



**Our Students
Our Community
Our Future**

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 34 (Abbotsford)

2790 Tims Street, Abbotsford, B.C. V2T 4M7

Des McKay
Superintendent of Schools
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January 24, 2007

Dear Parents:

As you may be aware, an issue before all school districts in the Province is the recent court ruling regarding the charging of school fees. The court ruled that school districts cannot charge a fee for "materials or activities that are required for students to successfully complete a course leading to graduation." While there is still considerable uncertainty as to the legal and practical effect of the decision, the District is working to understand the implications of the decision and to fully comply with the direction provided by the court. The District is committed to ensuring that any fees are proper, reasonable and consistent for families, recognizing that certain fees make possible many programming opportunities for students that would be otherwise impossible. The District will also continue with its long-standing practice of waiving fees for students who require financial support.

A complicating factor is the fact that this decision occurred after school was underway and many programming commitments had been made. The direction the District is providing to schools is intended to guide practice for the remainder of the school year so that current course offerings are affected as little as possible. It may well be that this direction will need to be modified for the next school year, once there is a better understanding of the impact of the judgment on school programs.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Program Fees:

These charges will not be continued. Students may expect to see some adjustment in activities and opportunities as a result. School supplies (e.g. pens, paper, exercise books, PE strip, etc.) remain the responsibility of the parents. A fee may be charged for a student planner but it cannot be used for marks or to meet curricular outcomes.

Field Trips:

Where a field trip is an enrichment activity and student attendance is not mandatory, there may be a charge to cover expenses. Students who do not participate in the field trip will be provided with alternative activities related to the field trip learning outcomes. Where participation in the field trip is necessary in order to meet student learning outcomes or assessment requirements, no charge will be required. Expectations regarding safety, student conduct and activity implementation will remain in effect for all field trips.

Band / Music Programs:

Band and music programs are full-year programs where commitments were made in September. Schools do not currently have the capacity to provide musical instruments for all students who participate in elementary band and music programs. This year, the financial arrangements and expectations schools and parents put in place in September will remain for the duration of the school year. The district will be reviewing its options in consultation with parents regarding the continuation of our elementary band programs.

Textbooks and Workbooks:

Educational resource materials such as textbooks and workbooks are provided without a fee; however, a deposit may be charged for a textbook or a workbook and the return of the deposit would be subject to its being returned in a condition suitable for reuse.

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Program Fees: (i.e. Explorations: Home Economics, Fine Arts, Technology, Band, Computer Studies)

Program fees will no longer be charged. Students may expect to see some adjustment in activities and opportunities as a result. School supplies (i.e. pens, paper, binders, etc.) remain the responsibility of the parents.

Activity Fees / Extra-Curricular Fees / Locker Fees:

Student activity fees, fees for extra-curricular activities and fees for lockers continue to be permitted. Student planners may be included in an activity fee and cannot be used for marks.

Field Trips:

Where a field trip is an enrichment activity and student attendance is not mandatory, there may be a charge to cover expenses. Students who do not participate in the field trip will be provided with alternative activities related to the field trip learning outcomes. Where participation in the field trip is necessary in order to meet student learning outcomes or assessment requirements, no charge will be required. Expectations regarding safety, student conduct and activity implementation will remain in effect for all field trips.

Band / Music Programs:

Band and music programs are full-year programs where commitments were made in September. Schools do not currently have the capacity to provide musical instruments for all students who participate in band programs in our district. This year, the financial arrangements and expectations schools and parents put in place in September will

remain for the duration of the school year. The district will be reviewing its options with parents regarding the continuation of our middle school band programs.

Textbooks and Workbooks:

Educational resource materials such as textbooks and workbooks are provided without a fee; however, a deposit may be charged for a textbook or a workbook and the return of the deposit would be subject to its being returned in a condition suitable for reuse.

Materials Required to Complete Assignments

Schools will provide materials required to complete basic projects in order to meet learning outcomes or assessment requirements for a course (e.g. lumber for Woodworking or fabric for Textiles). Students have the option to bring their own materials from home or purchase material for school if they wish to do a particular project and use a different or better quality material.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Course Fees:

Course fees will no longer be charged. Students may expect to see some adjustment in activities and opportunities as a result. School supplies (e.g. pens, paper, exercise books, PE strip, etc.) remain the responsibility of the parents.

Activity Fees / Extra Curricular Fees / Locker Fees / Parking Fees / Graduation Fees:

Student activity fees, fees for extra-curricular activities and fees for lockers, parking and graduation continue to be permitted. Student planners may be included in an activity fee and cannot be used for marks.

Field Trips:

Where a field trip is an enrichment activity and student attendance is not mandatory, there may be a charge to cover expenses. Students who do not participate in the field trip will be provided with alternative activities related to the field trip learning outcomes. Where participation in the field trip is necessary in order to meet student learning outcomes or assessment requirements, no charge will be required. Expectations regarding safety, student conduct and activity implementation will remain in effect for all field trips.

Band / Music:

Band and music programs are full-year programs where commitments were made in September. Schools do not currently have the capacity to provide musical instruments for all students who participate in secondary band programs in our district. This year, the financial arrangements and expectations schools and parents put in place in September will remain for the duration of the school year. The district will be reviewing its options with parents regarding the continuation of our secondary band programs.

Textbooks and Workbooks:

Educational resource materials such as textbooks and workbooks are provided without a fee; however, a deposit may be charged for a textbook or a workbook and the return of the deposit would be subject to its being returned in a condition suitable for reuse.

Career Programs – ACE IT:

Career programs are full-year programs where commitments were made in September. The financial arrangements and expectations schools and parents put in place in September will remain for the duration of the school year.

Sports Academies:

Sports academy programs are full-year programs where commitments were made in September. The financial arrangements and expectations parents and schools put in place in September will remain for the duration of the school year. The district will be reviewing its options with parents in order to ensure sports academies comply with statutory requirements.

Materials Required to Complete Assignments

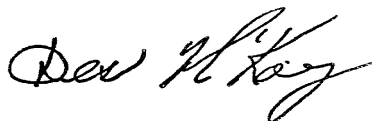
Schools will provide materials required to complete basic projects in order to meet learning outcomes or assessment requirements for a course (e.g. lumber for Woodworking or fabric for Textiles). Students have the option to bring their own materials from home or purchase material for school if they wish to do a particular project and use a different or better quality material.

ONGOING REVIEW

The District recognizes the matter of school fees will require ongoing review and careful planning in order to address the challenge presented by the court ruling. The Board will be consulting with the Ministry of Education, parents, and the community in this regard. The District remains committed to providing rich and varied learning experiences to students and a range of choices to respond to student needs and interests.

If you have specific questions about fees at your school, please contact your school principal.

Sincerely,



Des McKay,
Superintendent