



Developed in consultation with the Federation of Independent School Associations

It is an Authority's responsibility to be aware of, and work within, the requirements set out in the legislation, policies, Distributed Learning Agreement and accompanying Schedule A (Standards for Delivery). Authorities are responsible for being aware of current requirements.

IMPLEMENTING THE \$600 CAP FOR THIRD PARTY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

In the Distributed Learning Policy for Independent Schools, the Ministry has set a cap on the 3rd party services/resources allocation of up to \$600 per FTE in grades K-12. The Authority is required to pay a third party resource or service provider directly and may not pay parents or students. This allotment is not an entitlement and, as set out under section 10.04(b) of the 2012/13 Independent School DL Agreement, may not be used as an incentive.

Allocation of funding to third parties is to be made based on the student learning plan created by the parent, teacher and where appropriate the student. In order to meet the BC Ministry prescribed curriculum requirements, the teacher will identify the services and resources the school and family are able to provide as well as those services and resources which may require support by way of a third party. If it is determined that third party resources and services are required, an amount up to \$600 may be allocated as specified in the student learning plan. Schools are expected not to exceed this amount.

Schools may be required to provide the Ministry both audited and working financial statements to support policy implementation.

ENTITLEMENT

The \$600 amount for third party resources and services, reimbursement for a portion of internet service costs, hardware loaned to families and resources provided from within the school's educational program are not entitlements.

Ministry operational grants are given to schools to provide learning programs for their students that meet Ministry Prescribed Learning Outcomes. In turn, schools may make a portion of these operational grants available to resource the educational program and teachers manage this with input from students and parents.

Schools are strongly encouraged to work together regarding communication to parents. Schools are limited to a \$600 cap for third party services/resources; all other resources required within the educational program are provided by the school or supported by parents externally.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS FOR USES OF SERVICES/RESOURCE ALLOTMENTS

Schools can assist in improving the parental understanding of the use of the \$600 cap by ensuring that only those resources/services which clearly support learning of the prescribed curriculum are candidates for third party services and resources. With the co-development of the student learning plan, parents, students, teachers, and administrators work together to determine the best approach to meeting the required learning outcomes.

Schools will need to work with parents and students to prioritize third party resource and service requests within the \$600 cap. Third party services are ideal in assisting students meet curricular outcomes in non-core areas such as Fine Arts, Physical Education, and Applied Skills. The DL model of educational program delivery is supported in very practical and hands-on ways through instruction such as lessons in music, dance, horse-back riding, judo, skiing, woodworking, welding, etc. The 3rd party service and resource allocation is intended for ongoing instructional components that cannot be delivered easily by the DL school; it is not intended to subsidize equipment such as saddles, weight sets, skis, hockey equipment, etc.

Similarly, the Ministry considers a membership in an astronomers club to be appropriate rather than providing funds to purchase a telescope, a membership in a photography club or lessons rather than the purchase of camera equipment and accessories, etc. Again, if such equipment is necessary for the educational program it needs to be available on loan through the school's resource library/department or be a matter of personal purchase.

This \$600 cap does not apply to:

- supporting students with special needs in levels 1, 2 and 3; and categories K,P,Q,R, in achieving the goals in their Individual Education Plans***;
- career technical center program courses;
- post-secondary transition program courses; and,
- a portion of Internet access costs if required to participate in a DL program or course.

**** In situations where the student is enrolled and the school deems it necessary to have the student assessed/ tested with a view of supporting the student's educational program through an Individual Educational Plan, it is a matter of school policy whether a proportion of these assessment/testing services are paid for by the school. Such assessment/testing services are considered to be an operational expense outside of the capped 3rd party service/resource allocation.*

TEXTBOOKS, CONSUMABLE WORKBOOKS, AND OTHER CONSUMABLE SUPPLIES.

If a school uses a textbook or sets of textbooks as part of its educational program, these would be available on loan from the school. Consumable workbooks may also be purchased out of the \$600. Any non-consumable resource purchased with Ministry funds will be returned to the school at year-end or upon withdrawal from the school.

Basic consumable school supplies, such as paper, writing tools, student planners, binders, computer storage media (USB flash drives), etc., are considered to be personal expenses paid for by students or parents and may not be charged against the resource allocation.

PAYMENTS TO THIRD PARTIES OR PARENTS/STUDENTS

Section 10 of the DL Agreement deals with payments and reimbursements. Section 10.02 excludes academic tutoring services from third party services. And in Section 10.04 DL schools are not authorized to make payments to learners or their parents/guardians. This means that DL schools are not permitted to:

- contract/employ parents in capacity of tutors, Education Assistants, Teacher Assistants, Special Education Assistants, etc. for services to their own children.
- provide payments to parents' or students' personal credit card companies. Credit card companies are not considered 3rd party service/resource providers.
- provide special or additional allocations for parents or families or groups of families who are taking certain responsibilities for the educational program or participating in particular school-based programs.

Payments to third party services/resources providers through school-owned pre-loaded debit cards are permitted as long as the school attaches clear conditions of use and all expenses are authorized by the teacher in the Student Learning Plan; schools must have policy to recover these payments if used inappropriately or in unauthorized manner.

Schools will require students to be enrolled or re-enrolled and a draft SLP in place created by the teacher, parents and students, prior to issuing access to any third party learning resources.

It should be noted that DL schools use third party service providers when lessons cannot be offered easily by the school staff. The school's educational programming staff (such as teachers and various teaching, educational and special-education assistants) cannot be 3rd party service providers and, conversely, third party service providers cannot be employed as teachers or as various teaching/educational/special-education assistants.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) HARDWARE

Section 10.04 of the DL Agreement is explicit with regard to prohibiting DL schools from incenting students/parents to enroll with the DL school. Hardware such as computers, tablets,

iPads, and peripherals can be seen as such an incentive and, therefore, must be owned by the school and loaned or rented from the school by parents/students. Schools will be required to amortize IT equipment over a minimum of 3 years. This is referenced in Section 1.6 of Schedule A of the 2014/2015 DL Agreement.

The computer is ubiquitous in the 21st century and DL schools may assume that many parents/students have home computer equipment for use in the DL program. Where there are exceptions, a DL school may make the necessary computer/laptop/tablet available to a family under a loan agreement.

Schools will be required to have policies and procedures in place supporting the recovering and disposition (once depreciated) of school property.

DL school loan agreements will specify return dates, expectations and responsibilities for maintaining the equipment in good order, reductions in the third party allocation or cost to families, damage deposits, and any opportunities for parents and students to buy used equipment.

Where the student's program requires printers, scanners, or consumables like printer paper, ink supplies or laser printer cartridges, parents/guardians/students may be purchased from 3rd party resource providers provided this is supported and approved as part of the student learning plan.

Independent DL schools are encouraged to develop common practices to manage peripheral IT equipment and supplies in a cost-effective manner.

INTERNET SERVICE PROVISION

Internet connectivity is widely available and the Ministry recognizes that the majority of families use internet for much more than access to the educational program provided by the DL school.

10.03 The Authority may provide financial assistance to Learners or to the parents or guardians of Learners for a portion of Internet connections fees only if the Learner requires an Internet connection to participate in an educational program delivered in whole or in part through Distributed Learning.

The DL Agreement allows for reimbursement of a portion of internet access costs. The Ministry expects this to be a per-family reimbursement, not a per-student reimbursement. *Independent DL schools are encouraged to work together (in accordance with the requirements of the Personal Information Protection Act) to avoid multiple ISP reimbursements if sibling students are enrolled in different DL schools.* The annual family reimbursement is limited to 60% of 10 months of Internet provision - not exceeding \$350 annually. It is recognized that some families may live in rural areas where internet access costs can be substantial. In these exceptional cases only, and with appropriate supporting evidence, schools may choose to support families with additional funds available as necessary (and within reason) to assist with a portion of internet service costs. For clarity and consistency, this is not an entitlement to families; reimbursement

for a portion of internet service costs should be made for each family on a needs basis. Some families may require substantially less in internet service costs, depending on age of student and nature of program.

EQUIPMENT

Families are responsible for the cost of equipment items under \$50 each. More expensive items, if required to support the educational program, must be available on loan from the school. Such equipment can include microscopes, educational kits, musical instruments, cameras (DSLRs), telescopes, etc. Schools are required to have a policy in place to ensure that school property on loan is returned in reusable condition to the school when the student or family no longer needs them.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The \$600 cap does not apply to supports for students with special needs in achieving the goals in their Individual Education Plans in Special Needs Funding levels 1, 2 and 3; and categories K, P, Q, and R or for students with learning needs as identified and documented by teaching staff and indicated in their IEP. In order for the \$600 cap to be lifted, students must meet the criteria for the above level 1,2,3, K, P, Q, R designations and must have been assessed by appropriately qualified professionals (with evidentiary documentation in the student file), and determined to have special needs and reported as such on the 1701. These professionals may include psychologists, teachers of the hearing impaired, teachers of the visually-impaired, and developmental assessment teams such as those at Sunny Hill Hospital for Sick Children, B.C. Children's Hospital, or local Child Development Centers. (Refer to the SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines.)

In situations where an enrolled student is deemed by the school to require assessment or testing with a view of developing a student's Individual Educational Plan, it is a matter of school policy whether these assessment/testing services are paid for by the school/parents or some combination thereof. Such assessment/testing services are considered outside of the capped 3rd party service/resource allocation.

DL schools that are placing students on IEPs are required to ensure that the special needs are properly identified and diagnosed, that current IEPs are in place with the Parent/Guardian Confirmation Form signed appropriately, that the student's program is consistent with the IEP goals, and the student is working toward these IEP goals. IEPs are not be used as a mechanism to allow the school to fund beyond the \$600 and schools will be reviewed on compliance with requirements.