

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMMING

Background

In order to achieve the vision of *Every Student, Every Day, A Success*, the Board believes its fundamental purpose is to promote student learning, growth, and understanding. Inherent in this belief is the philosophy that responsive public education provides students with access to alternative programs.

The Board supports the parents' right and responsibility to make decisions about the education of their children. Alternative programming provides choices for parents to exercise that right.

The Board believes that alternative programs can play an important role in ensuring high standards of education while respecting and supporting the rights of all students in the division. Therefore, programs that emphasize a particular language, culture, religion or subject matter, or that use a particular teaching philosophy, should be made available where numbers warrant and when financially feasible. (Section 21 of the School Act)

Guidelines

1. Parents or an organization of parents may request that the Board provide an alternative program.
2. An organization of parents wishing to implement an alternative program shall apply to the Board in writing no later than November 1st in the school year prior to the program commencement. The application shall provide:
 - Details about the proposed program
 - Projected enrolments
 - Information regarding services and resources being requested
 - Proposed arrangements for student accommodation and transportation.
3. The Board may direct the Superintendent to provide additional information and/or to make a recommendation regarding the implementation of the alternative program.
4. The Board may provide an alternative program where, in the opinion of the Board:
 - a) there are sufficient resources and facilities to offer the alternative program, and
 - b) the alternative program is appropriate to meet the student's education needs.

5. The Board may designate an alternative program to operate in a separate building or within a school building offering a regular program.
6. Where an alternative program is offered within a school, the Board shall maintain the integrity and viability of the regular education program, subject to Policy 16 'School/Program Closure'. The Board may restrict the enrolment in the alternative program if there is insufficient space in a school, or to maintain the viability or integrity of programs within that school or elsewhere in the Division.
7. Where the Board operates an alternative program in a school building that offers a regular program, both programs shall be under the direction of one principal. However, he/she may assign a school administrator position whose primary responsibility is the alternative program.
8. The Board may designate an alternative program to be an operating school. As such, parents of students attending the alternative program may form a School Council pursuant to Section 255 of the Education Act.
9. Where a School Council has been formed for an alternative school program, the Board may delegate by resolution, specific duties and functions to the school council. These same specific duties and functions may be delegated to other parental advisory bodies by Board motion.
10. All staff employed or assigned to teach or work in the alternative program shall be employees of the Board, and shall:
 - Enjoy the same privileges, benefits extended to all other employees through board policies and existing collective agreements; and
 - Be subject to all board policies, regulation, administrative requirements and requirements of the Education Act and bona fide occupational requirement.
11. A school that offers an alternative program shall be operated in accordance with the requirements of the Education Act, Alberta Education policy and regulations, and the policies and regulations of the Board.
12. A school providing an alternative program shall provide courses of study and education programs prescribed by the Minister or approved by the Board and may not use any course, education program or instructional materials prohibited by the Minister or the Board. The principal, in consultation with the school council or other parental advisory body, shall be responsible for selecting curriculum resources to be used in the program.
13. Parents of students wishing to enroll in an alternative program must become familiar with the program philosophy and rules established by the Board and the school council or other parental advisory body (as approved by the Board).

14. The Board may charge a fee for defraying all or a portion of any non-instructional costs to parents who wish to enroll their children in an alternative program if the per student cost of the alternative program exceeds costs incurred by the Board in providing a regular education program, or to defray costs that may be incurred by the Board in developing and offering the alternative program. Fees for the alternative program will be charged in accordance with Administrative Procedure 505.
15. The Board may enter into a written agreement with a school council or parent organization requesting an alternative program, and the agreement shall:
 - Outline specific details regarding the provision of the program and
 - Specify the areas of decision making authority the Board delegated, by Board resolution, to the school council.
16. If an Alternative Program proposal is accepted by the Board, the detailed preparations such as timelines, transportation, student recruitment, staffing and location will be carried out through the office of the Superintendent in accordance with Administrative Procedure 213.
17. Closure of an alternative program will be in accordance with Board Policy 16.

References: Section 18, 19, 55, 197 Education Act
94/2019 Alta Reg
Alberta ECS-Grade 12 Guide to Education
Alberta Education Alternative Programs Handbook

Amended: June 11th, 2020