



BUSINESS OFFICE QUICK GUIDE

Spending • Staff Recognition • Food • Classroom Donations

OUR SHARED GOAL: Support students and staff while protecting public resources and keeping purchases equitable, transparent, and compliant.



BEFORE YOU PROMISE, PURCHASE, POST, OR PAY

Good ideas are easier to support when Business Services is involved before a commitment is made. Contact **Purchasing Services** for help (253) 931-4970

- Confirm the district purpose and funding source.
- Make sure the purchase or recognition is allowable before announcing it.
- Small, occasional, de minimis, benefits may be acceptable when they are part of carrying out district business, but they should not become a routine employee perk.
- Obtain required approval and keep the documentation needed for audit. **Need to know what to keep?** Required documentation such as approvals, agendas, attendee information, and itemized receipts, as applicable. Grant authorization is needed when using grant funds.



STAFF RECOGNITION & INCENTIVES

Before offering an attendance recognition, prize, gift card, meal, or other recognition:

- Contact Business Services before communicating the recognition.
- Confirm the funding source and allowable use.

Example: Gift Cards are **not allowable** under general fund, but may be allowed through a grant if expressly noted in grant documents.

- Consider payroll/tax, bargaining, equity, and documentation
- Do not assume personal purchases can be reimbursed later. Preapproval is required.

BEST RULE:

Ask Purchasing Services before you announce an incentive.



FOOD & REFRESHMENTS

Food paid for with district funds should be reasonable, necessary, pre-approved, serve a documented public purpose, and directly benefit the district.

Typically appropriate:

- Qualifying trainings/meetings that extend through a normal meal period.
- Board/retreat, bargaining, parent/community, ceremony, grant, or instructional uses when allowable.

Typically not appropriate:

- Routine staff meetings, morale events, birthdays, staff appreciation meals, holiday parties, or social gatherings
- Purchases without required approval or documentation..

WANT TO CELEBRATE?

Food and refreshments are fine when paid for with personal, non-district funds.



FOUR QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU SPEND

1 What is the district purpose?

Can you clearly explain how the expenditure benefits students or district operations? Any personal or employee benefit should be incidental or de minimis to the primary district purpose

3 Do I have approval before spending?

Do not rely on approval or reimbursement after the fact.

2 Is the funding source allowable?

A purchase may be allowable from one source and prohibited from another.

4 Can I document it?

Would the purpose, approval, attendees when applicable, and itemized receipt make sense to an outside reviewer?

CLASSROOM DONATIONS & COMMON QUESTIONS

A quick reference for consistent, equitable, and audit-ready decisions



P-CARD QUICK CHECK

USE FOR

- Allowable district purchases with an appropriate district purpose.

DO NOT USE FOR

- Gifts/gift cards, donations, personal purchases, cash advances, salaries/wages, or other prohibited purchases.

EVERY PURCHASE NEEDS

- Approval, itemized receipt, clear district purpose, correct coding, and timely reconciliation.

REMEMBER

- A card working at the register does not make the purchase allowable.



CLASSROOM DONATIONS

❌ DO NOT POST OR SHARE

- Amazon wishlists
- Venmo or other direct-payment apps
- GoFundMe campaigns
- Personal classroom fundraising through social media

Why: These approaches can create inequities, confusion for families, and compliance concerns.

✅ APPROVED CLASSROOM FUNDRAISING

Use DonorsChoose for classroom-based fundraising. It supports transparency, security, equity, and district visibility.

- Coordinate with your principal before posting a project.
- Direct donors to district- or school-led giving opportunities when appropriate.



COMMON SCENARIOS

We want to recognize employees with an attendance incentive.

Contact Business Services before announcing the recognition so funding, purchasing, payroll/tax, bargaining, and documentation requirements can be reviewed.

Can we buy lunch for staff as a thank-you?

Staff appreciation alone doesn't establish an allowable food purchase; however, food may be allowable when provided as part of an approved retreat, training, planning, or other qualified district activity.

We have a qualifying training that runs through lunch.

Food may be allowable when the meeting meets district requirements, is preapproved, and required documentation is retained.

A family wants to send money directly to a classroom or teacher

Do not use a personal payment account. Direct the donor to an approved district giving option or DonorsChoose.

The P-card accepted the charge. Are we okay?

Not necessarily. The purchase must still be allowable and supported by required approval and documentation.



WHEN IN DOUBT, ASK BEFORE YOU ACT.

Business Services / Purchasing can help identify an allowable path before district funds are committed.