

EXPENDITURES FOR A PUBLIC PURPOSE

The board recognizes that school district funds are public funds, and as such, should be used to further a public purpose and the overall educational mission of the school community. The district is committed to managing and spending public funds in a transparent and responsible manner. Prior to making a purchase with public funds, an individual should be comfortable defending the purchase/reimbursement to the taxpayers in the district. If the individual is uncomfortable doing so, the purchase may not fulfill a public purpose and additional guidance should be sought before the purchase is made.

Individuals who have concerns about the public purpose of a purchase or reimbursement should utilize the district’s Internal Controls policy and regulation as a resource for questioning a purchase. Concerns should be reported to the superintendent and/or the board president.

The superintendent shall develop a process for approving expenditures of public funds. The board will review expenditures and applicable reports as necessary to ensure proper oversight of the use of public funds. To the extent possible, expenditures shall be pre-approved by the district prior to expending the funds. Purchases of food and refreshment for district staff, even within district, should comply with the district’s Employee Travel Compensation policy, and all other applicable policies. All purchases/reimbursements shall comply with applicable laws, board policies and district accounting requirements.

Additional guidance regarding appropriate expenditures of school funds is provided in the regulation accompanying this policy

NOTE: All use of public funds should directly serve a public purpose in a clear and transparent manner. Districts should consider what purchasing and reimbursement flexibility is needed for their district and apply all restrictions equally.

Legal Reference: Iowa Constitution Art. III, sec. 31;
Iowa Code §§ 68A.505; 279.8; 721.2.
281 I.A.C. 98.70
1979 Op. Atty. Gen., No. 79-4-26

Cross Reference: 401.7 Employee Travel Compensation
704.1 Local-State-Federal-Miscellaneous Revenue
704.5 Student Activities Fund
705.1 Purchasing-Bidding
705.2 Purchasing on Behalf of Employees
705.3 Payment for Goods and Services
707.5 Internal Controls
905.1 Community Use of School District Facilities & Equipment

Date of Adoption: 02-18-2021 Reviewed: _____ Revised: _____

USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS REGULATIONS

The following is a list of examples organized by activity for what is allowable, or not allowable as a purchase/reimbursement using public funds. This regulation is intended as guidance and there may be situations that are not listed here. Any questions regarding the appropriateness of an expenditure should be submitted to administration **prior** to expending funds.

Reimbursements to an Individual

- **Use of Credit/Procurement Card**: All purchases through a district-owned credit or procurement card shall be pre-approved and comply with the district's policy 401.10 – *Credit and Procurement Cards*.
- **Mileage**: Individuals who are required to travel (other than to and from work) as part of fulfilling their job duties to the district shall be reimbursed for mileage costs in accordance with the requirements stated in the district's *Employee Travel Compensation* policy.
- **Travel accommodations**: Employees who are required to travel and stay overnight as part of fulfilling their job duties to the district shall be reimbursed for costs in accordance with the requirements stated in the district's *Employee Travel Compensation* policy.
- **Alcohol**: Alcohol is a personal expense and is never allowable for purchase or reimbursement using public funds.
- **Food/Refreshments**: Food and refreshments are typically a personal expense. Meetings spanning meal times should be avoided when possible. When a district meeting is required to take place spanning a customary meal time, the superintendent or designee shall determine whether food and/or refreshment will be provided to employees whose presence is required during the meeting. The cost of food and refreshment for employees shall be reasonable, and when possible, a separate itemized receipt for each employee is required. If an itemized receipt is not available, approval is required by the school business official prior to reimbursement. In all cases, the names and number of employees shall be noted on the receipt.
- **Apparel/Personal Items**: Apparel and personal items including, but not limited to items such as t-shirts, hats, mugs, etc. provide personal benefit to individuals and are a personal expense. These items shall not be purchased or reimbursed with public funds.
- **Gifts**: Gift cards or gifts given to individuals are personal expenses and public funds should not be used (except for recognition/staff retirement, listed below) for these purposes. Voluntary collections from staff would be an acceptable way of purchasing gifts.
- **Retirement and Recognition Gifts**: Recognizing an employee or volunteer's years of dedication to educating the community and commitment to the district serves a public purpose by honoring individuals with a token gift, or honorarium, in recognition of their service. The same is true for individual awards, mementos, or items purchased in recognition of employee service to the district. These purchases may use public funds, provided the expenditures are modest and approved by the superintendent.
- **Honoraria**: District employees may at times receive an honorarium from an outside source as compensation for the employee's time devoted to preparing and delivering a presentation within the scope of their professional field. Honorariums may only be accepted by employees when the employee has used their personal time outside of their work for the district to prepare and deliver the presentation. If the employee uses district time or resources to prepare or deliver a presentation, any honorarium shall be given to the district.

Supplies for Public Areas

- Limited refreshments such as water and coffee may be available in public reception areas of the district including, but not limited to the central office, the building administrator's office, etc. These refreshments may be purchased with the use of public funds, as they provide light refreshment to members of the community.

Staff Parties/Receptions

- Parties and receptions to benefit individual staff members are considered a personal expense and should not be purchased or reimbursed with public funds. This includes but is not limited to holiday parties.
- Hosting a group reception to honor all employees retiring from the district in a given school year is allowable as a public expense. Hosting a retirement reception provides a direct benefit to the community as an opportunity for the community to attend and honor the retiring employees' years of dedication and service to the district.

School/ Student Activity Banquets

- School/student activity banquets are typically a personal expense and will not be purchased or reimbursed with public funds unless the public purpose is submitted for review and pre-approved by the superintendent.

Memorial Gifts

- Memorial flowers to convey sympathy or congratulations are allowable as a public expense if they have been approved by the superintendent. Memorial cards are always appropriate.
- Memorial gifts of any sort other than flowers and a card are a personal expense.

Student Incentives

- It is within the discretion of the building principal to authorize the purchase of awards holding a nominal value to commemorate the achievements of a student or group of students. These awards should be designed to reward behavior and values that exemplify the educational and community mission of the district. Awards should not be gift cards or other monetary awards.
- Flowers and decorations for school dances held as part of the district's student activity program are an allowable expense paid out of the student activity fund, provided the purchases are approved by the building principal.

Meetings

- To the extent possible, meetings which span normal meal times should be avoided.
- Meetings of the district's board of directors and board committees are made up of individuals who volunteer a large amount of their personal time to serve the needs of the school community. These meetings are also scheduled at time most convenient for the public, and often span normal meal hours. Food and refreshment purchased for board members is an acceptable use of public funds. The service of these unpaid volunteers directly benefits the entire school community. The superintendent has discretion to purchase/reimburse reasonable expenses for providing food and refreshment to these unpaid volunteers during these meetings.

Some expenditures will be considered personal expenses regardless of the context. These include purchase or reimbursement of alcohol, and personal items not included as retirement or memorial gifts listed above.