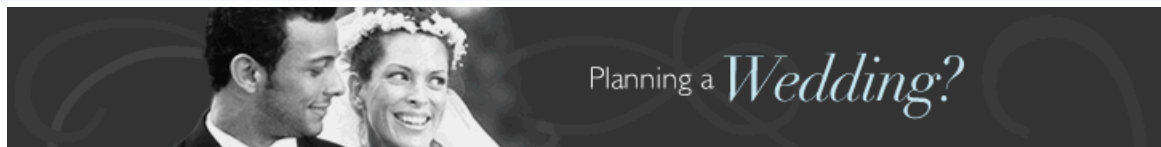


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Teachers told: You plug in, you pay up

Schools try to save by charging for use of fans, fridges

June 30, 2007

BY PEGGY WALSH-SARNECKI
FREE PRESS EDUCATION WRITER

Got a desk clock in your office? How about a small fan, a little extra light or even a mini-fridge?

Plugging in those personal amenities at work will cost teachers and employees money in a small, but growing, number of school districts. By making employees who bring in fans, space heaters and other small devices pay a fee to offset the electricity those appliances use, district administrators think they have a promising new way to help control costs after years of budget cuts. Grosse Pointe Public Schools initiated a "pay to plug" measure last spring, and Chippewa Valley Public Schools is considering doing the same for this fall.

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"We don't want to cut services for kids or families," said Chippewa Valley spokeswoman Diane Blain. "Pay to plug is just asking employees to step up and help us. Whether or not it will be implemented still remains to be seen."

Chippewa Valley estimates it would offset at least \$25,000 in electrical costs with its system, whether staff members pay the extra fees or decide not to bring devices in because of it. The district cut \$4.7 million out of its \$120-million budget for the upcoming school year.

Grosse Pointe expects to save \$35,000 to \$45,000 per year with its restrictions.

"We actually did it a couple of years ago and the reaction was pretty strong, and we rescinded it," said business manager Chris

Fenton. "We're doing it again this year, and we got a little bit of negative feedback, but it wasn't as overwhelming because most people know of the delicate financial situation at the state level."

Fenton said the plan is part of an overall package of energy-saving measures, including more efficient boilers, windows and lights.

"Now we're trying to adjust the human factor, turning off lights, turning off computers, and pay to plug," Fenton said. "If you take all of those pieces, they all add up and you can get to \$100,000 pretty quick, and now you're looking at the cost of a couple of teachers."

Teachers nationally are already spending an average of \$500 per year for school supplies, said Doug Pratt, director of communications for the Michigan Education Association, the state's largest teachers union, which represents both districts.

"I have no problem talking about energy conservation, but when we're talking about school districts telling teachers they can't bring a fan from home into the classroom to help make the learning environment more livable for students, that really shows the financial situation of the state," Pratt said.

"If we're at the point where we're pinching pennies and unable to run pencil sharpeners, there's obviously not enough revenue coming in," he said.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Pay to plug

Grosse Pointe Public Schools began charging employees earlier this year for the electricity used for certain personal items, and Chippewa Valley Public Schools is considering a similar system. Here are the proposed fees for certain items in the 2007-08 school year.

Appliance	Grosse Pointe	Chippewa Valley
Air purifier	\$20	\$15
Coffee pots	\$30	\$27
Microwave	\$25	\$23
Large refrigerator	\$150	\$139
Small refrigerator	\$75	\$70
Space heater	\$110	\$59
Toaster	\$10	\$8

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syzygy

All I see is business people playing golf with clients and giving things like Tigers tickets to families of clients. I know people - low and high level business people - being flown to places like Cabo and Orlando for 'meetings' and 'conventions' where they only play around and spend company money. I see company cars being driven. I see suites filled at every arena and concert venue.

...and the school districts are 'wasting money' so they should be charging the teachers for plugging in a fan? Are you f***ing KIDDING ME? This on top of not paying for necessary school supplies that teachers are paying for out of their own pockets?

No wonder people are leaving Michigan. Its full of total morons.

Posted: Thu Jul 05, 2007 7:42 am

KingofWestland

OK, enli makes a point. There is a lot of waste in school districts. This certainly includes the paid nonworkers loosely called things like "curriculum leaders". I think the state should mandate that a minimum percentage of any district budget must be spent on classrooms at the school sites.

Furthermore, I think bureaucrats who used to be teachers should lose their credentials if they are not teaching full time in an actual classroom for three years in a row. Too many former teachers buried in bureaucracy at district offices have probably forgotten how to teach. It is not healthy to give up a real profession for "busywork" outside of the classroom.

I don't think teachers should pay for the electricity to run necessary fans, but a classroom fridge is a luxury that it would be reasonable to bill teachers for. King out.

Posted: Tue Jul 03, 2007 8:58 pm

ChrisM

Yet another reason not to teach in Detroit! Are you kidding???!?!!

Posted: Tue Jul 03, 2007 4:30 pm

mnbrewer

When a teacher must bring items into the classroom at their own expense because of deficient facilities (fans, clocks, etc.), the very LEAST the school can do is pay for the power to run them. What a slap in the face for every teacher everywhere who purchases such things because none are available through channels.

Posted: Tue Jul 03, 2007 3:34 pm

enli

Ok, I'll pay for the fan I bought and brought into my 90 degree classroom and sat behind my desk. And I'll take home the three other fans I bought and brought into the classroom to cool my children so they wouldn't have to suffer in that kind of heat.

How about Detroit Public Schools dumps some of those so-called Curriculum Leaders who do absolutely nothing, teach no classes, disappear for hours every day, and run out of the building before the last hour's bell even rings before they worry about my fan?

Cutting waste is good - making working conditions impossible will guarantee that teacher turnover continues to climb year by year.

Posted: Tue Jul 03, 2007 3:25 pm

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