

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

Background

Section 82 (3) of the *School Act* authorizes a Board of Education to levy fees for goods and services provided by the board. This authorization is subject to Section 82 (4) of the Act, which requires a board to have “established policies and procedures to facilitate participation by students of school age ordinarily resident in British Columbia who would otherwise be excluded from the course, class or program because of financial hardship.”

Definitions

“**Curricular**” means of or pertaining to courses or activities directly relating to prescribed learning outcomes outlined by the Ministry of Education

“**Co-curricular**” means of or pertaining to activities that, while not required, are intended to enhance the prescribed learning outcomes outlined by the Ministry of Education (e.g. field trips, band concerts, debating clubs, etc.)

“**Extra-curricular**” means of or pertaining to activities that do not have as their primary focus the prescribed learning outcomes outlined by the Ministry of Education (e.g. international trips at spring break, athletic teams, school dances, etc.)

Regulations

1. There will be no course fees for any ministry, board-authorized, distributed learning, summer school or course challenge curriculum.
2. No fees may be charged for goods and services which a student needs in order to meet the required prescribed learning outcomes of an educational program, with the following exceptions:
 - 2.1. A school may charge fees for the purchase or rental of a musical instrument for a student's personal use.
 - 2.2. A school may charge a student enrolled in a specialty academy fees relating to the direct cost incurred by the school in providing the specialty academy that are in addition to the costs of providing a standard educational program.
 - 2.3. A school may charge fees for the purchase or rental of tools, equipment and materials necessary for a student's participation in a trades program.
3. Access to the goods and services outlined in Regulations 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, as well as to co-curricular programs and opportunities is available to all students. No student is to be denied that access because of financial hardship.

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4. Schools will have in place procedures for ensuring reasonable access for all students wishing to participate in curricular and co-curricular activities.
5. Schools are not obligated to provide access to programs and activities which are extra-curricular in nature. In such cases, application of this administrative procedure would not be relevant.
 - 5.1. While it is not obligatory for schools to waive fees or costs associated with extra-curricular activities, schools are encouraged to facilitate the access of those experiencing financial hardship to participate in such extra-curricular activities.

Procedures

1. All communication with students and/or parents regarding fees and deposits must include a statement that explains that fees will not be a barrier to student participation in school activities.
2. Schools will publish, at the beginning of each school year, a schedule of fees and deposits. This schedule shall include reference to the procedures that can be followed by students, or parents on behalf of students, who would otherwise be excluded from the course, class or activity because of financial hardship.
3. Schools will establish a hardship application process that is clear to students and parents. All staff members should be aware of this financial hardship provision and be able to advise students and parents with regard to access.
4. The procedures for addressing financial hardship must be clearly communicated to parents and students and should be conveyed in such media as the student handbook, the parent handbook, student planners, newsletters and/or the school's website.
5. The hardship application process may be formal or informal. The process must always, however, respect an individual's privacy and dignity and adhere to strict principles of confidentiality and fairness.
6. All requests for support will be considered by the school. The school should consider, but not be limited to, the following options: deferred payment, payment over time, partial waiver or full waiver.

Reference: *School Act, Section 82*