



Operational Directive:

Homeschooling Reimbursements by DEAs/CSFN

Effective Date:

March 20, 2016

Directive # :

OP - 2015 – 01

Purpose:

Homeschooling in Nunavut is permitted under the *Education Act*. District Education Authorities (DEAs) and la Commission scolaire francophone du Nunavut (CSFN) are mandated to supervise homeschooling programs and reimburse a student's parents for the costs incurred in providing homeschooling to their child. School principals and the department also have several responsibilities related to homeschooling programming and reimbursements. This operational directive aims to remove any existing confusion for parents, DEAs/CSFN, principals and the Department of Education (the department) alike, concerning the amounts to be paid in reimbursement to parents for the costs associated with providing a homeschooling program, as well as the larger context of responsibilities held by all parties that these reimbursements occur within.

Scope:

This operational directive applies to all DEAs, the CSFN, as well as parents of students registered in homeschooling programs under the *Education Act*, and students participating in the homeschooling program. It also impacts principals, Department of Education staff members who are tasked with operating and maintaining the Student Information System, as well as the Student Records Registrar.

Rationale:

The *Education Act* recognizes homeschooling as one of the ways in which parents may choose to access education for their children. "A parent of a child may, under the supervision of a district education authority, provide a homeschooling program to the child at home" (Section 21(1)). The *Homeschooling Regulations* currently in force prescribe the responsibilities of those individuals involved in the delivery of homeschooling (i.e. parents, principals, and the DEA). As outlined in the

Homeschooling Regulations, parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children in a homeschooling program.

DEAs/CSFN are mandated to both supervise homeschooling programs (*Education Act*, section 21(1)), as well as to "reimburse the student's parents for the education program costs that are incurred by or on behalf of a student who is registered in a homeschooling program." (*Education Act*, section 21(4)).

Principals and the department also play a role, outlined below, with respect to homeschooling programs.

Per this directive, DEAs/CSFN may reimburse a parent of a student registered in a homeschooling program up to a maximum of \$1000 per child. DEA/CSFN members are not authorized to reimburse a parent beyond that amount. The rationale for this amount is as follows:

Homeschooled students do not form part of the FTE count which informs the allocation of Student Educator Ratio (SER) positions.

Due to the level of work required by the school staff to support a homeschool program, a homeschooled student is counted as 1 or 100% of a full time equivalent student (FTE) for the purpose of contribution agreement funding to DEAs/CSFN. The full amount (100%) of an FTE funding to the DEA/CSFN is then reserved and available for reimbursement to the parent for program costs.

DEAs/CSFN are funded by the department in part based on the FTE count, and in part on a base-funding basis.

Currently, DEAs/CSFN receive \$796.00 per FTE (K-9). For students in high school (10-12) an additional \$52 is provided, bringing the total funding received to \$848 per FTE.

For home-schooled students, both of these amounts are topped-up to \$1000 per year in order to take into account the base funding provided to DEAs/CSFN. Therefore up to \$1000 will be available to the DEAs/CSFN for reimbursement to parents of registered home-schooled students. In keeping with the legislation and regulations, reimbursements are only made for program costs approved by the DEA.

The department has previously directed DEAs/CSFN to reimburse parents for the costs associated with providing a homeschooling program up to a maximum of \$1000; therefore this directive is in keeping with past practices.

This directive has been developed in keeping with Inuit Societal Values, in particular: *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq*, *Pijitsimiq*, *Pilimmaksarniq*, *Ikajuqtiinni* and *Qanuqtuurniq*.

Definitions:

FTE: full time equivalent (student);

Homeschooling program: a homeschooling program provided under section 21 of the *Education Act*;

Parent: the parent or guardian of the child as identified by the *Education Act*;

Principal: means the principal responsible for the school at which a student attending a homeschooling program is registered and enrolled;

Registrar: the employee at the Department of Education responsible for maintaining and updating the official register of students and their records;

SIS: Student Information System—a system-wide, electronically-administered data base in which student records and related information are stored and managed by the Department of Education.

Directions:

It is recommended that the transfer of a student from the school-based education program into a homeschooling program be made before the start of the academic school year.

For transfers after the start of the school year, it is recommended that the submission of a homeschooling program by the parent and the approval by the DEA be made before the student ceases to attend the school-based program.

High school students who transfer into a homeschooling program mid-semester will not receive credit for unfinished courses.

Parents must officially register their child in a school in their community and inform the principal and DEA, in writing, of their intention to educate their child in a homeschooling program. Parents must ensure that they follow the list of responsibilities outlined below, regarding the development of the homeschooling program and related assessments, as well as the process for claims for reimbursements as set out below and in the policies of the DEA/CSFN responsible for providing education in their home community. This includes providing proof of expenditure.

The principal must ensure that students that are part of homeschooling programs are officially registered and enrolled per the requirements of the department, so that the DEA/CSFN responsible for education in their community receives funding for that student. The principal must follow the list of responsibilities outlined below regarding

support to parents, homeschooled students and the DEAs/CSFN, and with respect to reporting.

DEAs/CSFN will make available up to \$1000 of expense reimbursement, per student, to parents of homeschooled students who are officially registered as part of a homeschooling program. Only program costs approved by the DEA will be reimbursed. The DEA will follow the responsibilities outlined below, in particular with respect to guidelines for reimbursement procedures, the timely provision of reimbursements or the reasons for denial of a request for reimbursement, and timely communication with parents of homeschooled students.

Expenses that are eligible for reimbursement include the following:

- a) expenses directly linked to the homeschooling program, as developed by the parent and approved by the principal and DEA—i.e. books, science kits;
- b) expenses directly linked to the curriculum standards set for the community in which the homeschooled student resides; and
- c) materials used in the normal course of work in a school-based classroom—i.e. writing materials, computers/tablets, some physical education equipment (see restrictions below)
- d) distance education program costs
Note: Homeschooled students have access to a selection of distance education programs offered by the Department in cooperation with the Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC). When a distance education program is required to supplement the homeschooling program, parents are encouraged to use these ADLC programs, as they have already been approved with respect to the Ministerial curriculum. Any other distance education program must meet the Ministerial curriculum requirements in order for the costs to be reimbursed and must be approved by the DEA members, relying on the recommendation of the principal. Approved reimbursements for distance education programs, whether the program is offered by ADLC or another provider, come out of the \$1000 available to students in homeschooling programs and are not to be reimbursed in addition to that amount. This includes registration fees, as well as costs for books and equipment.

Expenses that are not eligible for reimbursement include the following:

- a) webinars and other online-based educational programs;
- b) equipment already available for use by homeschooled students at the school in which they are officially registered (although not attending); and

- c) eligible physical education equipment does not include hockey or other team sports equipment, equipment not used as part of a regular component of the homeschooling program, or sports equipment already available for use by homeschooling programs at the school in which the child is registered.

Homeschooled high-school students can be registered in up to one school-based course per semester at the high school in their community for a course that the parent is unable to provide at home or through distance education and if there is available space in the desired course. A high-school student that is registered for more than one course is no longer considered homeschooled and therefore is not eligible for reimbursement of costs incurred by the parent.

Homeschooling that is provided above and beyond a full-time school-based program is not eligible for reimbursement.

Responsibilities:

Parents

1. It is the responsibility of the parent to officially register/enroll their child at a school in the community in which they are resident, and to inform the principal and DEA in writing of their intention to homeschool their child.
2. The parent has the primary responsibility for providing the homeschooling program. They must ensure the homeschooling program fulfils the curriculum standards set by the Minister, and provide a copy of this program to the principal at the beginning of the school year. Guidance in development can be provided by the principal. Review and approval of the proposed program is made by the DEA/CSFN.
3. This program should include a breakdown of expected costs and how those costs relate back to the curriculum.
4. The parent and principal must work on an agreed form of assessment. The parent must, twice per year, provide to the principal a sampling of assessments that show the progress of the student and discuss this progress with the principal. The parent must make reasonable efforts to implement changes to the homeschooling program that are made by the principal to improve the progress of the student, if any are made.
5. The parent can request up to \$1000 in reimbursements for costs incurred in providing the homeschooling program, subject to the approval of the DEA/CSFN. It is the responsibility of the parent to submit claims for reimbursement to the DEA/CSFN in a timely fashion, and no later than April 30th of the school year for which the claims are being submitted. Original copies of all receipts related to a reimbursement request must be provided, along with an explanation of the expenditure and how it relates to the homeschooling program.

Student

1. A student participating in the homeschooling program is expected to actively participate in the homeschooling program.
2. The student is expected to be available for parent-principal consultation, and actively participate in that review.

Principal

1. The principal must ensure that the student is registered at their school and that the student's record in SIS reflects that they are part of a homeschooling program. This is to ensure that the student is counted properly, so that:
 - a. the department funds the DEA/CSFN for that student; and
 - b. the DEA can then provide reimbursements to the parents of a homeschooled child.
2. The principal must work with the parent and DEA/CSFN in accordance with the regulations, to ensure that the homeschooling program matches both the needs of the student and the Ministerial approved curriculum. This includes making recommendations to the DEA regarding the homeschooling program and supervision.
3. The principal is expected to provide support during the school year for homeschooled students registered at their school. This includes working with parents on a mutually agreeable method of assessment and twice yearly (academic year) discussions with the parent regarding the progress of the student, as well as recommendations for improving progress if needed. The principal must report to Regional School Operations and the DEA/CSFN on the progress of the homeschooled student.
4. The principal will make program materials as well as school facilities available to homeschooling programs, including, but not limited to, computer labs, library services and gym equipment. Homeschooled students should be allowed to try-out for school sports teams and be members of school groups and clubs, with the exception of student council.

DEA/CSFN

1. It is the responsibility of the DEA/CSFN to supervise homeschooling programs, as well as to reimburse the costs of homeschooling to parents, within the limits set out in this directive.
2. Supervision of homeschooling programs includes:
 - Acting on the request of a parent to homeschool their child by requesting that the principal review and recommend the proposed homeschooling program.

- Reviewing reports on homeschooling programs from the principal or from the director and deciding to approve or not approve the proposed program.
3. The DEA may—on the recommendation of the principal and after their own investigation which should involve parent interviews and review of all relevant material—terminate a homeschooling program or permit the continuation of the program with changes the DEA considers appropriate. If the DEA decides to terminate the homeschooling program the DEA must give written notice of its determination to both the principal and to the parent providing the homeschooling program, and provide a specific date on which the homesschooling program will be terminated.

Reimbursement

1. Reimbursement of homeschooling costs should be made in a timely fashion, ideally within 45 days of receiving a request for reimbursement, per the example set in the Financial Administration Manual, 803-3. All reimbursement decisions and payments for approved expenses should be made by the end of the school year.
2. If a DEA/CSFN decides that a requested reimbursement is illegitimate or unwarranted, an explanation of their reasoning should be provided in writing to the parent in a timely fashion. The DEA should consult with the principal as to whether a particular expense is related to an approved aspect of the curriculum.
3. The DEA should make itself available to inquiries from parents with respect to future costs and the potential for reimbursement. The DEA/CSFN should develop a policy setting out timelines, deadlines and procedures for reimbursements, including information about where, how and with whom a parent can make a request for reimbursement. Copies of any policies that are developed by the DEA/CSFN should be provided to parents of homeschooled students.
4. DEAs/CSFN are also responsible for reporting the reimbursements as part of their mandated financial reporting.
5. All decisions made regarding a homeschool program should be through formal motions made at DEA/CSFN meetings and be recorded in the minutes. This includes the approval of the homeschool programs and approval for any and all expenses reimbursed (or denied, with explanation). Copies of these motions should be filed with other relevant documents pertaining to the individual homeschool program file.

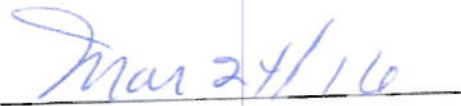
Department

The department has the responsibility of funding the DEA/CSFN to the amount of \$1000 per homeschooled student, as set out in this directive. The department also has the responsibility of maintaining the SIS and ensuring that the Registrar maintains and updates the student register to reflect the registration of homeschooled students in their community.

Approval:



Minister of Education



Date

Related Documents: \

Homeschooling Regulations and Transition Regulations 2014-2016

Contacts: DEA Development Coordinator
 Director, Corporate Services