

Ventura Unified School District
Student Fees
FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

Thank you for visiting our Student Fees webpage at www.venturausd.org. The subject of student fees, charges, deposits, donations and fundraising related to courses and activities has been at the forefront of public attention locally and nationally. What follows are responses to some of the Frequently Asked Questions:

Question

May a school still receive donations from parents and guardians?

Answer

Yes. School districts, schools, programs, and classes can and do seek and accept donations of funds and property, and this practice is permissible as long as the donation is truly voluntary and in no way a prerequisite to participation in the program or activity. Therefore, any statement or explanation related to a donation that could lead a reasonable person to believe the donation may not be truly voluntary is to be avoided. Access to educational programs must not be tied to either the willingness or the ability to pay a fee or request a fee waiver.

Question

May a school still fundraise?

Answer

Yes. As with donations, school districts, schools, programs and classes can and do engage in fundraising activities and programs, and this practice is also permissible as long as the raising of funds is voluntary. You may require students to attend a fundraising event; however, if they are unable to raise funds for the event, you cannot prevent them from participating in an educational activity. It is important to distinguish required fundraising from required attendance at fundraising event as attendance at a fundraising event is the same as attendance at practices, games, rehearsals, or performance which are all an expected aspect of participation. For example, expecting the members of a vocal ensemble to attend a fundraising concert that is on its calendar of events does not violate the “free school” guarantee, so long as attendance is the only requirement. Another example is when members of an athletic team are expected to help out with a fundraising sale at a Back to School Night or Open House – just as a coach can expect players to attend practices and games, the coach can expect players to attend a fundraising event as

long as the requirement is to attend rather than to raise money as a condition of participation in the activity or program.

Question

May a school charge fees for uniforms for teams sports?

Answer

No. A school must provide a free uniform to any student who is a member of the school team in question. Further, the free uniform must be substantially the same uniform as those which are made available for purchase. You can allow students to purchase their own uniforms if they want to purchase uniforms; however, buying a uniform cannot be a requirement to participate in a sport.

Question

May a school require team members to purchase Spirit Packs?

Answer

No. Spirit packs may be sold; however, you cannot require a student to purchase a spirit pack as a prerequisite to participate in a sport. If there are practice uniforms, etc., which are required, they must be provided free of charge to any student who is a member of the school team in question.

Question

What if a school only charges fees to those students who can afford them; and has a waiver process for those who cannot?

Answer

A waiver process based on financial need or inability to pay does not make an otherwise impermissible fee permissible.

Question

May a school charge fees for things?

Answer

Yes. There are specific fees, charges and deposits that are legally permissible because they are specifically permitted by law. These specific fees, charges and deposits are legally permissible.

- Charges for optional attendance as a spectator at a school or district sponsored activity.

- Charges for food served to students, subject to free and reduced price meal program eligibility and other restrictions specified in law.
- Paying the replacement cost for district books or supplies loaned to a student that the student fails to return or that is willfully cut, defaced or otherwise injured, up to an amount not to exceed \$10,000.
- Medical or hospital insurance for fieldtrips that is made available by the school district.
- Charges for required medical and accident insurance for athletic team members, so long as there is a waiver for financial hardship.
- Charges for standardized physical education attire of a particular color and design, but the school may not mandate that the attire be purchased from the school and no physical education grade of a student may be impacted based on the failure to wear standardized apparel “arising from circumstances beyond the control” of the student.
- Charging for the parking of vehicles on school grounds.
- Charges for the rental or lease of personal property needed for district purposes, such as caps and gowns for graduation ceremonies.
- Fees for school camp programs, so long as no student is denied the opportunity to participate because of nonpayment of the fee.
- Reimbursement for the direct cost of materials provided to a student for property the student has fabricated from such materials for his / her own possession and use, such as wood shop, art, or sewing projects kept by the student.
- Reimbursement for the actual cost of duplicating public records, student records, or a prospectus of the school curriculum.
- Fees for transportation to and from school, and transportation between school and regional occupational centers, programs for classes, as long as the fee does not exceed the statewide average nonsubsidized cost per student and provided there is a waiver provision based on financial need.
- Fees for transportation of pupils to places of summer employment.
- Tuition fees charged to pupils whose parents are actual and legal residents of an adjacent foreign country or an adjacent state.
- Tuition fees collected from foreign students attending a district school pursuant to an F-1 Visa, equal to the full unsubsidized per capita cost of providing education during the period of attendance.
- Fees for an optional fingerprinting program for kindergarten or other newly enrolled students, if the fee does not exceed the actual costs associated with the program.

- Fees for community classes in civic, vocational, literacy, health, homemaking, and technical and general education, not to exceed the cost of maintaining the community classes.
- Deposits for band instruments, music, uniforms and other regalia which school band members take on excursions to foreign countries.
- Charges for safety devices, at a price not to exceed the district's actual costs, in specified courses or activities in which students are engaged in, or are observing, an activity or the use of hazardous substances likely to cause injury to the eyes.

Question

Students run for and serve on the ASB Board have been required in the past to purchase ASB stickers / cards, is this still okay to do?

Answer

No. ASB stickers / cards are optional items for all students. Students cannot be required to buy ASB stickers / cards in order to run for an office or as a condition to participate in a club / organization or try out for a team or sport.

Question

Key Club and CSF Club both have collected dues from students in the past because they pay annual registrations to organizations on the national level. Is it still okay to collect these dues from students?

Answer

Students cannot be required to pay the dues as a condition for membership in the club at the school level. If the national level club / organization collect dues, the students should be directed to pay them directly to the organization, but membership in the national level club / organization cannot be a requirement for membership in the school level club.

Question

In the past some classes like Art or Ceramics have charged each student \$10 to \$20 for extra materials for creations that students take home and keep. Is it still okay to charge students for extra materials?

Answer

Students can be charged for materials if they will take home what they make. However, students should be able to make things they do not take home if they do

not want to pay for extra materials. Understandably, this means that students (1) make things that they do not take home and we throw it away; or (2) in the case of a ceramics course, they cannot fire their clay items in the kiln, so that the clay remains reusable.

Question

Does the student fees policy apply to club sports such as Women's Volleyball? Our high school does not fund the sport. Coaches are fingerprinted and processed by the district, but they are recruited, hired and paid by parents. Equipment, tournament fees and other team expenses have always been covered 100 percent by parents.

Answer

School-associated club sports are extracurricular activities and, therefore, subject to the same fee limitations as any other extracurricular activity. Funding must be through donations, not mandatory fees.

Question

I have a question that isn't answered above, what should I do?

Answer

Parents, guardians, students, faculty, and staff should direct questions about school-specific matters needing clarification / explanation directly to the school's principal. **Principals** should contact the Assistant Superintendent/Educational Services for guidance and support with responses to school-specific questions about student fees, deposits, donations and fundraising. The Assistant Superintendent/Educational Services will ensure that questions and responses are disseminated to schools through this webpage (www.venturausd.org) and by other means as appropriate.