

STATEMENT ON REQUESTING FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PARENTS

POLICY OWNER: Director, Finance and Corporate Support

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This statement provides information and advice on circumstances where it is appropriate to seek financial contributions from parents.

2. General Principles

- 2.1 Section 26 of the *Education Act 2004* stipulates that education is to be free and no fees are chargeable for it.
- 2.2 Section 27 of the *Education Act 2004* provides for the school board of a government school to ask the parents of a child enrolled at the school, or anyone else, to make a voluntary financial contribution to the school.
- 2.3 For the purposes of this statement free education is considered to be based on the following principles.
- All students should have free access to government school facilities to meet curriculum requirements during prescribed hours.
 - All students should have access to the school curriculum regardless of their capacity to pay.
 - All students should have free access to student support services available in government schools.
- 2.4 Parents can be expected to pay for some optional enrichment activities.
- 2.5 Student support funds are maintained in all government schools to support the needs of students who might not otherwise be in a position to take advantage of the opportunities provided by their schools.
- 2.6 Section 39 of the *Education Act 2004* stipulates that school boards have a responsibility in developing, maintaining and reviewing the curriculum for their school. Therefore the responsibility resides with school boards to decide what constitutes optional enrichment activities.

3. Voluntary Contributions

- 3.1 Under section 27 of the *Education Act 2004*, the following principles apply in relation to financial contributions:
- a) each contribution is voluntary
 - b) a child at the school is not refused benefits or services because the child's parent does not make a contribution
 - c) a child is not approached or harassed for contributions
 - d) any record of contributions is confidential.
- 3.2 If the school board seeks a financial contribution from the parents of a child enrolled at the school, the board must inform the parents about the principles that apply in relation to financial contributions.

Financial Contributions from Parents – Statement

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- 3.3 All communications to parents must inform them of the voluntary nature of contributions and whether the contributions suggested are for general or specific purposes. Terms such as 'fees' or 'levies' should not be used in making requests for voluntary contributions.
- 3.4 Requests for voluntary contributions should emphasise the benefits of increased resources for their child's school and encourage financial support.
- 3.5 Schools should be as specific as possible about what the voluntary contribution will be used for.
- 3.6 Individual records of voluntary contributions are confidential and access to that information should be limited to those officers administering the collection and accounting for contributions. This should be done through relevant school staff under the supervision and/or direction of the principal.
- 3.7 Schools should offer parents the opportunity to pay voluntary contributions by instalments where possible. There should be no financial disincentive in paying by instalments.
- 3.8 Requested contributions can be for additional resources in general, to support specific subjects or assist the school in the provision of specific activities and services.
- 3.9 In seeking voluntary contributions schools should give parents as much notice as possible.
- 3.10 Section 52 of the *Education Act 2004* requires that the annual report of the school board must include a statement of how voluntary contributions made to the school have been or will be spent.

4. Optional parent supported items, activities and services

- 4.1 Schools may offer or facilitate some specific optional items, activities and services for which parents may be required to pay if they want their child to access them. A list of these items, activities and services is included at Schedule One of this document.
- 4.2 A short statement about optional items, activities and services for which parents may be required to pay should be provided in school handbooks, websites and general information provided to parents.
- 4.3 In seeking payment for optional items, activities and services, schools should approach parents as early as possible.
- 4.4 Schools should be as specific as possible about what the payment will be used for.
- 4.5 Schools should offer parents the opportunity to pay for optional items, activities and services by instalments where possible. There should be no financial disincentive in paying by instalments.
- 4.6 Schools may require parents to provide refundable deposits to be lodged with the school in order to protect any significant items of government property that are loaned for use outside the school.
- 4.7 Individual records of payments for optional items, activities and services are confidential and access to that information should be limited to those officers administering the collection and accounting for

contributions. This should be done through relevant school staff under the supervision and/or direction of the principal.

5. Student Support Fund

- 5.1 Principals will inform their communities of the existence and purpose of the Student Support Fund and the procedures parents should follow to request financial support.
- 5.2 Schools will at all times respect the confidentiality and privacy of students and their families in accessing student support funds.

SCHEDULE ONE

Optional parent supported items, activities and services

Schools may offer or facilitate some specific optional items, activities and services for which parents may be required to pay if they want their child to access them. These are as follows:

- All international excursions
- Camps and excursions that are not essential to, but enrich, curriculum outcomes
- All school trips conducted during school holidays
- Hire/lease of musical instruments which involves use outside of the school environment
- Hire/lease of major items of equipment (eg interactive technology and outdoor education equipment) which involves use outside of the school environment
- Academic competitions
- High level sporting competitions (eg state representation, interstate competitions)
- Activities provided by external providers that are not essential to, but enrich, curriculum outcomes
- Attendance at public performances of school productions outside of school hours
- Graduation dinners/formals
- Hire of school lockers
- End of year school magazine / yearbook / memorabilia
- Class and individual photos
- Religious instruction materials
- Canteen services
- Internet access for recreational and non-school use
- Private tutoring
- Water safety and swimming programs
- School uniforms (including sporting and band uniforms)