

**Responses to Questions about Fees and Supplies from the Elementary School  
Principals Curriculum Update Meeting of March 6, 2009**

1. Can schools charge for agenda books or planners? Can they be considered organizational items for students to purchase?

*Response:* A local school may decide to charge students for agenda books if all of the following apply:

- The agenda book or planner is not required and a student may use an alternative organizational item provided by the parent.
- The agenda book or planner is not used as part of a student's grade.
- The agenda book or planner is not used as a hall pass.

A statement has been developed and will be sent to schools to communicate with parents on this topic.

2. Will there be standard letters created by central office staff that schools may use to communicate with parents? For instance, will there be a standard letter requesting supplies from parents?

*Response:* Yes, a standard letter communicating the changes to the existing practices regarding elementary school fees and supplies will be distributed to principals with translations provided at the end of April.

3. Will there be a designated maximum amount of money that can be charged for a fee?

*Response:* Fees may be charged for items required for instruction or for demonstrating mastery of the curriculum, only if at least one of the following applies:

- The fee covers ingredients used to make items eaten by the student.
- The fee covers materials needed to make a product that becomes the personal property of the student (for example, an art project).
- The fee covers items of personal use that become the property of the student for reasons of personal hygiene (for example, a music recorder).

Any allowable fee must be for the cost of the item only. No overcharge may be assessed to paying students to offset the costs absorbed by the school for students who are unable to pay (see information below regarding waiver form).

4. Is collecting a grade level fee for supplies, such as kindergarten, allowed?

*Response:* No. School supplies are defined as building or office materials needed to operate schools (e.g., paper towels, mops, etc.). It is the school's responsibility to provide school supplies, and no fee should be assessed or collected.

Students may be expected to bring individual organizational tools and personal supplies from home. Schools have been provided guidelines for developing and communicating those lists.

5. Can teachers collect fees at the beginning of the school year for class activities that will take place throughout year?

*Response:* A general fee cannot be charged; fees need to be specific. However, if a class activity is voluntary and an appropriate alternative is provided for students who do not choose to participate, a fee may be charged. If the class activity is required for instruction or for demonstrating mastery of the curriculum, a fee may not be charged unless at least one of the following applies:

- The fee covers ingredients used to make items eaten by the student .
- The fee covers materials needed to make a product that becomes the personal property of the student (for example, an art project).
- The fee covers items of personal use that become the property of the student for reasons of personal hygiene (for example, a music recorder).

6. Are field trips governed by the course-related fees guidelines?

*Response:* No. Students may be charged fees for transportation and other costs related to a field trip, if participation is voluntary and an appropriate alternative is provided for students who choose not to participate. The amount charged should be the expense (bus, admission, etc.) divided by the number of students expected to attend. The final student cost may be rounded to the nearest dollar for ease of collection. No overcharge may be assessed to paying students to offset the costs absorbed by the school for students who are unable to pay.

7. In the guidelines, crayons and glue sticks are listed under Materials of Instruction and also under Individual Student Organizational Tools & Personal Supplies. Is this a conflict?

*Response:* No. Local schools must consider how the items will be used and decide how to list them, in accordance with the guidelines provided. In some instances, they may fall under both categories.

For example, items such as crayons and/or glue sticks may be considered either “Materials of Instruction” or “Individual Student Personal Supplies,” depending on their use:

- If use of a crayon or glue stick is necessary for an educator to deliver the curriculum or necessary for the student to demonstrate mastery of the curriculum, it is considered a “Material of Instruction” and must be provided in class sets.
- If the crayons or glue sticks are being used by student choice to accomplish a task in one of the multiple methods available, and the student prefers to use personal materials, then the crayons and glue sticks may be considered “Individual Personal Supplies” and

brought to school by the students as part of his/her individual organizational tools and personal supplies.

8. Must three-ring binders, composition books, and loose-leaf paper be provided by the school?

*Response:* Three-ring binders and loose-leaf paper have been added to the list of Individual Student Personal Supplies. For composition books, local schools must consider how they will be used and decide how to list them, as described in the response to #7 above.

9. Can we require students to bring in items for shared usage in the class? For example, can we require students to bring in multiple boxes of tissues?

*Response:* No. It is the school's responsibility to provide school supplies, defined as building or office materials needed to operate schools. Tissues are included in this category. However, parent donations of items that enhance the classroom experience may be suggested, but not required. This includes donations from individual parents, organized by class parents, and organized or donated by the PTA.

10. If a student loses a required textbook, can the student be charged an obligation?

*Response:* Yes. When a student has lost, destroyed or damaged a book that the school has assigned to the student, a financial obligation is incurred.

11. Can fees be charged for snacks and cooking supplies for students?

*Response:* If items are required for instruction or needed to demonstrate mastery of the curriculum, a fee may not be charged unless it covers the cost of ingredients that will be used to produce an item the student will eat. A fee may be charged for ingredients or snacks used in an activity unrelated to instruction or assessment and only if students choose to participate.

12. Can schools still collect class party fees? Can parents be asked for donations to help pay for students who cannot afford to pay the class party fees?

*Response:* Class party fees are not related to the curriculum. Such fees are a local school decision, in collaboration with parent leadership. Schools must consider carefully what consequences, if any, a student faces if that student does not pay a party fee. Schools may request donations for class parties, if parent leaders agree.

13. How should we manage periodicals, such as *Time for Kids*?

*Response:* If a periodical is required for instruction or to demonstrate mastery, a fee may not be charged and the periodical must be provided in a class set or individually to all students. If a periodical is not required and is only suggested as a resource to have for independent reading or reference, students may purchase the item. Schools must consider carefully what

consequences, if any, a student faces if that student does not have the periodical. In some instances, PTAs want to pay for periodicals and they may do so.