

TEXTBOOKS, TRANSPORTATION AND TAX MONIES

This is the time of year when we receive numerous calls in the office, because districts are giving grief to administrators of our schools. Here is a rundown of the most common questions we have received:

TEXTBOOKS:



Q: Can the district charge for shipping?

A: No, not unless you have specified that you wish overnight delivery or some special delivery accommodations.

Q: Can the district take the costs of shipping out of my allocation?

A: No. Any costs of shipping are to be made from district monies.

Q: Can a district limit my school to a specific allocation from the state?

A: No. The law specifies "equitable" not equal treatment. In other words, if the district is meeting its students' needs, it must meet your needs. A caution: that means that we ought to be reasonable in our requests.

Q: Can the district tell me what books I can and cannot order?

A: No. As long as the book has met the "religion" test, or is on the approved list, it may be ordered. Remember, the operative word is "equitable"; the district cannot force you to use the same textbooks they do.

TRANSPORTATION:



Q: Can the district deny transportation to a student who makes a request after April 1st?

A: It is within their discretion to deny transportation, but you can appeal for good reason. Caution: we have never seen a parent appeal successfully.

Q: What about a student who transfers or who moves into the district?

A: The parent has 30 days to make the request.

Q: What about students who live more than 15 miles?

A: Again, it's up to the discretion of the district. The student could be dropped off at a drop-off point, usually, one of the district's schools and then taken to the Catholic school, even if that pickup point is more than 15 miles away. Also, if the district picks up other students (other than special ed.), and there is an empty seat, and the bus passes the student's home, the district may pick up the student.

Q: Is there a limit to the time a student rides the bus to the Catholic school?

A: No. There have been cases where students spend 90 minutes each way, and where the commissioner has ruled that this is not unreasonable.

Q: Can the district provide a "late bus" or after-school activities?

A: Parents may request such a bus.

EFFECTIVE CONSULTATION

The New York State Education Department and the Catholic Conference have recently held meetings concerning the requirements of the NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT (NCLB). Some of the federal education programs authorized by the law require the equitable participation of private school students and teachers. Meaningful and timely consultation among the private sector and the state education agency (SEA) and the local educational agency (LEA) is vital if the delivery of services from these programs is to be successful. In addition, other entities such as institutions of higher education and community-based organizations receive funds for programs requiring an offer of equitable services to private school students and teachers. These are also vital links to federal program services and benefits. Regular contact with entities receiving grants from the US Department of Education can help build a cooperative relationship that can lead to better and more effective program services. Here is a helpful checklist of items to consider and some things to make sure you find out from grant recipients, especially your LEA. It is a good idea to keep a written record of all deliberations.

- Some programs require the equitable participation of private school students.
- Programs for private school students must be designed to meet the particular needs of the private school students being served.
- Timely and meaningful consultation between public and private school officials is required. The law specifies topics that, at a minimum, must be discussed.
- Each district will have its own timetable for designing and developing programs and obligating the funds. It is recommended that you ask about this.
- Ask how much money is anticipated for private school students for the next school year.
- Ask if the services requested can be offered and how, where, and by whom would the services be provided.
- Ask how the services will be assessed. Will this assessment look at changes in academic performance in the classroom? How will the results of the assessment be used to plan the program for next year and improve results?
- Regular, face-to-face meetings are important in building a collaborative relationship and ensuring that federal education programs are effective for students.
- What is the schedule of meetings for the school year? Who is responsible for an agenda for the meeting? How can I add items to the meeting agenda? Who will record and distribute minutes following each meeting?

For more information, contact:

Dept. of Education - U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
www.usccb.org/education click on "Division of Catholic Schools and Public Policy"

Office of Nonpublic Education - U.S. Dept. of Education
www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/NonPublic