

# WARREN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** John H. Grant, Superintendent  
**FROM:** Larry D. Conrad  
**Subject:** Student Participation Fees for Athletic & Extracurricular Activities  
**Date:** May 18, 2005

Here is a compilation of some of the brief research I was able to complete in addressing student participation fees. The intent of this report is merely to provide some background for discussion around assessment of student participation fees to generate new revenue in support of the fiscal budget of the district. At the end of this report are the figures that were presented at the Finance Committee meeting on Monday, May 16, 2005, as potential revenues for the district in 2005-06. As is the case in most instances of revenue projections, there is much room for discussion on the actual potential of this source.

### **GENERAL OVERVIEWS:**

Most of the information and discussion points that follow were gleaned from a number of school districts outside of the state of Pennsylvania. Ohio, Colorado, Indiana, Minnesota and a few others appear to have been involved in “pay-to-participate” programs from a number of years and much of the information to follow came from web sites for public schools in these states.

### **Purpose/Objective: Why consider student participation fees?**

The revenue generated from fees assessed middle and high school level students for participation in athletics and/or extracurricular activities provided by the school district will help to defray the cost of such activities and enable the district to continue existing programs and possibly expand those programs in the future.

### **What Are Participation Fees?**

A participation fee is a financial assessment made by a school district for its students to participate on athletic teams or other extracurricular activities. It should be noted that assessing fees are not made for activities associated with awarding course credit as part of the district’s curriculum.

### **What Participation Fees Are Not**

Participation fees do not guarantee a spot on an athletic team or playing time on that team. All conditions of being a team member apply as if the fee did not exist – and that includes playing time based on the coaches’ decision of a student’s athletic ability.

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Participation fees do not confer authority to make demands of the school relative to the athletic program. The school district administration must maintain complete control, even if it cannot completely fund the program. The school district depends on participation fees and outside contributions from booster groups and corporate sponsors to assure the availability of athletic and extracurricular activities.

### **Are all middle and high school level students required to pay a fee?**

**No.** Participation in athletics and/or extracurricular activities is voluntary on the part of each student. Only students who choose to participate in school-sponsored athletics and/or extracurricular activities (sports, intramurals, clubs, etc.) in which there is an adult supervising students beyond the instructional day are required to pay a fee. Students who do not participate in athletics and/or extracurricular activities are not required to pay a fee.

### **Are there any after-school activities that do not require the payment of a participation fee?**

**Yes.** Students who are required to participate in an extracurricular activity, such as concerts or plays, as part of the class requirement to receive course credit do not pay a participation fee. All students will have the opportunity to address the administration to determine what activities are listed as extracurricular and require the payment of a fee to participate.

### **How much are the fees?**

A fee structure for all athletic and extracurricular activities will be developed by the administration and submitted to the Board of Education for its approval each year when the fiscal budget is approved. Every effort will be made to maintain a reasonable fee structure to assure that every student will have an opportunity to participate in athletics and/or extracurricular activities that they may choose. Families who qualify for free and reduced meals through the district's association with the **National School Lunch Program** may be waived from paying athletic and/or extracurricular participation fees.

### **When will fees be paid?**

Students will be afforded the opportunity to try out for athletic teams and/or other extracurricular activities before paying a fee. Once the student is informed that he/she has been selected for the team or activity, the fee will be required to be paid.

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## **Rationale for Participation Fees**

- ✓ In tight economic times, school districts have seen participation fees as a last resort in choosing between offering extracurricular athletic programming and cutting back or not sponsoring such programs at all.
- ✓ In an overall budget picture, school districts are asking all programs to be subject to cuts, and some kind of outside financing so that each department/program contributes its share to the reduction effort.

## **Rationale Against Participation Fees**

- ✓ Participation has long been a privilege available to all students meeting academic and other eligibility criteria. Athletic participation fees threaten to create teams that will be made up of only those families within a school district with the ability to pay – a notion not much different than some of the elite travel teams that exist in non-school sports.
- ✓ Participation fees make very little positive difference in the budget for athletics and have the potential to do more harm than good to the overall school budget.
- ✓ The athletic budget on average nationally is less than 1 or 2 percent of the total budget, hardly a place to solve the problems of local school finance.
- ✓ In days of increased competition to attract families to move into communities, or have students transfer into neighboring districts, the existence of participation fees or the rates being charged may become a determining factor in where a family purchases a home or where a youngster attends school.
- ✓ Imposing participation fees reduces student involvement and paid attendance at athletic events, further negating much of the new revenue anticipated.

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## POLICY CONSIDERATION:

### **Policy No.XXXXX: Student Athletic and Extracurricular Participation Fees**

The Board of Education recognizes the value and importance that athletics and extracurricular activities play in the overall development of the district's students. The Board also recognizes that the costs for offering such activities may present budgetary constraints to the regular educational programs, and consequently, has determined that student participation fees will be assessed to help offset the escalating costs of offering a variety of athletic and extracurricular activities.

**xxxx.x** The Board shall establish a list of fees which may be assessed to students who choose to participate in athletics and/or extracurricular activities sponsored by the district. Such list of fees shall be filed annually in the office of the Superintendent of Schools and reported to appropriate local, State and Federal agencies as may be required. School officials shall issue to each student a receipt for fees collected.

**xxxx.x** Special school activities during the normal school day requiring costs to students that might prevent some students from participating are prohibited. No student will be deprived of participation in any special school activity because of inability to pay.

**xxxx.x** Fees may be waived or reduced in the event of inability to pay. Students who qualify for free and reduced meal eligibility through the National School Lunch Program will receive consideration for a waiver of fees associated with their participating in athletic and/or extracurricular activities.

**xxxx.x** Once fees have been paid, any student who may transfer to another school within the district will not be assessed additional fees for the participating in the same activities in the new school for that year.

**xxxx.x** If a student transfers from the Warren County School District to another local education agency or is compelled to withdraw because of illness or for any other good and valid reason, then the student/parent/guardian shall be entitled for consideration to a partial refund of the fees paid.

Adoption Date -  
Practice -  
Legal Reference -

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## NOTES:

- Although the state of Pennsylvania has not embraced the idea of student participation fees to the extent of many other states, it appears there is more and more movement in this area.

Examples of fees in northwest Pennsylvania schools:

<u>Crawford Central SD, Meadville</u>	-	\$20/year parking fee
<u>Fairview SD, Erie</u>	-	\$45/year activity fee
<u>McDowell HS, Erie</u>	-	\$40/year Gr 9-12 FB
	-	\$25/year Gr 7-8 FB
	-	\$40/year Gr 9-12 All others
	-	\$25/year Gr 7-8 All others
<u>Seneca, Erie</u>	-	\$30/year Gr 9-12 All activ
	-	\$15/year Gr 7-8 All activities (Max \$90/Family)

Other Pennsylvania examples:

<u>Southern Lehigh School District</u>	-	\$10 charge for physicals
	-	\$50 athletic participation fee

- Many of the states who were reviewed for their policy and/or practices of assessing student participation fees appear to be states which require a referendum vote to approve public school budgets.

Some examples:

<u>Jefferson County, Colorado</u>	-	\$100 1 <sup>st</sup> sport/student
	-	\$ 85 2 <sup>nd</sup> sport/student
	-	\$ 70 3 <sup>rd</sup> sport/student
	-	\$ 55 4 <sup>th</sup> sport/student
	-	\$100/yr student parking
	-	\$170/yr outdoor lab fee
Technology Fee	-	\$5/school year(Elem)
	-	\$10/school year(MS/HS)

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## Crookston Public Schools, Minnesota

### Athletics

Baseball	Gr 7-8	\$ 60	Fee
	Gr 9-12	\$100	Fee
Basketball	Gr 7-8	\$ 60	Fee
	Gr 9-12	\$100	Fee
Football	Gr 7-8	\$ 60	Fee
	Gr 9-12	\$100	Fee
Golf	Gr 7-8	\$ 60	Fee
	Gr 9-12	\$100	Fee
Soccer	Gr 7-8	\$ 60	Fee
	Gr 9-12	\$100	Fee
Softball	Gr 7-8	\$ 60	Fee
	Gr 9-12	\$100	Fee
Girls Swim	Gr 7-8	\$ 60	Fee
	Gr 9-12	\$100	Fee
Tennis	Gr 7-8	\$ 60	Fee
	Gr 9-12	\$100	Fee
Track	Gr 7-8	\$ 60	Fee
	Gr 9-12	\$100	Fee
Volleyball	Gr 7-8	\$ 60	Fee
	Gr 9-12	\$100	Fee
Wrestling	Gr 7-8	\$ 60	Fee
	Gr 9-12	\$100	Fee

### Fine Arts and Extracurricular

Instrument Fee	Gr 7-12	\$50	Fee
Choir	Gr 9-12	\$25	Fee
Orchestra	Gr 7-12	\$40	Fee
Junior High Band	Gr 7-8	\$35	Fee
Senior High Band	Gr 9-12	\$50	Fee
Speech	Gr 7-12	\$40	Fee
Knowledge Bowl	Gr 9-12	\$40	Fee
One-Act Play	Gr 8-12	\$40	Fee
Three-Act Play	Gr 8-12	\$40	Fee
Cheerleading	Gr 8-12	\$40	Fee

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## Preliminary Budget Presentation for 2005-06

During the budget discussions at the Finance Committee of the board on May 16, 2005, potential new revenue generation was reviewed relative to student participation fees. Those proposed revenues were generated on the following assumptions or projections:

Parking Fees	400 students @ \$200/year	=	\$ 80,000	
Student Activity Fee	1,700 students @ \$200	=	\$340,000	Gr 9-12
	400 students @ \$100	=	\$ 40,000	Gr 6-8
Eliminate ADM's	5,000 @ \$3/ADM	=	\$ 15,000	
Technology Fee	\$25/student	=	<u>\$128,000</u>	
Total Estimated New Revenue			<b>\$603,000</b>	