



Board Policy Equity Lens Tool

Title of board policy being reviewed:

JN-Student Fees, Fines, and Charges

Describe the purpose of this policy:

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for assessing and collecting student fees, fines, and charges while ensuring that no student is denied access to education due to inability to pay. It outlines notice requirements, due process protections, potential restrictions, and the superintendent's authority to waive debts under certain circumstances.

What is your experience with this policy:

Student fee policies require careful balance between fiscal stewardship and equitable access. Experience shows that transparency, consistent waiver practices, and monitoring for disproportionate impacts are essential to prevent economic hardship from limiting student opportunity.



What is the plan to communicate this policy to staff, students, and/or families?

What is the plan to communicate this policy to linguistically diverse students and their families?

Is this policy:

Easy to locate for staff?

This policy and a summary of this policy will be available on the MESD web page. The summary of this policy is also available on the MESD website in Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Somali, and Vietnamese and, upon request, the summary and/or policy may be translated into other languages.

Accessible to students and families?

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Included in onboarding, intake, or other training?

This policy will be communicated to staff through inclusion in the student and employee handbook. The policy will also be posted on the district website for easy access.



Clear and easy to understand?

The policy clearly outlines expectations regarding fees, notice requirements, and potential consequences. It includes important legal safeguards such as written notice and hearing rights. However, the complexity of fee collection processes and legal references may require administrative guidance to ensure consistent and equitable implementation.

People

How are people affected positively or negatively by the policy? What potential barriers might people encounter? What barriers might be reduced by this policy?

The policy positively affirms that students will not be denied an education due to inability to pay and protects access to educational records. It provides due process safeguards and allows for fee waivers in cases of hardship.

Potential negative impacts include financial stress on low-income families, possible stigma, or restrictions that could limit participation in activities. Use of private collection agencies may disproportionately impact economically marginalized families.

The waiver provision and due process protections reduce barriers that could otherwise deepen inequities tied to poverty.



Can you identify the racial or ethnic groups affected by this policy, program, practice, or decision? Do you know the potential impacts to these populations? If you don't know, how will you find out?

Students from low-income households are disproportionately students of color due to broader socioeconomic disparities. As a result, fee and fine policies can have disproportionate impacts on Black, Latino/a/x, Native American, and immigrant families.

Potential impacts include financial hardship, exclusion from extracurricular participation, or negative credit consequences if debts are referred to collections. Monitoring fee and restriction data by demographic groups can help assess equity impacts.

Were these populations involved in any way, at any point in the development, implementation, and evaluation of this policy? If so, when and how?

The policy reflects state law and standard fiscal governance practices. Ongoing evaluation can include family feedback, review of hardship waiver requests, and analysis of demographic patterns in fee assessment and collection to ensure equitable outcomes.

What priorities and commitments are communicated by this policy?

The policy communicates commitments to fiscal responsibility, transparency, and due process. It also affirms a commitment to educational access by prohibiting denial of education based on inability to pay and allowing waivers in hardship situations.

Balancing fiscal stewardship with equity and access is a central priority reflected in the policy.



Place

What kind of positive or negative environment are we creating?

What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes? (e.g. mandated, political, emotional, financial, programmatic or managerial)

The policy creates an environment emphasizing accountability and financial responsibility while protecting core access to education.

Barriers to equitable outcomes include economic disparities, potential stigma associated with unpaid fees, inconsistent application of waivers, and use of collections practices that may disproportionately affect low-income families. Financial and managerial constraints may influence implementation decisions.

Power

How is the power of decision-making shared with those it affects?

How have you intentionally involved the communities affected by this policy, program, practice, or decision?

The policy provides procedural safeguards, including written notice and the right to request a hearing. It grants the superintendent authority to waive fees based on hardship or mitigating circumstances, which allows for consideration of family context.

Power-sharing can be strengthened by ensuring families are clearly informed of waiver options and that processes are accessible and culturally responsive.



Process

Does the policy, program, or decision improve, worsen, or make no change to existing disparities?

Does it create other unintended consequences?

The policy improves equity by explicitly stating that inability to pay will not deny access to education and by permitting waivers. However, disparities may persist if restrictions or collections practices disproportionately impact marginalized communities.

Unintended consequences may include family financial strain, reduced extracurricular participation, or community mistrust if policies are perceived as punitive.

Plan

How will you reduce the negative impacts and address the barriers?

Negative impacts can be reduced by:

- Proactively informing families about waiver options.
- Standardizing equitable criteria for hardship determinations.
- Monitoring fee, restriction, and collection data for disparities.
- Limiting exclusionary penalties tied to unpaid debt.
- Exploring alternative funding sources for essential activities.