

No Cash...No Problem - Cashless Schools

The Report Card appears weekly and is written by staff, administrators and partners of the Anglophone East School District. This week's column is written by Aubrey Kirkpatrick, Director of Finance and Administration.

In 2012 Anglophone East School District implemented a pilot cashless online payment system called School Cash Online. The system is a simple, secure method for parents to make fee payments with a credit card or e-check and to manage and view the history of their child's school expenses online. Instead of sending cash with children, parents can safely pay online anywhere/anytime for their students. This semester, parents are encouraged to sign up to take advantage of future promotions.

To date over 50% of ASD-E parents have signed on to use this time saving online payment system. There are seven schools that have a system adoption rate of over 70%. Frank L Bowser School has the highest parent adoption rate of 87% which means most of the parents are able to receive information about school events and activities online and able to pay for their student's fees and activities online 24/7.

The primary goal was to improve accountability and provide more security for students and their parents paying fees. The most recent Auditor General's 2015 report reviewed school raised funds in NB. It was estimated that over \$27 million in school raised funds was received annually. In ASD-E the amount of school raised funds reported was \$3,632,492.75 last fiscal year. The Auditor General's report recommends the use of an online revenue collection and school cash computerized system such as ASD-E is using to better safeguard and account for school raised funds

An important secondary goal was to reduce teacher and administrative time spent on managing money and to increase time for important educational matters. Schools are reaping the rewards of time and resource savings with the reduction of coins, cash and cheque handling with event accounting done automatically as payments are received automatically and accounted for in the school accounting system.

Another goal was to improve communications between the school and home by automatically emailing parents of upcoming events and activities while providing them the convenience to choose to pay online.

From the parents' point of view, the system is very easy to use. Parents can easily sign up by going to the school website to register. Once they've signed up, logged in and found their child's school and profile, they can see what fees are payable, with explanations on what the money is for. Parents are saying "It was very easy to register and the convenience to pay online and keep track of fees is great." ASD-E is encouraging all parents to register and go cashless this school year.

Last fiscal year ASD-E had over \$650,000 in school raised funds paid online; 84% paid by credit card and 16% paid by e-check. For the first two weeks of September 2015 approximately \$187,000 was collected online, meaning that amount of cash and coins did not filter through students, teacher and administrator hands and went directly into the bank account and was credited to the right project accounts at the school automatically.

Principal Nick Mattatall of Bessborough School said, "This system improves our communication home by automatically emailing parents of upcoming events and activities while providing them the convenience to choose to pay online for items their children are involved in and earn reward miles or other incentives at the same time."

According to Mattatall, there's more security and convenience for parents, and school finances are easier to track electronically, "I am a big fan of the system. We have integrated the school cash register so that has been another bonus, as receipts are printed instantly, teachers no longer handle cash, and all money is kept in one secure locked location with minimal access, thereby significantly reducing the risk of theft." It is important to note that the new system is optional for parents.

For more information, or to sign up proceed to <https://district2.schoolcashionline.com> or click School Payments Online on any Anglophone East School website.