

Management of Public Funds – Regulation

All public funds received, regardless of source, must be used to support the educational mission of Portsmouth Public Schools (PPS). The source of public funds does not mitigate the requirement to properly manage and account for funds entrusted to PPS. Funding sources include, but are not limited to, the following: appropriated federal, state, and city revenue in the general fund, textbook fund, and construction fund; federal funds including Title I and IDEA grants, and grant funds from other sources; and print shop and cafeteria funds. The best test to use when determining whether an expenditure is appropriate is called the “public scrutiny test.” The test is simple and merely asks whether the tax-paying public would view the expenditure as necessary to support public education. If you are already questioning whether the expenditure is appropriate, it may very well not be appropriate. This regulation identifies specific practices and procedures to be followed by all PPS employees when using public funds.

I. **Food and Refreshments**

A. **Meetings and Conferences**

Meals/snacks can be provided and paid for with public funds if the meeting is four (4) hours or more and separate breaks would be disruptive to the meeting objectives. Meals and snacks are normally a personal expense. Any meal or snack served must be a reasonable price (normally less than or equal to the per diem rate) and an integral part of the session in order to use public funds.

B. **Coffee and Beverages**

Coffee and other beverages are normally a personal expense. A voluntary collection can be made from those who desire to have coffee and other beverages in the school/department. Schools/departments with a vending machine that is used primarily by staff may use profits to purchase coffee and other beverages for staff members. Except for meetings and conferences (Item A), public areas (Item E), and School Board meetings (Item G), coffee and beverages shall not be purchased with public funds.

C. **Employee Break Room Supplies**

Public funds should not be used to stock supplies such as plastic ware and paper products in employee break rooms. A voluntary collection can be made from those who desire to have such supplies, or vending machine profits from machines used primarily by staff can be used for these supplies. Medicine for staff and employees is considered a personal expense and shall not be purchased with public funds.

D. **Individual Receptions**

Receptions for individual employees should never be paid from public funds. This includes retirement dinners, staff meals, welcome aboard receptions, and similar gatherings where food and/or refreshments may be served. Voluntary collections can be taken from those attending such gatherings, or, if specifically

authorized by the grant manager or building administrator, paid by the grant or school activity fund. Grants may have more restrictive guidelines concerning the use of public funds, and the grant manager is responsible for managing the grant in accordance with the grant guidelines/regulations.

E. Public Areas

In some cases, a building or part of a building is routinely open to the public for conducting PPS business. The Division Superintendent's Office and school principals' offices are such locations. Having refreshments of nominal value available to members of the public, such as coffee and other nominal snacks/beverages, are considered a courtesy and are authorized in these specific locations.

F. Acceptable Occasions

The School Board and/or Division Superintendent may determine that the serving of food or refreshments is appropriate for selected occasions. The annual retirement reception for all PPS employees is one such example. However, even at these events, which are normally held after business hours, any alcohol served must be a personal expense.

G. School Board Meetings

The School Board meets at times that are intended to be convenient for the general public. Meetings routinely span the normal dinner hour. Serving meals of reasonable value to Board members and staff required to attend Board meetings is considered to be an appropriate expense.

H. Student Programs/Incentives

Food bought for students from public funds as part of an initiative, a program, or an incentive (e.g., SOL rewards, honor roll) shall be preapproved and authorized by the school principal.

II. Gifts

A. Employee Gifts

Expenditures of public funds for gifts to staff and employees are not authorized. This includes gifts purchased for staff birthdays or other personal occasions, except if paid from a staff hospitality account(s).

B. Tokens

The purchase of tokens of nominal value (e.g., PPS coffee mugs, pens, tote bags, PPS T-shirts/apparel, etc.) that promote PPS or present PPS in a favorable light are authorized. Nominal value is defined as being \$10.00 or less per item. These purchases must be preapproved by the school principal or an individual who serves in a directorship or a higher position. Budgeting for such items is the responsibility of the individual department or school.

III. **Flowers**

A. Sympathy and Congratulations

The use of public funds for the purchase of flowers is restricted to the few occasions where a public expression of sympathy or congratulations has been determined by the School Board or the Division Superintendent to be in the best interests of the division. Donations can be made in lieu of flowers if requested by the family. Written expressions of condolence are encouraged for all other occasions where flowers are not appropriate.

B. Individual Achievements

Unless they are part of the award ceremony, flowers are not appropriate for individual achievements. The teacher of the year ceremony has traditionally been an exception to this provision.

C. School Activities

Flowers/decorations purchased for proms, dances, homecomings, etc., may be purchased out of school activity funds, if authorized by the school principal.

IV. **Awards and Recognition**

Awards to recognize individual or group performances serve an important role in an organization.

A. Performance-Based Awards

Awards for performance should be of reasonable value such as a plaque or a savings bond. When presented to an employee, awards should be reserved to recognize sustained performance over a period of time or for noteworthy one-time performances.

B. External Awards

At times, awards are appropriate for presentation to people or organizations external to PPS. External awards or tokens of recognition shall be determined by the School Board and/or the Division Superintendent.

V. **Break Room Equipment**

Microwaves, refrigerators, coffee pots, and toaster ovens may be procured with public funds for use in public reception areas and employee break rooms. Otherwise, these items must be purchased with personal funds. In all instances, all fire marshal safety restrictions must be observed. These items are not authorized in classrooms and offices.

VI. Holiday Parties, Décor, and Cards

A. Holiday Décor

Office holiday decorations shall not be purchased with public funds. School activity funds, if authorized by the school principal, may be used.

B. Holiday Cards

Holiday cards shall not be purchased with public funds.

C. Holiday Parties

Staff holiday parties and meals are a personal expense unless school activity funds are authorized by the school principal. Voluntary collections may be taken to fund holiday events. Public funds shall not be used for holiday parties.

Effective July 1, 2009