

Frequently Asked Questions

Guideline for Fees for Learning Materials and Activities

1. What is meant by “required to complete the curriculum expectations of a particular grade or course”?

In each subject, the curriculum expectations identify what a student should know and be able to do at the end of the grade or course.

Students are expected to demonstrate their learning and must be evaluated on their achievement of the overall expectations in each grade or course. It is expected that materials required by students to demonstrate their learning and meet the curriculum expectations in a particular grade or course will be provided.

2. Can fees be charged for musical instruments? Can you provide some examples of enhanced materials in music or other courses that would be eligible for a fee?

There must be a no-fee option available for students who wish to enrol in these courses or programs to ensure they have access to the materials required to meet the learning expectations of the grade or course. For example, as part of a music course, sufficient instruments and required materials must be available at no cost for student use during the class although the type of instrument and the variety of instruments are at the discretion of the school and board.

Fees may be charged for enhanced materials that are voluntary enrichments beyond what is necessary to meet the curriculum expectations. For example, in a photography course, the school may provide cameras and paper for general use to meet the learning expectations; however, students may choose to bring their own camera, rent a higher grade camera or use higher grade paper for a fee.

Where fees are appropriate they should be minimized as much as possible, with the goal of supporting student participation in programs and activities regardless of individual economic circumstances.

Schools may recover the costs for the replacement or repair of lost, damaged or broken materials such as textbooks, library books, music or science supplies or any loaned materials. These charges should not exceed the replacement or repair cost.

3. Can schools charge fees for field trips? What about in-class field-trips?

Field trips, co-curricular activities, special events and program enhancements (e.g. admission fees, rental of equipment or travel) may be eligible for fee charges if alternative programming and assignments are offered to students who do not participate or where the topic being covered is not a mandatory element of the subject or course. The fees guideline notes as a best practice for principals to minimize, where possible, costs related to enhanced programming and materials (for example, speakers, dance instructors, in-class field trips) that are optional to a course.

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4. Are activity fees voluntary?

Student activity fees are voluntary amounts that are used to supplement a student's school experience through materials and activities such as student agendas, student recognition programs, yearbooks, extracurricular activities, school dances, or theme days.

Examples of inappropriate collection practices include denying students timetables, access to the library or a locker for non-payment of a fee.

5. Can schools charge fees for consumables such as workbooks? Can a school charge a student a flat fee for printing/photocopying?

Fees cannot be charged for workbooks or for printing or photocopying of materials required to meet the curriculum expectations of the course. Fees cannot be charged for:

- Learning materials that are required for completion of the curriculum such as workbooks, cahiers, musical instruments, art supplies, science supplies, lab material kits and safety goggles;
- Learning materials that are essential to meet the curriculum expectations of the course, but are consumed by the student and cannot be used again by another student in the next semester, e.g., a chemical used in a chemistry experiment.

The Ministry of Education provides funding for workbooks and classroom supplies as part of the Pupil Foundation Grant.

6. What is optional programming? Can fees be charged for these programs?

Optional programming is a course or activity that students choose to attend, normally through an application process, with the knowledge that these programs are beyond the provincially mandated curriculum. Examples may include Advanced Placement® and Hockey Canada Skills Academy programs.

A fee charge is permissible for optional programming as it is a voluntary upgrade.

7. Can schools ask for textbook deposits?

Textbook deposits for students enrolled in day school programs are not permissible. The *Education Act* requires that resident pupils are entitled to attend a day school program without payment of a fee.

Schools may recover the costs for the replacement or repair of lost, damaged or broken materials such as textbooks, library books, music or science supplies or any loaned materials. These charges should not exceed the replacement or repair cost.

8. Can fees be charged for school or gym uniforms?

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The fees guideline applies to learning materials and activities only. Fees may be charged for school and gym uniforms. Where fees are appropriate, they should be minimized as much as possible, with the goal of supporting student participation in programs and activities regardless of individual economic circumstances.

The Ministry does not prescribe uniforms or a specific dress code. School boards and local school communities know best their own needs and priorities about what is considered appropriate for students to wear when they are at school. The Ministry requires boards' policies and procedures to allow a majority of parents, through their school councils, to recommend guidelines for appropriate dress.

9. What supplies are parents expected to provide? What about “recommended lists” that are sent home by teachers often for primary grade classes?

The Ministry provides funding through the Pupil Foundation Grant for classroom supplies. Classrooms should be stocked with the materials necessary for students to meet the curriculum expectations of a particular course or grade. Fees cannot be charged for learning materials that are required for the completion of the curriculum. Each school board or school has discretion in the assortment of supplies selected to meet those curriculum expectations.

Parent and/or guardians may be asked to provide clothing, footwear and supplies not curricular in nature such as pencil cases, pencils, pens, paper, rulers or binders. If a student does not have the necessary supplies, schools should ensure that each student has what he or she needs to complete the activity or assignment.

Schools and/or teachers may provide parents with suggested items to add to classroom materials. However the purchase of these materials and/or the fee charge related to any purchases is completely voluntary. All materials required to meet the learning expectations of the course or grade must be provided without payment of a fee.

10. Can schools collect additional amounts to cover the costs of students that cannot afford to pay to attend a field trip or activity?

Additional voluntary amounts can be collected for this purpose. The fee charge including any additional amount is voluntary. Accounting for the use of these amounts should be part of the financial reporting to the community.