

CODE: HNB.AR

EFFECTIVE DATE: (29-01-2020)

TOPIC: School Fees

ISSUE DATE: (29-01-2020)

REVIEW YEAR: (2024)

OBJECTIVE

To assist the Division in its obligation to adhere with Board Policies, Administrative Regulations and current legislation for the setting, and the collection of school fees.

DEFINITIONS

School Fee is a charge to parents that is set on a cost-recovery basis for students to receive a good or service.

Fees for instructional supplies and materials (e.g., a workbook used in the classroom) include services, supports and materials required for a student to be successful in meeting curricular outcomes. Schools are legislatively prohibited from charging for these types of fees.

Fees for enhanced educational services (e.g., an alternative program fee, field trips) include services, supports and materials that are not required to meet curriculum related outcomes but are provided to enhance the student's learning opportunities.

Fees for non-curricular supplies, materials and services (e.g., an agenda) are for optional activities or materials outside of the educational mandate of the Division.

Refundable Deposit fees (e.g., textbooks) are charged to parents and are reimbursed when the goods are returned in satisfactory condition at the end of a specified period.

RESPONSIBILITY

The principal shall be responsible for:

- setting school fees in accordance with Board Policies, Administrative Regulations, and current legislation;
- consulting with the parent community in setting school fees;
- communicating the school fees that will be charged to parents;
- documenting the rationale for why a fee is being charged and maintaining supporting documents for the amount charged;
- ensuring fees are connected to a specific good or service and used for the purpose for which they were collected; and
- overseeing the process a parent has to follow to request that a fee or cost be waived or refunded.

The Division believes in empowering those most closely affected by a decision to play a significant role in making those decisions. As such the decision to waive or refund a school fee normally resides with the principal.

However, if a parent is denied a request to waive or refund a fee, the principal is responsible for ensuring that parents are aware of and have access to the Division's dispute resolution process.

Financial Services shall be responsible for ensuring that fees charged align with Board Policy, Administrative Regulations and legislation by conducting internal audits of school fees on a regularly scheduled basis.

REGULATION

ESTABLISHING SCHOOL FEES

1. Schools shall not charge fees for instructional supplies and materials, including textbooks, workbooks, photocopying and printing or paper.
2. Schools may assess specific fees for enhanced educational services. The types of acceptable fees for enhanced educational services are outlined in the Division's Guide to School Fees.
3. Schools may not assess a generic (blanket) fee to a grade or cohort where there is no indication as to what the fee is being charged for or how it is being spent.
4. Schools must communicate all fees to parents, including a detailed description of what the fee being charged is for.
5. Schools may offer to sell non-curricular supplies, materials and services provided that:
 - a. the good or service offered for sale may be purchased on an individual basis;
 - b. the good or service offered for sale is optional to families and students;
 - c. the fee charged does not exceed the direct cost of the good or service.
6. Junior high and high schools may implement a refundable textbook deposit.
7. School fees charged shall be individually itemized and accounted for separately from other fees.
8. The principal shall ensure that all parents who have paid their fees are provided a receipt.

PROCESS FOR SCHOOL FEE WAIVERS AND REFUNDS

Board Policy CO.BP Fiscal Oversight and Accountability, states the following: *"While the Board recognizes the need to charge specific fees, economic circumstances shall not be a barrier to a student's access to curricular outcomes."*

1. The principal may waive, reduce or refund any school fee on an individual student basis. The school shall be responsible for covering any costs resulting from the waiver and shall maintain a record of the amount and circumstances of the waiver. Further information on the waiver and refund process can also be found in the Guide to School Fees and on the Alternate Payment or Refund Request form.
2. Parents experiencing circumstances that impact their ability to pay school fees may request an Alternate Payment form to reduce their fees.

3. Principals choosing to pursue the non-payment of school fees with parents shall follow the Division non-payment protocol available on Staff Room.
4. The principal shall maintain an annual summary of information about revenues received for school fees, including a cost to the school's instructional budget for the provision of fee waivers.
5. Fees for services provided over time (for example student council membership) are assessed and refunded on a prorated basis.

REFERENCES

CO.BP Fiscal Oversight and Accountability
Alternate Payment or Refund Request form
Division dispute resolution process
Division Guide to School Fees
Division non-payment protocol (*StaffRoom*)