

# THE EARLY LIGHT ACADEMY

## **Early Light Academy Fee Waiver Policy**

### **PURPOSE**

In order to facility the highest quality and balanced education for the student body, the Early Light Academy (ELA) may establish a reasonable fee schedule. ELA will abide by the rules found under article X, Section 2 and 3 of the Utah Constitution, which provide that elementary and secondary schools shall be free except for a limited number of acceptable fees. If any fees are needed to participate in school activities, ELA will follow the proposed policy. State Law also allows schools to establish money collection and handling procedures.

### **POLICY**

Under the direction of ELA's board, the Director 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**

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.

Textbook and other fees may be charged in grades 7-9 (see ELA's Fee Schedule).

If a class is established or approved which requires payment of fees or purchase of materials, 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, the class shall be subject to the fee waiver guidelines.

Students of all grade levels may be required to provide materials for their optional projects, but a student may not be required to select an optional project 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.

Student supplies must be provided for elementary students. Secondary students may be required to provide their own student supplies, subject to the fee waiver provisions.

Elementary and secondary students may be required to replace supplies provided by the academy which are lost, wasted or damaged by the student through careless or irresponsible behavior, and a fee waiver will not apply to such damages.

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## **Activities Outside of the Regular School Day**

Fees may be charged, subject to the Board approved fee schedule (see the current school year fee schedule), in connection with any school-sponsored activity which does not take place during the regular school day if 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. Such fees are subject to the fee waiver requirement.

Activities not sponsored by the school, but allowing for student participation after school, and using the school premises may have fees associated with their program (i.e. programs sponsored by the PTO and/or an outside vendor.) Such fees are not subject to the fee waiver requirement.

## **General Provisions**

No fee may be charged or assessed in connection with any class or academy-sponsored or supported activity, including extracurricular activities, unless the fee has been set and approved by the Board and distributed in an approved fee schedule.

Fee schedules and policies for the academy shall be adopted at least once each year when the Board adopts its annual budget in a regularly scheduled public meeting of the Board.

The Director shall ensure that a written copy of ELA's fee schedule is included with all registration materials provided to potential or continuing students. ELA 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. No present or former student may be denied receipt of unofficial transcripts or diplomas for failure to pay school fees.

1. A reasonable charge may be made to cover the cost of duplicating or mailing transcripts and other school records.
2. 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.

In accordance with Utah Code Ann. §53A-11-806, if the academy's property has been lost or willfully cut, defaced or otherwise injured, the academy may withhold the issuance of official written grade reports, diploma, and transcripts of the student responsible for the damage or loss until the student or the student's parent or guardian has paid for the damages.

Students shall be given notice and an opportunity to pay fines prior to withholding issuance of official written grade reports, diplomas and transcripts.

1. If the student and the student's parent or guardian are unable to pay for damages or if it is determined by the academy 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 academy may provide for a program of voluntary work for the student in lieu of the payment.

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2. A general breakage fee levied against all students in a class or school is not permitted. ELA will not exclude a student may from school or withhold unofficial transcripts to obtain payment of fees or fines.
3. 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.

In the collection of fees, the academy must comply with statutes and Utah State Tax Commission rules regarding the collection of state sales tax.

### 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, ELA provides fee waivers or other provisions in lieu of fee waivers as follows:

- The Director 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 Director 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 are to be available to any eligible student.
- The Director 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. Inability to pay is presumed for students who are:
  - a. In state custody or foster care, or
  - b. Receiving public assistance in the form of Aid to Families with Dependent Children, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or
  - c. Are eligible for free school lunch (if applicable).
2. CASE BY CASE DETERMINATIONS are to be made for those who do not qualify under one of the foregoing standards but who, because of extenuating circumstances such as, but not limited to, exceptional financial burdens such as loss or substantial reduction

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- of income or extraordinary medical expenses, are not reasonably capable of paying the fee.
3. In accordance with Utah State Code §53A-12-103(5), a parent/guardian of a student applying for a fee waiver must provide documentation and certification of eligibility, such as income tax returns or current pay stubs.
  4. If a student is eligible for waivers, textbook fees must be waived; no alternative in lieu of a fee waiver is permissible.
  5. A student may however, 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.
  6. Denial of eligibility for a waiver may be appealed in writing to the Director within ten (10) school days of receiving notice of denial.
    - a. The academy shall contact the parent within two (2) weeks after receiving the appeal and schedule a meeting with the Director to discuss the parent's concerns.
    - b. If, after meeting with the Director, the waiver is still denied, the parent may appeal, in writing, within ten (10) school days of receiving notice of denial to the Board.
  7. Any requirement that a student pay a fee will be suspended during any period in which the student's eligibility for waiver is being determined or during the time a denial of waiver is being appealed.

In order to protect privacy and confidentiality, ELA 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 ELA are fees requiring approval of the Board and are subject to the fee waiver requirements.

### **Items Not Subject to Waivers**

The requirements of fee waiver and availability of other provisions in lieu of fee waiver do not apply to charges assessed pursuant to a student's damaging or losing school property. ELA shall pursue reasonable methods for obtaining payment for such charges, including withholding official grade reports, diplomas, and transcripts as indicated in this policy. ELA will not exclude students from school or withhold unofficial transcripts or diplomas to obtain payment for such charges.

Charges for yearbooks, picture books, and similar articles not required for participation in a class or activity are not fees and are not subject to the waiver requirements. Such items are examples of PTO or vendor sponsored items.

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Student supplies for secondary students are not subject to waivers as long as the item is something which 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.

### **Fee Waiver Reporting Requirements**

The Director will share the following information from the annual S-3 statistical report with the Board and the professional education management company, as appropriate:

1. A summary of the number of students in the academy given fee waivers, the number of students who worked in lieu of a waiver, and the total dollar value of student fees waived by ELA;
2. A copy of ELA's fee and fee waiver policies;
3. A copy of ELA's fee schedule for students; and
4. The notice of fee waiver criteria provided by ELA to a student's parent or guardian.
5. Fee waiver compliance forms as required by applicable law.

### **Fee Schedule**

The Board adopts a fee schedule yearly. See current yearly adopted fee schedule.

### **Refunds**

All middle school students who withdraw from school shall be refunded all unused fees apportioned by the number of days attended with the exception of the extracurricular Band fee, which is non-refundable.

### **School Fee Collections & Accounting Procedures**

It is the duty and responsibility of the Director to ensure that all student fees collected are in compliance with the authorized fee schedule and financial procedures as approved by the Board. These fees are to be received and deposited in a timely manner.

### **Monies Shall Be Collected by Authorized Personnel Only**

All monies for fees, lockers, student supplies, optional projects, picture books, year books, clinics, etc. are to be collected following this policy and school guidelines using authorized staff only.

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1. All money collected is to be deposited in the bank by the close of the day or otherwise, only if approved by the Board.
2. No money is to be collected by staff, teachers, teaching assistants, or coaches unless authorized by the Director.

### Available References

Utah Code Ann. §53A-2-207(5) Enrollment of nonresident students processing fee

Utah Code Ann. §53A-3-602.5 School performance report - Components - Annual filing


Utah Code Ann. §53A-11-806 Defacing or injuring school property-- Student's liability-Voluntary work program alternative

Utah Code Ann. §53A-12-102 to 104 State Policy on student fees, deposits, or other charges – Waiver of fees - Notice of student fees and waivers

Utah Code Ann. §53A-12-201 to 204 Provides for state policy on providing textbooks

Utah Administrative Code R277-407 Rules for School Fees

Utah Administrative Code R277-713-6 Student Tuition, Fees and Credit for Concurrent Enrollment Programs

  
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*Mia Prazen - ELA Board President*

*14 April 09*  
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*Date*