

**Franklin Public Schools
Franklin, Massachusetts 02038**

Action Required

Subject: Refund of Fees

Date: May 12, 2020

Dept: School Committee

Reason: Required Vote

Enclosure: yes

Recommendation:

Refunds of Fees due to COVID-19 Closure

I recommend that the School Committee refund fees for select programs as detailed.

- Spring Sports Fees for 2020
- Transportation Fees to Seniors by \$35
- Lifelong Learning Solutions fees since March 13, 2020 and summer fees should programs be cancelled
- Lunch balances over \$10 to seniors, unless families transfer funds to younger siblings

Action Requested of the School Committee:

Majority vote of the School Committee is required.

<u>Vote Tabulator</u>	
A Bergen:	Y / N T Keenan: Y / N
J D'Angelo:	Y / N M J Scofield: Y / N
J Pond-Pfeffer:	Y / N D Spencer: Y / N
E Stokes:	Y / N Action: _____



Franklin Public Schools

*Office of the Superintendent
355 East Central Street; Suite 3
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Phone: 508-553-4819*

To: Franklin School Committee

From: Sara Ahern, Superintendent and Miriam Goodman, School Business Administrator

Re: Refunds of Fees due to COVID-19 Closure

Date: May 7, 2020

As you are aware, Governor Baker announced that schools will be closed through the remainder of the school year. With that news, we have received several questions about refunds of user fees. As you consider this for discussion at your May 12, 2020 School Committee meeting, we offer you the following information based on the fee being considered:

Prior to the issuance of any refund, we make an effort to research any amounts owed. If a refund is due in any category and there is a balance due in a different category, the practice has been to reduce the amount of the refund to pay off the balance due to us first. In all scenarios below, we would allow parents the option to donate any refund due back to the department for additional support. We believe that many families would take advantage of this.

ECDC Preschool Tuition

We continue to operate a high quality preschool program at ECDC. Our faculty and staff continue to be paid as they are engaging with students and families through participation in the remote learning plan. We view this programming as school and not as day care; we would not recommend refunds of Preschool Tuition.

Athletics - Spring Sports

With the closure of schools for the remainder of the school year, the spring athletic season will not take place. Coaches were notified, and no service is being provided to students or families. Coaches are not being paid and buses will not run. We recommend a full refund of all athletic fees paid for FY2020 spring sports. This amount approximates \$30,000.

Pay to Ride Bus Transportation

More than 1,600 students paid for transportation this year. There were 67 days from March 13th through June 18th that might be under consideration. Holmes Bus Company will continue to be paid a lower, negotiated rate to preserve the continuity of service and the ability to retain drivers when schools reopen. There are 22 seniors who have paid for transportation, and upon request, we would recommend a partial reimbursement in the amount of \$35, which

approximates the percent reduction negotiated with the vendor. Given the volume of fees collected by grades K-11 students for transportation, we suggest that the Committee consider a one-time reduction in the fee for the FY21 school year, returning it back to \$325 for 2020-2021. We would then raise it to \$360 in FY 22.

Lifelong Learning Programs

With the closure of schools for the remainder of the school year, no service is being provided to students or families. We recommend a full refund of all fees paid for FY2020 Solutions before and after school care since mid-March. Staff continue to be paid from this revolving account. Refunds would approximate \$70,000. Other programming includes adult education, music ensembles, morning movement programs, and more. Instructors are not being paid for the cancelled classes, and total refunds here will be close to \$40,000. Summer program tuition continues to be collected in anticipation of operating, however, in the event that programs do not run because of extended closure, we recommend a full refund of fees paid for summer programming as well.

School Meals

As you may know, School Committee policy EFD excerpted here addresses refunds for school meals:

Refunds for withdrawn and/or graduating students are not issued. Parents have the option to transfer funds to a sibling's or other student's account. After one (1) year, any remaining credit balance on a school lunch account for a student who is no longer enrolled in the Franklin Public Schools will become the property of the Franklin School Lunch Program to be used as a donation to offset uncollected debt.

We recommend that the School Committee make an exception to this policy this year only and for seniors only. There are 189 seniors with a balance of \$10 or more. I would not recommend issuing refunds under \$10. For those seniors with younger siblings in the district, we will automatically transfer any balance to the younger sibling. We can work with families with multiple students to make the transfers in accordance with the parent's request. For those seniors without a younger sibling, upon request this year only, refunds would be issued. Total value of refunds to 89 families would approximate \$3,445. Please also be aware that there are 36 seniors who owe \$2,285 to the Foodservice Department at this time.

High School Fees

Student fees collected at Franklin High School for specific activities would be refunded at the discretion of the FHS Principal. Such fees would include AP exams, senior week activities, senior banquet fees, prom, etc. The student activity coordinator at FHS would issue checks at

the direction of the Principal. Please note that this would not include refunds of participation fees or Chromebook insurance.

Logistics

Logistically, the district would create a Google form for parents to complete to request a refund. Requests would need to be received prior to June 18th and would be paid out as requests are received and prior to the closing of the fiscal year. Again, we would encourage parents to consider donating any refund due back to the program.