

FINANCE

Policy 602-R (previously Policy 802-R)

Charges for Goods and Services

The purpose of this regulation is to clarify the charges that schools may make for goods and services and to provide a process to ensure that students are not excluded from participation in school activities due to financial hardship.

Section 82(1) of the School Act requires a Board to "provide free of charge to every student of school age resident in British Columbia and enrolled in an educational program in a school operated by the board ... educational resource materials necessary to participate in the educational program," but Section 82(3) of the School Act states that "a board may charge fees for goods and services provided by the board."

The School Regulation (BC Reg 265/89) provides the following definitions of "educational resource materials" and "goods and services" to aid in the interpretation of these requirements.

Educational resource materials means (a) information, represented or stored in a variety of media formats, that is used for instruction in an educational program including, without limitation, the materials referred to in section 3 of Ministerial Order 333/99, the Educational Program Guide Order, and (b) materials and equipment necessary to meet the learning outcomes or assessment requirements of an educational program provided by the board.

Educational resource materials does not include (a) paper, writing tools, calculators other than graphical calculators, student planners, exercise books, computers used for distributed learning, computer storage media and other school supplies and equipment for student personal use, and (b) appropriate personal clothing for school activities such as gym strip, footwear, outerwear and personal safety equipment.

Goods and services means, but is not limited to, (a) materials and equipment of a nature, or of a quality or quantity, beyond that which is necessary to meet the required learning outcomes or assessment requirements of an educational program provided by the board, (b) paper, writing tools, calculators other than graphical calculators, student planners, exercise books, computer storage media and other school supplies and equipment for a student's personal use, (c) REPEALED ... (d) the payment of expenses, including expenses for transportation, accommodation, meals, entrance fees and equipment rentals, in respect of optional field trips or special events that are not necessary to meet the required learning outcomes or assessment requirement of an educational program provided by a board."

I. Charges for Materials Taken Home and Rental of Instruments

1. Subject to section 82 of the School Act, the Board will not charge for educational resource materials without which a student could not meet required learning outcomes or assessment requirements.
2. Students may be charged for paper, writing tools, calculators (other than graphical calculators), student planners, exercise books, computer diskettes storage media, and other school supplies and equipment for a student's personal use.

In order to minimize the expense of basic school supplies for families, the board will offer a bulk purchase program to parents for school supplies for elementary students. If a family is unable to pay for these supplies due to financial hardship they will be provided to the child free of charge. To create a safe, supportive and inclusive environment in the elementary classroom, basic school supplies will be provided to all students as required throughout the year from a common supply rather than provided to students individually at the time of purchase.

3. The Board expects that students will attend school with:
 - (a) appropriate personal clothing for school activities (e.g. gym strip, footwear, outerwear aprons); and
 - (b) personal safety equipment (e.g. safety boots and gloves).
4. Students will not be required to pay fees for basic materials for projects necessary to meet learning outcomes or assessment requirements (e.g. in woodwork, cooking, textiles) but may be charged for materials of a quantity or quality beyond that which is necessary to meet the required learning outcomes or which are intended for the student to take home for personal use or as a gift.
5. Subject to Section 82(3) of the School Act, students may provide their own musical instrument where that is necessary or the Board may charge for the purchase or rental of a musical instrument for the student's personal use.

II. Field Trips

The Board may charge for optional field trips. Schools are, however, encouraged to facilitate, whenever possible, the participation of students experiencing financial hardship.

III. Extra-curricular Activities

Students may be charged for participation in extra-curricular activities where goods or services are required. Schools are, however, encouraged to facilitate, whenever possible, the participation of students experiencing financial hardship.

IV. Establishing Annual Fees Schedules of Charges and Deposits

Prior to each school year the Principal, after consultation with teachers and the Parent Advisory Council, will recommend to the Superintendent or designate a schedule of school charges and deposits. The Superintendent or designate will approve the schedule in writing.

V. Financial Hardship

1. Principals are responsible for establishing procedures to facilitate participation in school activities by students who would otherwise be excluded due to financial hardship. Insofar as possible, Principals will consult with teachers, students and parents in the development of such procedures.
2. The procedure must incorporate the principles of fairness, respect, dignity, confidentiality and sensitivity. Student, parents and staff will be advised of the procedure.

3. All communications with students and parents regarding charges must include a statement explaining that charges will not be a barrier to student participation in school activities. No student will be denied Ministry mandated educational opportunities offered at the school due to financial hardship.
4. In secondary schools, the statement explaining that no student will be denied participation in Ministry mandated educational opportunities offered at the school will be published along with the fee schedule of charges in the school course selection handbook. The procedure for addressing financial hardship will also be included in the handbook.

VI. Summer School / Night School / Continuing Education

As part of the Continuing Education program, the Board may make available optional courses of study outside the standard school schedule. Except for those courses funded by the Ministry of Education, the Board will charge those who wish to participate to cover its costs.