

## **INSTRUCTIONAL FEES, REFUNDS, AND WAIVERS**

### **Background**

With the introduction of *Bill 1, An Act to Reduce School Fees*, effective in the 2017-18 school year, the government is eliminating fees for specific instructional supplies and materials. Through the new School Fees Regulation, parents will no longer be charged fees for: textbooks; workbooks; photocopying and printing; or paper. In addition, common fees specifically related to instructional supplies and materials, which were previously charged to an entire student body or grade cohort will be eliminated. For the purposes of the School Fees Regulation, a common fee is a fee charged to an entire student body or grade cohort, and is specifically related to instructional supplies and materials. The District retains the ability to set fees on a school-by-school basis, with input from Parent Advisory Councils, and final approval by the Board. The process and timing of school-based fees is outlined in the Basis for Allocations to Schools document, approved each year by the Board, as part of the annual budget process.

### **Fee Guidelines**

1. Each year, the Board will approve a School Fee Summary on a school-by-school basis, which indicates the maximum fee a student may be charged for a course, service, participation in a club or team, or consumable goods within a school year.
2. A fee charged by a school may be less than the indicated maximum on the Approved School Fee Summary, but shall never exceed the approved maximum per student fee.
3. If a fee category is not included or indicated on the Board Approved School Fee Summary, it may not be charged in that school year.
4. In the case of fees that might be charged on more than one occasion throughout the year, such as field trips, the total of the individual fees charged must remain less than or equal to the indicated maximum on the School Fee Summary.
5. An Approved School Fee Summary will posted on the District website for each school.
6. Fees charged for late registrants will be based upon the annual rate times 10 percent per month, or any part thereof, for all remaining months of the school year.

7. Junior and senior high school students enrolled in special programs such as home economics or industrial education may be levied a fee to offset the cost of necessary supplies. Students completing projects which will become their property are required to pay for the cost of materials.
8. If an instructional resource; e.g. book, film strip, etc. is lost or damaged beyond use, a replacement cost will be charged to the student based on the age and condition of the instructional resource.
9. All monies collected at the school level must be deployed accordingly on the purpose for which they were intended.

## **Procedures**

1. All school-based fees must be provided for input by the parent community and discussed at a school council meeting prior to March 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year, prior to the school year in which the fee becomes effective.
2. Evidence of the discussion described above, by way of a meeting date, must be provided to the Secretary-Treasurer on an annual basis, no later than April 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year, prior to the school year in which the fee becomes effective.
3. Any change in fees must be substantiated by a demonstrated need, clearly outlined in writing, and approved by the Secretary Treasurer prior to presentation to the Board for approval.
4. A summary of all school based fees must be submitted to the Secretary-Treasurer by April 1<sup>st</sup>.
5. A school-by-school Summary of Fees will be presented to the Council of Councils for consultation and input between April 15<sup>th</sup> and May 15<sup>th</sup> prior to consideration by the Board.
6. Once opportunity for parental input has been provided for and received, a school-by-school fee schedule along with a summary schedule will be presented to the Board for approval each year by May 31<sup>st</sup> (or at the last meeting of the month in which the budget must be approved) prior to the start of the school year in which they apply.
7. School-based Fees must not be assessed by schools until approval by the Board is granted. A fee increase of 5% or more, from the previous year, requires Ministerial Approval.
8. All extra-curricular fees, such as athletic team fees, should be communicated to parents and should be limited to operating expenses for the current season of the team.

9. All extra-curricular fees will be shared with the school administration and forwarded to the Secretary-Treasurer as soon as they are set in any given school year. This information will be shared with the Board, as it becomes available.
10. If the fees are not listed on the fee schedule approved by the Board, they shall not be charged at any time in that school year.
11. A School Fee Summary, indicating the MAXIMUM per student fee to be charged during any given school year shall be posted both on the school website and the district website.
12. The Board of Trustees will make the final approval on all fees, except extra-curricular fees.
13. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that all monies collected at the school level are properly accounted for and submitted to the Secretary-Treasurer as directed and by mid-June, thereafter as required to conclude each year's activities.
14. Annual fees for Out-of-Province students will be set by the Board as part of the budget development process.

### **Refund Guidelines**

1. All refunds will be handled at the level the fee was collected – either at the school or the district level.
2. All refunds will be processed via cheque (for fees paid by cash, cheque, or debit card) or by credit to the original credit card used for payment.
3. Refunds will not be issued in cash.
4. Refunds for students leaving will be based upon the annual rate (or the total paid, if amount was prorated due to mid-year start) times 10 percent per month for each remaining month.
5. Refunds will not be processed after April 30<sup>th</sup> in any given year.

### **Procedures**

1. Proof of student withdrawal or reason for individual fee refund is required as part of the documentation.
2. Name, address, and phone number of refund recipient must be recorded on the refund requisition and supporting documentation must also be attached.
3. Refunds should be issued within three weeks of the request (as long as supporting documentation has been provided).

## **Waiver Guidelines**

1. In order to assist families experiencing financial challenges, a waiver program has been in place for many years. Eligibility for a waiver is based on the combined taxable income for each adult (individual who is 18 years old or older) residing at the same address, using information from the most recent income tax return.
2. In extenuating circumstances, the School Principal's recommendation and signature may substitute for tax return information.
3. All requests for waiver of fees must be submitted to the Office of the Secretary Treasurer; forms are posted on-line in both the School Fees and Transportation sections of the district website.

## **Procedures**

1. Complete the Waiver Form for the year in which you are requesting a waiver consideration, using the previous year's tax return information, as indicated on the Waiver Form, include the Notice of Assessment to verify earnings, and submit your request to the Office of the Secretary Treasurer.
2. In extenuating circumstances, particulars should be discussed with the school principal, who may then waive the requirement for financial information to be the basis for the waiver request. In this case, the Waiver Form must be signed by the Principal and then submitted to the Office of the Secretary Treasurer.
3. Waiver decisions will be provided in writing, by the Office of the Secretary Treasurer, within approximately three weeks of September 30<sup>th</sup> of each year, or three weeks after they are submitted following September 30<sup>th</sup>. Copies of all approvals and/or conditional approvals will be provided to the school principal or designate of the associated school(s).
4. Fees associated with Programs of Choice are not considered eligible for a Waiver.
5. Once amounts are sent for collection, the amount is no longer eligible for waiver consideration.
6. Final consideration for waiver requests will be the 1<sup>st</sup> week of December in any given year.
7. All Waiver Requests and accompanying information are kept confidential.

Reference: Bill 1, School Fee Regulation, Board Policy 2 (s.6)

Revision Dates: June 30, 2017