

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Background

The Division believes that parents, the child's first and most influential teachers, have a life long interest in their child and a right and responsibility to make decisions about their child's education. In order to exercise that right and responsibility, parents need to have choices in the kind of education their child will receive.

The Division believes that alternative programs, pursuant to the School Act, Section 21, 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.

The Division further believes that it is responsible to ensure that all students have an opportunity to meet the standards set by the Minister and to achieve the educational outcomes determined by the Division; therefore, the Division is responsible for student outcomes, for assessing student achievement, and for monitoring results in all programs.

Guidelines:

1. A School Council or an organization of parents and/or community members may request that the Division provide an alternative program.
2. A School Council or an organization of parents and/or community members may not request an alternative program which, in effect, seeks to circumvent or limit the governance authority of the Board.
3. Any alternative programs authorized by the Division shall be under the direction of the principal of a school operating the regular education program.
4. The Division may designate an alternative program to operate within a school building where regular educational programs are offered or in a separate building.
5. Where an alternative program is offered within a school, the Division shall maintain the integrity and viability of the regular education program.
6. The Division may restrict enrollment in an alternative program to maintain the integrity of the regular education program or if there is insufficient space in that school.
7. All staff employed or assigned to teach or work in an alternative program shall be employees of the Division, and shall:
 - a. enjoy the same privileges and benefits extended to all other employees through Division policies and applicable collective agreements;
 - b. be subject to all Division policies, regulations and administrative requirements and the requirements of the School Act.

The Division will seek the recommendation of the alternative program advisory body regarding the employment and assignment of staff to an alternative program.

8. A school providing an alternative program shall provide courses of study and education programs prescribed by the Minister or approved by the Division and may not use any course, education program or instructional materials prohibited by the Minister or the Division. The alternative program advisory body, in consultation with the principal, shall be responsible for selecting curriculum resources, acceptable to the Minister and to the Division, to be used in the program.
9. For budget purposes, the students enrolled in an alternative program shall be considered to be part of the general school population.
10. The Division may charge parents a fee for the purpose of defraying all or a portion of:
 - a. any non-instructional costs that may be incurred by the Division in offering an alternative program; and
 - b. any instructional material costs that are in addition to the costs incurred by the Division in providing its regular education program.

Procedures

- 1.1 A School Council or an organization of parents and/or community members wishing to implement an alternative program shall apply to the Division in writing no later than February 1st in the school year prior to the program commencement. The application shall provide:
 - a. details about the proposed alternative program;
 - b. projected enrollments;
 - c. information regarding services and resources being requested;
 - d. proposed arrangements for student accommodation; and
 - e. any transportation requirements.
- 1.2 An alternative program advisory body (as approved by the Division) may be maintained to work with and advise the school principal in matters related to the alternative program. This body will work through the School Council in matters not specified in this policy and should endeavor to have a representative on the School Council executive.
- 2.1 Parents of students wishing to enroll in an alternative program must become familiar with the program philosophy and rules established by the Division and the alternative program advisory body.
- 3.1 The principal of a school offering an alternative program shall ensure that the alternative program is operated in accordance with the requirements of the School Act, Alberta Education policy and regulations, and the policy and regulations of the Division.

Reference: Section 21 School Act