
Guidelines for School Supplies and Student Fees**June 4, 2013****Rationale:**

It is recognized that August/September is a very expensive time for our school families with the beginning of school and the purchase of supplies, clothing, and the payment of student fees. It is also the time when sports programs begin in schools and the community, and many community organizations for youth start up after the summer break.

Each school in the three Education Centres was asked for information on school supplies and student fees, and the differences were great. With the amalgamation of the Districts and some questions that came forward last fall, the Superintendent discussed with the DEC the need for some guiding principles for schools and this was supported. In May, three focus groups were held (elementary, middle, high) and each group had school administrators, members of Parent School Support Committees\DEC representatives. The focus groups were facilitated by the Senior Education Officers, Jenny MacDougall (St. Stephen Centre), Paul Smith (Hampton Centre), Debbie Thomas (Saint John Centre) and Acting Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Sheila Murray. Each focus group examined Policy 132 of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Contribution of Resources by Parents), and examined the data collected from each school.

The focus groups feel that it is important to respect each school's autonomy to make decisions regarding school supplies and fees based on knowing their families and the community. It is recognized that no student goes without, as schools always reach out to support those in need, and are to be commended for doing so.

Guiding Principles for School Supplies:

1. It is important for all educators, school administrative assistants and PSSC's to be familiar with Policy 132 (Contributions of Resources by Parents). Parents should be provided with information on this Policy as well, perhaps a link to it on the school web site, reference made to it on the annual school supplies/fees list.
2. Principals should provide information to their PSSC annually about the process followed in establishing supply lists/purchasing of supplies. Once established, the lists should be presented to the PSSC at the May or June meeting and feedback sought.

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3. Schools should consider the best method for the purchase of supplies; a fee for the bulk purchase, parents purchase from a list, or a combination. It may be possible to survey parents for their feedback through the winter months.
4. It is important for grade levels to work together (Prime and FI) on common grade level lists of supplies required so there is consistency. It is a good practice to cost the list to give consistency within a school.
5. The list is typically sent home at the end of June, and should then be posted on the school web site for easy summer access by families.
6. Specific brand names should not be requested.
7. In June, schools should encourage re-using and recycling of supplies from one year to the next; supplies do not need to be new.
8. Schools should consider the possibility of families having the option to purchase specific items throughout the school year, especially items used to replenish such as pens, pencils, notebooks, loose leaf. It is recognized that often items are less expensive in August/September.

Guiding Principles for School Fees:

1. The school fee amount should be reviewed by the PSSC at their May/June meeting with the Principal explaining the process followed in establishing the fee and a breakdown of the specific costs that make up the fee. If the PSSC feel that amount is too high, it may mean a paring down of activities.
2. A one-time fee is preferred by families so they do not have to send money each time there is a special activity.
3. It is important to have the month of September to pay the fee, and it is beneficial to families, if schools can offer a family payment plan, or the option of paying in installments.
4. Schools should itemize for families what the fee covers – e.g. the cost of a special speaker, trip costs etc. It should not cover contributions to charitable fund raisers, and should focus on initiatives benefitting the entire student body.
5. Course fees should be advertised – e.g. Advanced Placement Exams and Outdoor Pursuits with detailed information on the costs of trips that go above and beyond normal curricular funding.
6. It is recognized that school fees can vary depending on the items covered and the population. It also should be communicated that schools are always looking for ways to reduce costs and find efficiencies.