

Background

Section 18 of the *Education Act* describes the Minister's authority to prescribe educational programs and courses of study. This is accomplished in the *Guide to Education* and the *Provincial Programs of Study*.

The *Guide to Education* is updated regularly by the Ministry of Education and is the primary source of direction regarding program planning for schools.

The *Programs of Study* prescribe the curriculum for each subject and grade level.

According to section 17 of the *Education Act*, a Board may authorize the use of French (or any other language) as the language of instruction.

The Board exercises this authority by offering French Immersion programs in selected Division schools. These schools will offer programs consistent with the requirements described fully in the *Guide to Education* and in the *Handbook for French Immersion Administrators*.

The *Education Act* sections 19(1) states:

“...an alternative program means an education program offered by a board that:
(a) emphasizes a particular language, culture, religion or subject-matter, or
(b) uses a particular teaching philosophy,
but that is not a ... Francophone education program or specialized supports and services under section 11.”

The Board exercises this authority by authorizing an alternative non-denominational Christian program in one Division school.

Religious instruction may be offered at the discretion of the school board under section 58 of the *Education Act*.

Procedures:

1. Provincial Programs

- 1.1. School Principals will comply with the direction provided by the *Guide to Education* in the development of programs for Division schools.
- 1.2. School Principals will annually assess the instructional time provided for programs within their schools as part of their planning process and in preparation of school calendars (see [AP 60-05 School Year Calendar](#), [AP 60-06 School Day](#) and [AP 60-07 School Education Planning and Reporting](#)).
- 1.3. Teachers will use the *Programs of Study* as the source of program rationale, philosophy, general and specific learner outcomes.

- 1.4. The procedure for the selection of Instructional Resources is described in [AP 60-17 Instructional Resources](#).
- 1.5. School Principals will regularly and consistently interact with teachers to ensure the appropriate delivery of *Programs of Study*.
- 1.6. School compliance to the above will be reviewed through [AP 60-07 School Education Planning and Reporting](#).

2. Alternative Programs

2.1. French Immersion (FI)

- 2.1.1 The Board supports the provision of FI programs in Barrhead Composite High School, Barrhead Elementary School, R. F. Staples Secondary School, and Westlock Elementary School. These schools therefore may have dual programs: an English program and a FI program.
- 2.1.2. FI programs will follow the *Programs of Study* and will reflect the expectations described in the *Guide to Education*.
- 2.1.3 School Principals can reference the *Handbook for French Immersion Administrators* for guidance in programming for FI.
- 2.1.4 The viability of dual programs will be reassessed on an annual basis by the School Principal in consultation with the School Councils. Viability of the FI program will be based on the following criteria:
 - 2.1.4.1 Population of students enrolled in FI must be sufficient to ensure financial viability of the program without negatively impacting the English program; as determined by the School Principal in consultation with the Secretary Treasurer, the Superintendent and the School Council Chair.
 - 2.1.4.2 The school must confirm agreement from parents of students impacted by any plan for combining three or more grade levels to create viable class sizes. Multi-grade combinations of three or more grades must be authorized by the superintendent or designate.
 - 2.1.4.3 Ability to effectively meet the FI programming requirements as defined in the *Guide to Education*. (The required amount of instruction in French varies from grade to grade.)
 - 2.1.4.4 Availability of teachers trained and skilled in the delivery of instruction primarily in French.
 - 2.1.4.5 Availability of school financial resources to support maintenance of student and teacher instructional resources.
- 2.1.5 Schools with FI programs will distribute a letter to all families with students registered in a FI program, each year, within two to three weeks of the start of the school year. This letter describes the conditions for FI programming in the Division. It is attached as reference [Form 6-01-A](#).
- 2.1.6 Schools with FI programs will conduct 'exit interviews' with the students and parents when a student chooses not to enroll in the program for the next year. In the interest of maintaining program quality, the interview will focus on three items:
 - 2.1.6.1 What elements of the FI program have you seen as valuable, effective or otherwise being a positive experience?
 - 2.1.6.2 What elements of the FI program could be improved? And what suggestions do you have for improvement?

2.1.6.3 What are your primary reasons for choosing not to enroll in FI programs in the subsequent year?
The information from these interviews will be collected by the School Principal and submitted to the Superintendent or designate for compilation and filing. The data will inform decision making regarding program development and implementation. See [Form 6-01-B](#).

2.1.7 Parents who live outside the attendance boundaries of the four designated dual-program schools and want their children to be enrolled in FI programs can choose to enter into a Parent Provided Transportation Agreement with the Division as described in [AP 50-01 Requesting a School Other Than Designated School](#).

2.2. French as a Second Language (FSL) (and International Language and Culture Courses)

2.2.1 Division schools can choose to offer FSL programs in their school where and when interest warrants, and when the school has the expertise on staff to do so.

2.2.2 FSL programs in elementary school can start in grade 4 and use the 9 year program. High schools can offer the 3 year program beginning in grade 10, and/or the final three years of the 9 year program. School Principals should refer to the *Guide to Education* for specific direction for programming for FSL.

2.2.3 International Language and Culture courses may be offered where and when interest warrants, and when the school has the expertise on staff to do so. Refer to the *Guide to Education* for specific directions.

2.3. Religious Programs and Religious Instruction

2.3.1 The Board supports the provision of an **Alternative Religious Program** of instruction in the context of Christian ethics, morals and beliefs in specifically one school in the Division, the Neerlandia Public Christian School (NPCS).

2.3.1.1. The Board chooses to not charge parents for the alternative religious program at NPCS.

2.3.1.2. Parents choosing to enrol their children in NPCS should reference [AP 50-01 Requesting A School Other Than Designated School](#) for specific procedures.

2.3.1.3. See [AP 50-01 Requesting a School Other Than Designated School](#), for specific procedures related to transportation of students to NPCS.

2.3.2 The Board supports the provision of an **Alternative Religious Program** of instruction in the context of Christian ethics, morals and beliefs for grades 1-9, delivered at a distance from the Alberta Distance Learning Center.

2.3.2.1 Students (parents) must select this option specifically at the time of registration.

2.3.3 Senior high schools may choose to offer **Religious Instruction** as a distinct topic of study.

2.3.3.1 Schools may choose to offer locally developed religious studies courses (Religious Studies 15, 25, 35) in accordance with Locally Developed Course requirements defined by Alberta Education.

- 2.3.3.2 Elementary and junior high schools may offer classes in religious studies as long as they comply with the conditions of locally developed religious programs as described in the *Guide to Education* (up to 80% based on a particular faith or belief system and 20% that address a comprehensive study of other world religions).
NOTE: Any locally developed course, elementary, junior or senior high, needs to conform to the procedures outlined by Alberta Education Policies and Regulations. Submissions for approval must include evidence that the course content has been reviewed and meets Alberta Learning's *Recognizing Diversity and Promoting Respect*.
- 2.3.3.3 The School Principal must ensure that the conditions of [AP 60-23 Religious or Human Sexuality Instruction](#) are followed relevant to informing parents about offering religious studies classes in elementary school.
- 2.3.3.4 Parents may choose to have their children opt out of religious studies classes or courses offered in elementary or junior high schools as per [AP 60-23 Religious or Human Sexuality Instruction](#).
- 2.3.3.5 The School Principal shall approve all guest presenters or instructors of religious classes. A teacher on staff must be present during all religious instruction.
- 2.3.3.6 For information and guidelines related to distribution of free materials (text, and or artifacts) that deal primarily or explicitly with religion or human sexuality see [AP 60-23 Religious or Human Sexuality Instruction](#).

2.4. Outreach Programs

- 2.4.1 The *Guide to Education* states: “An outreach program provides an educational alternative for students who, due to individual circumstances, find that the traditional school setting does not meet their needs. The program allows students to access resources that improve their ability to succeed academically and socially. A flexible approach is taken to teaching and learning in recognition of individual student needs. Outreach programs serve students of junior and senior high school age.”
- 2.4.2 The Division operates two Outreach school sites; each is affiliated with and administered by the local secondary school; Westlock Outreach School (school code: 0019) in Westlock (affiliated and administered by R. F. Staples Secondary School) and Barrhead Outreach (school code: 2316) in Barrhead (affiliated and administered by Barrhead Composite High School).
- 2.4.3 The Board has passed a motion to grant approval of each of the Outreach programs (Board Motion 549/06/96).
- 2.4.4 **Student Eligibility:** Placement and promotion of a student from one grade or course to another is determined by the School Principal, subject to policies and Administrative Procedures of the Division and to provisions in the *Guide to Education*, and in consultation with the student and significant adults in the students' life.
- 2.4.5 **Attendance requirements:** All Outreach Programs have flexibility in their attendance requirements and expectations are discussed on a student by student basis as meets the circumstances, age of the student and educational goals for placement in Outreach.

- 2.4.6 **Performance expectations:** The student, teacher and School Principal in an Outreach Program jointly plan an individualized program to meet the educational needs of that student in a safe, non-threatening environment. All Outreach Programs must provide students with educational services that are in addition to distance learning courses and materials. Individualized performance goals and stages are established within the specific plan for the student.
- 2.4.7 Outreach services include personal and career counseling as well as conflict resolution, anger management, time management and study skills training. Outreach staff work closely with community agencies to create a network of support for students.
- 2.5 Distance Learning / Online Delivery / Home Education**
- 2.5.1 The Division will provide an alternative delivery program at a distance through the Vista Virtual School. Families may use the Vista Virtual School as their primary school of choice for students in grades 1 through 12.
- 2.5.2 The Division recognizes parental choice of home schooling for students as an alternative to attendance at schools operated by the Board.
- 2.5.3 The Division will provide home education support through Alberta Distance Learning Centre (school code: 0099) and home education through Vista Virtual School (school code: 2317).
- 2.6 Off Campus Programs**
- 2.6.1 The Board encourages and supports the community partnerships and career experiences that come with off-campus opportunities for students in senior high school.
- 2.6.2 School Principals can reference [AP 60-14 Off-Campus Education](#) regarding specific procedures and forms.
- 2.7 Outdoor Education**
- 2.7.1 Division schools may choose to provide Outdoor Education programming. Program planning shall align with the *Programs of Study* (see: “Environmental and Outdoor Education” under “Other Programs” in the list of *Programs of Study*).
- 2.7.2 School Principals will ensure that appropriate instructional time is provided for all core programs.
- 2.8 Swim Programs**
- 2.8.1 Division schools may choose to provide a swim program. Program planning shall align with [AP 60-03 Field Trips, Excursions, National and International Tours](#).
- 2.8.2 Funding for swim programs, and for the transportation to swim programs, is part of the site budget.
- 2.8.3 See also [AP 30-06 Student Fees](#).
- 2.9 Teaching Controversial Issues**
- 2.9.1 The *Guide to Education* provides directions for teachers, students and others participating in studies or discussions of controversial issues.

2.10 English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL)

- 2.10.1 ESL programs will be implemented upon recognition of need and funding availability.
 - 2.10.1.1 Assessment is required at the start and end of the school year. Please refer to the Alberta K-12 Proficiency Benchmarks (<http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/eslapb/index.html>).
- 2.10.2 Consultation will take place between the referring teacher, the School Principal, Speech and Language Therapist, and the student's parent(s) before an ESL program is implemented.

Reference

[Education Act](#)

[Alberta Education](#) - Guide to Education & Handbook for French Immersion Administrators

[Policy 18 Curriculum – Provincial and Alternative Programs](#)

[AP 30-06 Student Fees](#)

[AP 50-01 Requesting a School Other Than Designated School](#)

[AP 60-03 Field Trips, Excursions, National and International Tours](#)

[AP 60-05 School Year Calendar](#)

[AP 60-06 School Day](#)

[AP 60-07 School Education Planning and Reporting \(Program Evaluation\)](#)

[AP 60-14 Off-Campus Education](#)

[AP 60-17 Instructional Resources](#)

[AP 60-23 Religious or Human Sexuality Instruction](#)

[Form 6-01-A Letter to Parents of French Immersion Students](#)

[Form 6-01-B French Immersion Programs Exit Interview Questions](#)