day school programs are not permissible. The *Education Act* requires that resident pupils are entitled to attend a day school program without payment of a fee.

Schools may recover the costs for the replacement or repair of lost, damaged or broken materials such as textbooks, library books, music or science supplies or any loaned materials. These charges should not exceed the replacement or repair cost.

8. Can fees be charged for school or gym uniforms?

The fees guideline applies to learning materials and activities only. Fees may be charged for school and gym uniforms. Where fees are appropriate, they should be minimized as much as possible, with the goal of supporting student participation in programs and activities regardless of individual economic circumstances.

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The Ministry does not prescribe uniforms or a specific dress code. School boards and local school communities know best their own needs and priorities about what is considered appropriate for students to wear when they are at school. The Ministry requires boards' policies and procedures to allow a majority of parents, through their school councils, to recommend guidelines for appropriate dress.

9. What supplies are parents expected to provide? What about “recommended lists” that are sent home by teachers often for primary grade classes?

The Ministry provides funding through the Pupil Foundation Grant for classroom supplies. Classrooms should be stocked with the materials necessary for students to meet the curriculum expectations of a particular course or grade. Fees cannot be charged for learning materials that are required for the completion of the curriculum. Each school board or school has discretion in the assortment of supplies selected to meet those curriculum expectations.

Parent and/or guardians may be asked to provide clothing, footwear and supplies not curricular in nature such as pencil cases, pencils, pens, paper, rulers or binders. If a student does not have the necessary supplies, schools should ensure that each student has what he or she needs to complete the activity or assignment.

Schools and/or teachers may provide parents with suggested items to add to classroom materials. However the purchase of these materials and/or the fee charge related to any purchases is completely voluntary. All materials required to meet the learning expectations of the course or grade must be provided without payment of a fee.

10. Can schools collect additional amounts to cover the costs of students that cannot afford to pay to attend a field trip or activity?

Additional voluntary amounts can be collected for this purpose. The fee charge including any additional amount is voluntary. Accounting for the use of these amounts should be part of the financial reporting to the community.