



Low Income Awareness Checklist

Below are listed a series of statements which are indicators of areas where schools may need heightened awareness of the needs of low-income families and students.

Source:

http://www.goodshepvic.org.au/Assets/Files/Low_Income_Awareness_Checklist.pdf

1. Special Provision/Advocacy/Internal Policy Development

- Has developed special funds which are available to support the needs of low-income students.
- Has developed special provision for students who are homeless.
- Has developed special parent payment policies/concessions for students who are self-supporting and for families in crisis.
- Has developed a special grocery-necessities supply procedure for students and families who are on a low income or homeless.
- Has approached local traders and businesses to make arrangements for discounts for low-income students on school-related purchases (e.g. shoes, stationery, etc.).
- Provides active support and advocacy on behalf of students who have received transit or other fines.
- Has developed links with agencies and organizations in the local area so that specialist support and assistance can be provided for students and families in financial crisis.
- Has developed mechanisms (e.g. via school council, etc.) for researching and monitoring the impact of government social policies on low-income families and students, or has developed links with community agencies that are able to carry out such monitoring, leading to possible submissions to government for changes in policies.
- Has developed a policy regarding fundraising within the school, ensuring that low-income families are not pressured or embarrassed in any way.
- Has developed practices to ensure that staff members are regularly reminded of the needs of low-income families and students.
- Has policies available in languages evident in the community.
- Has access to or provides interpreters.

2. Accessing Eligible Services

- Makes every effort to ensure that low-income families are aware of their education-related social security and government concession entitlements. This could include: information sessions, regular bulletins about updates and changes; input at parents & friends meetings, display of appropriate information in school foyers, etc.
- Has taken special initiatives or developed specific support roles so that students and families can receive advice and support in the event of over-payment situations involving Youth Allowance (a not uncommon occurrence) or is able to direct students to agencies who can provide such support.

3. Parent Payments to Schools

- Has clear and fair arrangements for people to make 'parent payments' by instalments, on a basis which conforms to their capacity to pay.
- Has policies which ensure that students are not penalized or humiliated by their family's non-payment of school payments or levies (e.g., there are NO practices such as non-delivery of annual student magazine, report cover, food products for home economics classes, resulting from fee defaults).

4. Booklists/Equipment/IT requirements

- Monitors booklists and other equipment requirements to ensure that unnecessary items are not added as “compulsory” purchase items.
- Monitors booklists and other equipment requirements to ensure that expensive items are not included without sound educational reasons being provided in a structured school forum.
- Monitors booklists to ensure that textbooks are not changed from year to year without sound reasons being explored in an appropriate forum.
- Has developed procedures to ensure that second-hand textbooks can be purchased by students.
- Has developed provision for access to graphic calculators, tablets and laptop computers for students on low income (e.g., school-owned class sets; sale of second-hand calculators).
- Ensures that printing for educational materials is available at the school without cost for students, when necessary.

5. Uniforms

- Has a low-cost uniform and has defined what is meant by “low cost”.
- Has a policy regarding maintaining a low-cost uniform.
- Has a second-hand uniform shop/supply available for all parents.
- Provides uniforms through more than one supplier to keep costs down.
- Ensures that as many uniform items as possible, such as socks, sports gear, etc., can be sourced at low-cost clothing stores.
- Provides patterns and access to material so that families can make their own uniform items.
- Will provide uniform at no cost, when necessary, via a dignified and discreet process.
- Has eliminated unnecessary compulsory uniform items such as special monogrammed school bags and sports bags.

6. Excursions/Socials

- Has policies to monitor excursion costs to ensure that costs are kept to a minimum at each year level.
- Makes dignified and discreet provision for families who cannot afford even low-cost excursions for students to participate at no cost.
- Ensures that students who miss excursions are followed up discreetly; did they ring in “sick” because the family could not afford the excursion, etc.?
- Ensure that excursions do not include lunch stop-overs at fast food “restaurants” where students on low income could be embarrassed.
- Has a policy regarding trips, camps and large-scale excursions to ensure that costs are kept as low as possible and that provision is made to subsidise or totally cover costs of low income students if necessary.
- Has policies regarding end of term and end of year “socials” to ensure that venues are accessible in terms of cost, and that dress codes involved do not require students to purchase expensive clothing as a matter of course.

7. Homework

- Has developed approaches for the use of computer and other information technology which does not assume students have access to one in their own homes (e.g., a special computer lab set aside for non-teaching, student use).
- Has developed an approach to the setting of homework that does not assume that every student has a quiet, dedicated space to study at home, or has made provision for a homework space/program at school for students.

8. Nutrition

- Has developed a canteen policy which enables the dignified provision of nutritious food supply to needy students when necessary.
- Has developed a "breakfast club" providing basic breakfast food for students at nominal cost on a daily basis.