

Community Relations

Use of School Facilities, Buildings and Grounds

General Philosophy

The Regional School District 18 Board of Education wishes to encourage the community use of the Regional School District 18 facilities, buildings and grounds for meetings and events intended for recreation, self-improvement, community programs or other non-commercial uses consistent with the public interest, when such use does not interfere with the school program or school-sponsored activities.

The use of Regional School District 18 facilities and grounds for school purposes has precedence over all other uses. Persons and/or organizations using school facilities and grounds must abide by school conduct rules of Regional School District 18 at all times.

The improvement of community living, one of the major objectives of public education, can be greatly enhanced by the use of these policies and regulations, which encourages the use of the school buildings and grounds by many and varied groups.

Building and Grounds Usage Application and Approval Process

All usage of Regional School District 18 buildings and grounds by non-school persons or groups require that a "School Buildings and Grounds Application Form" be submitted to the Director of Facilities. Fee payments to Regional School District 18 and approval from the Director of Facilities must be obtained (based on submission of the "School Buildings and Grounds Application Form" and appropriate fee schedules) prior to facilities usage.

Only organizations directly associated with Regional School District 18 are exempt* from submitting the appropriate application. Examples of these exempt groups are:

- Regional School District 18 administered educational programs or activities.
- Regional School District 18 administration, faculty, staff, Board of Education or Parent Teacher Organization activities.
- Official meetings of the Towns of Lyme or Old Lyme and/or the activities and meetings of their departments or agencies, excluding Parks and Recreation.

PLEASE NOTE: *Any exempt groups wishing to use Regional School District 18 buildings or grounds must notify the Director of Facilities Secretary or the School Building Administrator's Secretary at least 24 hours prior to facilities usage. The Director of Facilities may deny an exempt organization request if the school district buildings or grounds are in use or otherwise unavailable.

General Usage of School Buildings and Grounds

1. School facilities, buildings and grounds are available outside school scheduled usage. Facilities, buildings and grounds summer rental is not available except for the HS/MS Turf Field which may be rented during the summer in accordance with the regulations of this policy.
2. Consistent with the guidelines of this policy, the Director of Facilities for Regional School District 18 shall develop and promulgate regulations and associated forms governing the use of school buildings and grounds by organizations.
3. School facilities may be rented for religious services and instruction and to other non-school/town organizations on a temporary or emergency basis by church groups or community groups established in the Towns of Lyme and Old Lyme.
4. Groups requesting use of buildings or athletic fields must identify specific facilities desired, and approval will be given for those specific facilities only.

5. All school equipment in the premises shall be in the charge and control of the Director of Facilities or his/her designee, and arrangements for on-site equipment use shall be made directly with the Director of Facilities by organizations using school facilities.
6. Athletic field use is subject to approval by the Director of Facilities based on field conditions and weather/climate.
7. If a community group is denied the use of Regional School District 18 school facilities by the Director of Facilities, the group may appeal that decision to the Superintendent of Schools and, if necessary, to the Regional School District 18 Board of Education.

Eligible Organizations and Priority Use

The following groups are considered to be eligible to use Regional School District 18 facilities, buildings and grounds and shall be given priority for their usage in the order given below:

1. Regional School District 18 educational programs.
2. Regional School District 18 student activities.
3. Regional School District 18 administration, faculty, staff or PTO activities.
4. The Towns of Lyme and Old Lyme departmental or agency activities.
5. Activities sponsored by and for local organizations promoting the physical, political or cultural well-being of the citizens of the Towns of Lyme and Old Lyme.
6. Private organizations, private businesses or enterprises located in the Towns of Lyme or Old Lyme.
7. Taxpayers of Lyme and Old Lyme.
8. Out-of-town organizations.

Restrictions on Use of School Facilities

The following types of activities will not be permitted in any Regional School District 18 building, facility or on the grounds:

1. Activities which are unlawful in nature, including, but not limited to, the use or possession of alcohol, illegal or controlled substances or tobacco. Any violations may justify permanent restriction on the use of Regional School District 18 facilities by the organization involved.
2. Fundraising or sales by vendors shall be prohibited, except as permitted by the Director of Facilities to community-based groups for an educational, civic or charitable purpose.
3. Refreshments in buildings will be limited to the school cafeteria unless specifically permitted by the Director of Facilities.
4. Commercial advertising by non-school groups shall be prohibited.
5. Any purpose that is in conflict with mission or goals of Regional School District 18 shall be prohibited.
6. Any activity which may be injurious to buildings, grounds and/or equipment of the schools or which may thereafter negatively affect public welfare and safety shall be prohibited in Regional School District 18 facilities.
7. In accordance with Board of Education policies, use or possession of alcoholic beverages or unauthorized controlled substances shall not be permitted on school property. There shall be no smoking in or on Regional School District 18 facilities or grounds.
8. Any activity, advertising and/or decorations determined to be in bad taste by the Board of Education, the Director of Facilities or the building administrator shall not be allowed in or on Regional School District 18 facilities or grounds.
9. Activities that advocate, teach or preach any doctrine or theory subversive to the Constitution or laws of the State of Connecticut or of the United States, or that which advocates a social or political change, violence or revolution.
10. Anything in conflict with school activities.

Use of School District Facilities under Americans with Disabilities Act

Regional School District 18 complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Public Law 101-336 (ADA), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. The Americans with Disabilities Act, as applies to school districts, requires that no individual shall, on the basis of disability, be denied the benefits of school district services, programs or activities.

Use of School Equipment or Property

School equipment or property may be used by or loaned to community groups for an educational, civic or charitable purpose when:

1. the group using or borrowing school equipment agrees to accept responsibility for repairing or replacing any equipment damaged or lost while in its possession.
2. the equipment is not unusually expensive or easily damaged.
3. the equipment is in good condition.
4. the group will provide a competent operator for equipment loaned.

Supervision

1. Uniformed police officers or other paid security agents are required at the users' expense for all activities where the probable number of people seems great enough to present a traffic or crowd control problem. Police service is also required for any organization that presents volatile issues to which there might be public reaction and possible disorder. The number of police officers or paid security agents to be employed for any function will be determined by the Director of Facilities.
2. All groups using school facilities must designate an adult to be responsible for the overall supervision of the group. Such responsibility shall include complete supervision of the group from the time the first member arrives until the last has left the premises. The responsible adult shall not leave the property until all persons under his/her supervision have left.

Liability

1. Those groups or individuals applying for use of Regional School District 18 facilities assume all responsibility and liability for any injury to persons, and for injury to, or loss of, school or private property in connection with the use of the building. The applicant must hold Regional School District 18 harmless for any such losses or damage.
2. Each organization renting school facilities must have group insurance for personal liability coverage for negligent acts as tenants. Proof of insurance coverage of a nature and amount satisfactory to the Director of Facilities shall be provided to the Director of Facilities prior to the use of Regional School District 18 facilities, buildings or grounds.
3. Proof of insurance needs to be provided certifying that Regional School District 18 is a named insured in an amount satisfactory to the Director of Facilities, or the insurance company of those requesting use of school facilities agrees to indemnify, defend, protect or hold harmless Regional School District 18 against any legal claim of any nature whatsoever arising from the organization's use of the school district facilities, buildings and grounds.

Regional School District 18 Building and Fields Usage/Fees Structure

A fee structure has been established which reimburses the school district for building and field space rental and facility services. All fees are listed on the School Building and Grounds Application Form.

Waiver of Usage/Rental Fees

Rental Fees, but not Facilities Service Fees, will be waived for the following groups:

1. Non-profit organizations which:
 - a. work directly with school age children in the Towns of Lyme or Old Lyme (minimum of 50% of participants to be Lyme/Old Lyme residents);

OR

- b. directly benefit the school district through their efforts;

OR

c. serve the Towns of Lyme or Old Lyme;

OR

d. do not charge admissions, take collections or solicit donations;

OR

e. include the Red Cross, United Way, American Cancer Society, public health organizations, library associations, booster clubs, historical societies, rotary or lions clubs, veterans groups, Lyme Academy of Fine Arts, Florence Griswold Museum, and other non-profit organizations as determined by the Superintendent or his/her designee.

2. Town, state or federal government organizations using the schools for the purpose of meetings, official business or public disaster relief.

Exemption from rental fees for use of Regional School District 18 facilities shall not include exemption from custodial or cafeteria staff fees.

Cafeteria Facilities

In all cases where kitchen facilities are used, a cafeteria supervisor, approved by the Director of Facilities, must be in charge. An hourly fee will be administered for this service.

Custodial Service

1. An hourly fee will be charged for school custodial services based on current salary schedules and/or overtime schedules for custodial staff of Regional School District 18.

2. Custodian duties will consist of:

a. opening the school building at least one-half hour prior to any meeting or function;

b. providing necessary chairs, tables, equipment, etc., for the group using the facility;

c. protecting school property from being stolen, marked, defaced, abused, etc.;

d. determining that all groups using school facilities adhere to the closing hours;

e. securing school facilities after each function, i.e., clean, sweep down all used areas; put away all chairs, tables, equipment, etc.; check windows, lights, heat and ensure that all entrance doors are locked; check other specific facilities used, such as kitchens, locker rooms, library media centers, etc.

3. The Director of Facilities will be responsible for determining whether more than one custodian is needed for any function.

Legal Reference:

Connecticut General Statutes.

10-239 Use of school facilities for other purposes.

PA 97-290 An Act Enhancing Educational Choices and Opportunities.

Equal Access Act, 20 U.S.C. Sub-sections 4071-4074.

Good News Club vs. Milford Central School, Sup.Ct. 6-11-01.

Policy Adopted: June 15, 2022

Lyme/Old Lyme Board of Education.