

Fact Sheet on School Fees for 2017-2018

Earlier this Spring, Elk Island Catholic Schools (EICS) announced that we would be using funds directed by the Alberta Government as part of Bill 1 and announced in Budget 2017, which is intended to reduce school fees for parents. Since EICS has never charged fees for eligible transportation and all fees for Basic Education were eliminated in the 2016-17 school year, this new funding of \$474,000 will provide EICS the ability to further ease the financial burden for our families in the following ways:

- EICS will no longer require parents to supply basic school supplies for their students other than a backpack, gym attire and one-to-one technology device (as recommended for Grades 4-12).
- EICS will be supplying all basic required supplies to students, including, over the next 3 years, providing a graphing calculator while a student takes high school math courses.
- EICS will be eliminating noon hour supervision, agenda costs, locker fees and any other general fees that are not tied to a choice by parents.
- All remaining fees charged to parents, such as field trips, sports teams or enhanced programming with additional costs, will continue to be optional. Parents will be provided a choice for their child to participate in enhanced education services or extracurricular activities on a cost recovery basis.
- EICS will continue to provide monthly reports on all fees collected and spent at our public EICS Board meetings and also online.

Here are some answers to questions that we have heard from parents.

1. How can (EICS) afford to eliminate District Material Fees in 2016-17 and then provide school supplies and eliminate other fees in 2017-18?

In 2016-17, with the change to students bringing their own technology devices in grades 4-12, EICS saved over \$500,000 in leasing costs. These savings supported EICS educational technology supports plus they enabled EICS to eliminate all Basic Education fees. In 2017-18, the Division is receiving \$474,000 in targeted funding that is required to be used to reduce the financial burden on families. With basic education fees already eliminated, EICS is targeting the remainder of family financial costs that are not the result of parental choice.

2. Will this change result in reduced budgets for schools?

Schools are being directly allocated \$170 per Early Childhood Services to Grade 3 student and \$135 for students in all other grades to replace the fees lost and to support school supply purchases.



3. How will schools order and get these supplies to classrooms and students?

EICS posted a public tender for school supplies earlier this Spring and received a healthy number of proposals from interested supply vendors. What we were looking for was a vendor that would package its product for both the student and by classroom to ensure that distribution of the supplies is as easy as possible. As of this May, we have determined that we will be going with Staples Canada based on their ability to meet our requirements, high quality of products, selection and cost.

Students will be provided with all the basic supplies to support their education. Longer lasting non-basic supplies like scientific calculators and math kits will be provided to students with the expectation they are used for multiple years. Any damage, loss or supplies or battery replacement will be a parent responsibility to replace for their student.

Next year, Grade 10 students will be supplied a graphing calculator with their math textbook in the semester they take math. In 2018-2019, this service will be extended to Grade 11 and 12 students receiving this service in 2019-2020. This phased-in approach reflects that current Grade 10 and 11s already purchased a calculator for their current program.

4. What will schools do with leftover supplies?

We will let the schools and teachers provide the best advice for what they can use the next school year. We will not be requiring students to hand back used basic supplies that are currently in their use.

5. What is meant by the requirement that parents are provided the opportunity to have their students receive a basic education at no cost?

Parents must be provided the opportunity to opt out of any activity that is an enhanced education service (ie curricular field trips, programs of choice, cultural activities and options programming) and that requires a fee to participate. Schools must ensure that it has at least one no cost option for parents to choose.

6. What does it mean that parents will still pay for educational enhancements?

As a result, parents shall no longer pay fees for mandatory cultural events, agendas, lockers, noon hour supervision or any other fee that is not a result of a choice by parents. Fees for options and field trips will continue, however, Board Policy will dictate that parents are provided a cost-free option for their students and that field trips are optional.

7. Why did EICS choose to allocate the majority of Bill 1 funding towards school supplies rather than other fees?

- Eliminating school supply lists will be an extremely beneficial service to parents both financially and in terms of convenience.
- School supply lists cover items required for Basic Education and should be eliminated before those items that are nice but not necessary.
- School supplies are not covered in the division's waiver program like other fees and are a hardship on families that may be struggling financially.
- Having school supplies as a budget item creates innovation and ensures supplies are purchased as needed. Savings can then support other school services that benefit students. As well, EICS will achieve significant savings through volume purchasing.

