

Fee Waiver Policy

Adopted: January 20, 2016



Purpose

Wallace Stegner Academy (the “School”) must abide by the Utah State Board of Education rules which direct the Board of Education to implement a policy regarding student fees. The rule is authorized under Article X, Sections 2 and 3 of the Utah Constitution, which provides that elementary and secondary schools shall be free except that fees may be imposed in secondary schools as authorized by the Utah State Legislature. Utah state law also allows schools to establish money collection and handling procedures.

The purpose of the Fee Schedule and Fee Waivers are to provide educational opportunities for all students. This allows the School to establish a reasonable system of fees, while prohibiting practices that would exclude those unable to pay from participation in school-sponsored activities.

Policy

Under the direction of the Board of Directors (the “Board”), the School’s principal (the “Principal”) is authorized to administer this policy and to do so fairly, objectively, without delay, avoiding stigma and unreasonable burdens on students or parents/guardians.

Classes & Activities During the Regular School Day

Elementary and secondary students may be required to provide materials for their optional projects, but a student may not be required to select an optional project requiring the student to obtain additional material as a condition for enrolling in or completing a course. Project-related courses must be based upon projects and experiences that are free to all students.

Kindergarten through Sixth Grade

No fee may be charged in kindergarten through sixth grades for materials, textbooks, supplies or for any class or regular school day activity, including assemblies and field trips.

Elementary students cannot be required to provide their own school supplies.

However, the School or teacher may compile and provide to the parent or guardian of students in grades kindergarten through sixth a suggested list of supplies for use during the regular school day so that a parent or guardian may furnish on a voluntary basis

those supplies for student use. The list provided to a student's parent or guardian must include and be preceded by the following language:

"NOTICE: THE ITEMS ON THIS LIST WILL BE USED DURING THE REGULAR SCHOOL DAY. THEY MAY BE BROUGHT FROM HOME ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS, OTHERWISE, THEY WILL BE FURNISHED BY THE SCHOOL."

Seventh through Ninth Grade

Fees may be charged in grades 7-9 for materials, textbooks, supplies or for any class or regular school day activity, including assemblies and field trips.

Fee waivers are available for any class that requires payment of fees or purchase of materials (i.e., tickets to events, etc.) in order for students to participate fully and to have the opportunity to acquire all skills and knowledge required for full credit and highest grades.

Secondary students may be required to provide their own student supplies, subject to the fee waiver provisions.

Activities Outside of the Regular School Day

Fees may be charged in all grades for any school-sponsored activity that does not take place during the regular school day where participation is voluntary and does not affect the student's grade or ability to participate fully in any course taught during the regular school day. Fee waivers are available for such fees.

Activities that use the school facilities outside the regular school day and are not sponsored by the School may require fees (i.e., programs sponsored by the parent organization and/or an outside organization.) Fee waivers are not available for such fees.

General Provisions

The Board will approve a Fee Schedule at least once each year. No fee may be charged in connection with any class or School-sponsored activity, including extracurricular activities, unless the fee has been approved by the Board in the Fee Schedule.

The Principal shall ensure that a written copy of the School's Fee Schedule is included with all registration materials provided to potential or continuing students. The procedures for obtaining the waivers and for appealing a denial of a waiver shall be provided as soon as possible prior to the time the fees become due.

The School will not exclude a student from school to obtain payment of fees or fines.

No present or former student may be denied receipt of unofficial transcripts, diplomas or grade reports for failure to pay school fees or fines.

A reasonable charge may be made to cover the cost of duplicating or mailing transcripts and other school records. No charge may be made for duplicating or mailing copies of school records to an elementary or secondary school in which the student is enrolled or intends to enroll.

Donations or contributions may be solicited and accepted, but all such requests must clearly state that donations and contributions are voluntary. A donation is a fee if a student must make a donation in order to participate in an activity. No student may be excluded from any activity or program connected to the regular school day program because they did not make a donation.

Waivers

To ensure that no student is denied the opportunity to participate in a class or School-sponsored or supported activity because of an inability to pay a fee, the School provides fee waivers or other provisions in lieu of fee waivers as follows:

- The Principal will administer the policy and grant waivers.
- The process for obtaining waivers or pursuing alternatives shall be administered fairly, objectively, and without delay, and avoid stigma and unreasonable burdens on students and parents.
- The Principal will inform patrons of the process for obtaining waivers.
- Students who are granted waivers or provisions in lieu of fee waivers shall not be treated differently from other students or identified to persons who do not need to know of the waiver.
- Fee waivers or other provisions in lieu of fee waivers will be available to any eligible student.
- The Principal will explore with the student and parent/guardian of a student eligible for a fee waiver the alternatives available for satisfying the fee requirement in lieu of waivers, including but not limited to (a) providing tutorial assistance to other students, (b) providing assistance before or after school to teachers and other school personnel on school-related matters, and (c) general community or home service.

Eligibility for Fee Waivers

1. A student is eligible for a fee waiver as follows:
 - a. income verification consistent with Utah Code § 53A-12-103, such as income tax returns or current pay stubs;
 - b. the student receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (only the student who receives the SSI benefit qualifies for fee waivers);

- c. the family receives TANF (currently qualified for financial assistance or food stamps); or
 - d. the student is in state custody or foster care.
2. Supporting documentation is required as follows for each special category listed above:
 - a. For TANF, a letter of decision from Utah Department of Workforce Services covering the period for which the fee waiver is sought;
 - b. For SSI, a benefit verification letter from the Social Security Administration;
 - c. For state custody or foster care, the youth in custody required intake form or school enrollment letter provided by the caseworker from the Utah Division of Child and Family Services or the Utah Juvenile Justice Department.
3. Case-by-case determinations may be made for those who do not qualify under one of the foregoing standards but who are not reasonably capable of paying the fee because of extenuating circumstances including, but not limited to, exceptional financial burdens such as loss of work or substantial reduction of income or extraordinary medical expenses.
4. If a student is eligible for waivers, textbook fees must be waived; no alternative in lieu of a fee waiver is permissible for such fees. However, a student may be offered a work alternative to a waiver for all other kinds of fees. Parents will be given the opportunity to review proposed alternatives to fee waivers.
5. Denial of eligibility for a waiver may be appealed in writing to the Principal within ten (10) school days of receiving notice of denial.
 - a. The School shall contact the parent within two (2) weeks after receiving the appeal and schedule a meeting with the Principal to discuss the parent's concerns.
 - b. If, after meeting with the Principal, the waiver is still denied, the parent may appeal, in writing, within ten (10) school days of receiving notice of denial to the Board.
6. Any requirement that a student pay a fee will be suspended during any period in which the student's eligibility for a waiver is being determined or during the time a denial of waiver is being appealed.

In order to protect privacy and confidentiality, the School will not retain information or documentation provided to verify eligibility for fee waivers.

Items Eligible for Fee Waivers

Any charge, deposit, rental, or other mandatory payment for required student participation in any class, program or activity provided, sponsored or supported by the School are fees requiring approval of the Board and are subject to the fee waiver requirements.

Expenditures for costumes, clothing, and accessories (other than items of typical student dress) which are required for school attendance, participation in choirs, pep clubs, drill teams, athletic teams, bands, orchestras, and other student groups, and expenditures for student travel as part of a school team, student group, or other school-approved trip, are fees subject to the fee waiver provisions of this policy.

Items Not Subject to Waivers

Fee waiver and other provisions in lieu of fee waivers are not available for charges assessed in connection with a student losing or willfully damaging school property.

Charges for yearbooks, picture books, and similar parent organization or vendor-sponsored items that are not required for participation in a class or activity are not fees, and fee waivers are not available for such items.

Fee waivers are not available for student supplies for secondary students if the item is something that is commonly found in students' homes regardless of wealth.

If a student must repeat a course or requires remediation to advance or graduate and a fee is associated with the course or the remediation program, it is presumed that the student will pay the fee.

Collection

The School may pursue reasonable methods for obtaining payment for fees and charges assessed in connection with a student losing or willfully damaging school property.

The School may not exclude students from school or withhold official student records, including written or electronic grade reports, diplomas, or transcripts, in order to collect fees.

The School may withhold the official student records of a student responsible for lost or damaged School property consistent with Utah Code § 53A-11-806 but may not withhold a student's records that would prevent a student from attending school or being properly placed in school.

Consistent with Utah Code § 53A-11-504, the School will forward a certified copy of a transferring student's record to a new school within 30 days of the request, regardless of whether the student owes fees or fines to the School.

Students shall be given notice and an opportunity to pay fines prior to withholding issuance of official written grade reports, diplomas and transcripts. If the student and the student's parent or guardian are unable to pay for damages or if it is determined by the School in consultation with the student's parents that the student's interests would not be served if the parents were to pay for the damages, then the School may provide for a program of voluntary work for the student in lieu of the payment. A general breakage fee levied against all students in a class or school is not permitted.

Refunds

Student fees are non-refundable.

School Fee Collections & Accounting Procedures

It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that all student fees collected are in compliance with the Fee Schedule and applicable financial policies and procedures.

Fees must be received and deposited in a timely manner.

Money may only be collected by staff authorized by the Principal.

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