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# LEARNING SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

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## Alternative Programs

To provide for parental choice and to meet specific learning needs, Alternative Programs may be offered in the Fort Vermilion School Division.

### Definition

Section 21 of the School Act states the following provisions:

Alternative programs

21(1) In this section, "alternative program" means an education program that

(a) emphasizes a particular language, culture, religion or subject-matter,  
or

(b) uses a particular teaching philosophy,

but that is not a special education program, a program referred to in section 10 or a program of religious education offered by a separate school board.

(2) If a board determines that there is sufficient demand for a particular alternative program, the board may offer that program to those students whose parents enroll them in the program.

(3) A board that offers an alternative program shall continue to offer the regular education program to those students whose parents do not enroll them in the alternative program.

(4) If a parent enrolls a student in an alternative program, the board may charge that parent fees for the purpose of defraying all or a portion of any non-instructional costs that

(a) may be incurred by the board in offering the alternative program, and

(b) are in addition to the costs incurred by the board in providing its regular education program.

At the time when the Education Act regulations are enacted FVSD may offer Alternative Programs under Section 19 which states:

Alternative programs

19(1) In this section, "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 neither a religious education program offered by a separate school board of that religious denomination nor a Francophone education program.

(2) A board may offer an alternative program to a student whose parent requests it where, in the opinion of the board,

(a) the board has sufficient resources and facilities to offer the alternative program, and

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(b) the alternative program is appropriate to meet the student's education needs.

(3) A board may offer an alternative program under subsection (2) that operates within the geographic boundaries of another board only if the other board has been requested to offer the alternative program and has refused.

(4) A board that offers an alternative program shall continue to offer an education program consistent with the requirements of this Act and the regulations to those students not enrolled in the alternative program.

(5) If a parent enrolls a student in an alternative program, the board may charge that parent fees related to the alternative program only for the purpose of defraying all or a portion of any non- instructional costs that

- (a) may be incurred by the board in offering the alternative program,
- (b) are necessary for the delivery of the alternative program, and
- (c) are in addition to the costs incurred by the board in providing education programs other than the alternative program.

### **Guidelines**

1. To be considered for development and continued support, an Alternative Program shall:
  - a. Follow provincial legislation, all FVSD policies and guidelines, unless specifically exempted by the Board of Trustees or Superintendent;
  - b. Enroll numbers of students sufficient to warrant the program;
  - c. Not infringe on the rights of other students;
  - d. Follow Alberta Education curriculum;
  - e. Be integrated whenever possible, within existing schools;
  - f. Be financially viable and sustainable over the long term;
  - g. Ensure that transportation to and from the Program occurs at no additional cost to the Board;
  - h. Ensure that staff are employed, evaluated and responsible to the Fort Vermilion School Division according to Divisional policy and guidelines;
  - i. Accept that the Board may charge a fee for non-instructional costs to parents who wish to enroll their children in an Alternative Program; and
  - j. Not be a duplication of an existing program offered by the FVSD.
2. Proponents shall submit a proposal to establish an Alternative Program to the Superintendent of Schools.
3. The submission shall be made with sufficient notice to the expected "start-up" date, so as to provide appropriate time for clarification, discussion and planning.
4. Each Alternative Program proposal must include the following elements:

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- a. Name of Group, if applicable;
  - b. Name of Primary Contact;
  - c. Primary Contact Information;
  - d. Demonstrate how the majority of affected parents have indicated support;
  - e. Proposed Name of the Alternative Program;
  - f. Proposed Opening Date for the Alternative Program;
  - g. Proposed Grade Levels for the Alternative Program;
  - h. Background research;
  - i. Philosophy, objectives and mission statement;
  - j. Distinguishing feature of the Alternative Program;
    - i. Describe in detail the essential characteristics of the proposed alternative program depending on its base of language, culture, religion, subject matter or teaching philosophy.
    - ii. Explain how the proposed alternative program is significantly different from programs offered by the FVSD as related to language, culture, subject matter, religion or teaching philosophy.
    - iii. Describe the students for whom the alternative program is intended.
  - k. Student Learning Concepts – Describe the unique student learning outcomes resulting from the proposed Alternative Program.
  - l. Operational budget;
  - m. Staffing profiles desirable to meet the Alternative Program objectives;
  - n. Evaluation of Alternative Program methodology and objectives;
  - o. Projected student population and geographical location/ages;
  - p. Transportation of students to and from the Alternative Program;
  - q. Curriculum and instructional materials in addition to Alberta Education curriculum;
  - r. School Council implications;
  - s. School building / lease implications (if applicable); and
  - t. Facility and equipment needs associated with the Alternative Program.
5. Feedback will be provided to the proponents of the Alternative Program proposal, regarding the proposal, so as to fulfill the necessary requirements of the proposal.
  6. When the proposal is deemed to be complete by the Superintendent, the Superintendent will arrange for the originators to make a presentation of the proposal to the Board of Trustees.
  7. If the proposal is accepted by the Board of Trustees, detailed preparation (timelines, transportation, student recruitment, staffing, location,

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- administrative services and fees, if required) will be carried out through the office of the Superintendent.
8. If the proposal is not accepted by the Board of Trustees, proponents will be informed as to the reasons for the decision.
  9. The Alternative Program will be reviewed by the Superintendent on an ongoing basis, so as to assess its viability.
  10. The Board of Trustees, School Council or other advisory body (as approved by the Board of Trustees) which is delegated decision making authority with respect to the Alternative Program, shall provide six months' notice prior to the beginning of the next school year, in the event that it no longer plans to offer or support the Alternative Program. Notice of less than six months may be accepted by mutual agreement.

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## **Challenges to Instructional Materials**

### **Guiding Principles**

Any district resident or employee may raise objection to instructional materials used in a school's education program.

No parent or caregiver has the right to determine reading, viewing or listening matter for students other than his/her own children.

Although it is the instructional materials which are challenged, the principles of the freedom to read, listen or view must be defended as well.

Access to challenged material will not be restricted during the reconsideration process.

The major criterion for the final decision is the appropriateness of the material for its intended educational use.

### **Procedure for Dealing with Challenged Materials**

#### *Informal Reconsideration*

The school receiving a complaint regarding instructional material will try to resolve the issue informally as follows:

1. The principal or appropriate staff member will explain to the questioner the school's selection procedure, criteria and qualifications of those persons selecting the material.
2. The principal or appropriate staff member will explain the particular place the questioned material occupies in the educational program, its intended educational usefulness, and additional information regarding its use, or refer the party to someone who can identify and explain the use of the material.
3. If the questioner is dissatisfied with the informal explanation and wishes to file a formal challenge, a formal Request for Reconsideration of Curriculum/Instructional Materials and/or Learning Resources form (see FVSD Forms) will be provided by the principal.

#### *Formal Reconsideration*

##### **Preliminary Procedures**

- a) Each school will keep on hand and make available Request for Reconsideration of Curriculum/Instructional Materials forms. All formal objections to instructional material must be made on these forms.
- b) The Request for Reconsideration of Curriculum/Instructional Materials form must be signed by the questioner and filed with the principal or someone designated by the principal.

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c) The Superintendent will be informed of the formal complaint received.

Resolution

- (a) The principal will proceed, within the guidelines of related policy and regulation, to:
- examine the challenged material;
  - determine professional acceptance of the material;
  - inform the questioner and Superintendent of the resolution.

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## Children in Need of Intervention

### Introduction

All school staff (administrators, teachers, Child's Circle workers, Mental Health Therapists, Student Wellness Coaches and support staff) are in a unique position of having regular contact with children and are trained observers of children's behaviour. Therefore, school personnel have a significant role in ensuring that children are protected from potential abuse and neglect.

*An annual review of this administrative regulation shall take place to ensure all school staff are knowledgeable about district procedures.*

In view of the importance of this subject, principals and supervisors shall ensure all staff are made aware of the contents of the following documents (all of these documents should be available in the school):

- 1) Protocol and Guidelines for Child Welfare Workers and School Personnel issued by Alberta Children's Services and Alberta Education, (no date).
- 2) Responding to Child Abuse: A Handbook (October 2005)
- 3) Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, August 2004

### Definitions

Children are dependent on others for their safety and well-being and have a right to be protected from abuse and neglect. The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, RSA (2004) Part 1 (2), states that "*...a child is in need of intervention if there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that the survival, security or development of the child is endangered because of any of the following:*

- the child has been abandoned or lost;
- the guardian of the child is dead and the child has no other guardian;
- the child is neglected by the guardian;
- the child has been or there is substantial risk that the child will be physically or sexually abused by the guardian of the child;
- the guardian of the child is unable or unwilling to protect the child from physical injury or sexual abuse;
- the child has been emotionally injured by the guardian of the child;
- the guardian of the child is unable or unwilling to protect the child from emotional injury;
- the guardian of the child has subjected the child to or is unable or unwilling to protect the child from cruel and unusual treatment or punishment;

The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act RSA (2004) Part 1 (2.1) states:

- "*a child is neglected if the guardian*"
  - is unable or unwilling to provide the child with the necessities of life;
  - is unable or unwilling to obtain for the child, or to permit the child to receive, essential medical, surgical or other remedial treatment that is necessary for the health or well-being of the child, or



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- is unable or unwilling to provide the child with adequate care or supervision

The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act RSA (2004) Part 1 (3) states:

- *“a child is emotionally injured”*
- if there is impairment of the child’s mental or emotional functioning or development, and
- if there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that the emotional injury is the result of:
  - rejection;
  - emotional, social, cognitive or physiological neglect;
  - deprivation of affection or cognitive stimulation;
  - exposure to domestic violence or severe domestic disharmony;
  - inappropriate criticism, threats, humiliation, accusations or expectations of or toward the child;
  - the mental or emotional condition of the guardian of the child or of anyone living in the same residence as the child;
  - chronic alcohol or drug abuse by the guardian or by anyone living in the same residence as the child;
- *a child is physically injured* if there is substantial and observable injury to any part of the child’s body as a result of non-accidental application of force or an agent to the child’s body that is evidenced by a laceration, a contusion, an abrasion, a scar, a fracture or other bony injury, a dislocation, a sprain, hemorrhaging, the rupture of viscous, a burn, a scald, frostbite, the loss or alteration of consciousness or physiological functioning or the loss of hair or teeth;
- *a child is sexually abused* if the child is inappropriately exposed or subjected to sexual contact, activity or behaviour including prostitution related activities.”

## **Reporting Regulations**

### **1. Duty to Report**

Any person who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe a child is in need of intervention is legally required to report the matter to Children’s Services. The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act prescribes penalties for those who fail to report such situations, and provides protection from legal action against a person making a report unless the reporting “is done maliciously or without reasonable and probable grounds for the belief.” Failure to report a child in need may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

### **2. Reporting Procedures**

A staff member who suspects a child is in need of intervention shall seek advice as to whether or not the facts constitute reasonable and probable grounds for that belief. Advice may be obtained from the principal or the Child Abuse Hot

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Line. When discussing the situation, it is recommended that the staff member discuss hypothetically rather than use the names of those involved.

If satisfied that there are reasonable and probable grounds to suspect a child is in need of intervention services, the staff member shall make a formal report to Children's Services.

- Between 8:15 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. contact Children's Services (780-926-4441). Before 8:15 a.m. and after 4:30 p.m. contact the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (1-800-638-0715).
- If the child lives on reserve, contact North Peace Tribal Council Child and Family Services at (780-926-3446). Before 8:15 a.m. and after 4:30 p.m. contact the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (1-800-638-0715).

The duty of a staff member to report a child in need of intervention has not been discharged until the staff member is certain a director of Children's Services or delegate has received the report.

The staff member shall advise the principal or designate regarding any formal report that has been or will be made.

Staff who make a report that a child is in need of intervention are advised to record and file in the school the date and time of the call and the name and position of the Children's Services official accepting the report. **No information with respect to reports of children in need of intervention may legally be kept in the Student Record.**

### 3. *Responsibility for Investigations*

The investigation of child intervention complaints is the responsibility of duly authorized workers from Alberta Children's Services, who may, where appropriate, be assisted by the police. District staff should not assume this responsibility. School staff should offer support to the student, but **refrain from seeking further information to confirm suspicion or clarify disclosures.**

A staff member to whom a student has made disclosure statements should record those statements, preferably in the student's own words, as soon as possible after the disclosure and retain them in the school for future reference. Such records or information shall be kept in the strictest confidence and **shall not be included in the Student Record.**

Within the context of their responsibility for the well-being and care of students in a school, staff should facilitate Children's Services workers' and/or police officers' access to students for the purposes of determining if a child is in need of intervention.

The responsibility for notifying parents about an investigation rests with the worker or police officer conducting the inquiry. If the school is contacted by

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parents inquiring about a student who has not returned home, and the student has been apprehended or delayed at school because of an investigation, the school shall inform the parent of that fact and provide the investigator's name and telephone number. Parents should be referred to the worker for further details.

All those involved in a child intervention investigation are required by law to keep details about the investigation confidential in accordance with the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act.

4. *Facilitating Investigations at School*

Children's Services workers appointed under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act RSA (2004) are empowered to enter schools, obtain information about students and apprehend students.

All approaches by Children's Services workers are to be referred to the principal or designate.

The principal shall ask the worker or police officer to show an identification card, to define the nature of the investigation being conducted, and to state the reasons for conducting the interview at school.

The principal shall cooperate with the investigator regarding the time and location of interviews to be conducted in the school, unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary.

Principals shall keep a record of all investigative interviews conducted at the school to determine if a child is in need of intervention, noting in each case whether it was completed by:

- a police officer and/or
- a Children's Services worker.

When an interview takes place in the school, the principal or designate shall be available to sit in on the meeting unless they are specifically excluded by the investigating worker or police officer.

School staff interviewed by the investigator should summarize in writing any information provided to the investigator immediately after the interview and file the report at the school for future reference.

If the investigator finds conditions established for a school interview unacceptable, the investigator has the authority to apprehend the child and conduct the interview at some other location.

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5. *Post-Investigation Procedure*

Principals shall share information with staff on a “**need to know**” basis and as relevant to the student’s continued need for school services.

Access of a Children’s Services worker to a student on an ongoing basis during school hours is acceptable if arrangements as to time and place are mutually agreed upon. If it is agreed that interviews by the worker will take place at school, school staff shall arrange for the worker to interview the student at an appropriate time and place in the school.

6. *Threats*

If threats are made against school staff or the child, the principal shall call the police.

7. *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP)*

Any and all records such as those specified in 2, 3 and 4 must be retained in a secure file at the school. Those records/reports are not to be included as part of the Student Record. Access to these records will be on a “need to know” basis. Under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP), there may be limitations/exceptions supporting withholding disclosure of the information or parts thereof. When in doubt, check with the Board’s FOIP Coordinator.

8. *Confidentiality*

Staff have a responsibility to act in a professional and confidential manner in dealing with disclosures of children in need of intervention. Staff should ensure that they maintain this confidentiality both verbally and via electronic sources. Staff shall ensure that they inform their supervisor of the disclosure and their reporting of the issue unless their supervisor is directly involved, in which case they should contact the Assistant Superintendent of Operations.

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## **Child's Circle Program**

The Child's Circle Program is a joint venture between Northwest Alberta Children's Services and the Fort Vermilion School Division. 4 Child's Circle workers and 1 Child's Circle Supervisor are available to provide services to children, youth and families through the Child's Circle Program. Services are available as long as the child/youth is registered with the Fort Vermilion School Division.

The role of the Child's Circle worker is to support students and families demonstrating risk factors to assist in the development of protective factors and increase their potential for success. While the mandate of the educational staff of the school (administrators, teachers and educational assistants) is to provide appropriate learning opportunities, the mandate of the Child's Circle worker is to focus on services for students and families that positively impact the safety and overall well-being of the student and family. This will ensure that students are better able to learn at school.

The Child's Circle staff are based out of the schools and provide services to children, youth and families within the schools as well as within the communities and directly with parents/caregivers in their homes.

### **Services**

This program offers the following services, individually or in partnership with other community agencies, to increase the protective factors and reduce risk factors experienced by families. The Child's Circle service delivery approach is one of respect and understanding of the cultural diversity and community environment of the children, youth and families accessing services.

- **Family Service Plan**
  - A Service Plan is developed to meet the needs of children, youth and families demonstrating higher levels of risk. The Service Plan identifies goals, targets and indicators of success specific to each family as well as strategies to be employed and stakeholders who will be involved in the Service Plan. The Service Plan is developed collaboratively by the Child's Circle worker and family. The focus is on helping the family, including children and youth, to develop the skills and strengths needed to successfully support the family and minimize the need for intervention by Children's Services. A coaching approach is critical so that the Child's Circle worker is seen as a trusted coach or mentor for the family.
- **Parenting programming**
  - Direct supports that provide mentorship and coach parenting skills. Some of this work will be in the family home, working with the whole family unit.
  - Group Programs
    - Triple P Parenting (Standard level 4), Active Parenting or other parent education courses that meet the needs of the family

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- **In Home Support**

- One of the most important components of the Child's Circle Program is the in-home support model. Through Parent Education, mentorship and coaching, the Child's Circle workers also provide the following services:
  - Work directly with families in their homes.
  - Assist in developing individualized supports that help strengthen the family core.
  - Empower families to determine areas of growth and skill development, leading to higher levels of success and reduction of risk.
  - Assist families in the development and implementation of
    - Routines and structure in the home
    - Budgeting, healthy meal prep, nutrition content and effective shopping
    - Positive discipline and healthy relationships
- **Youth supports:** Child's Circle workers provide programs that focus on anger management, bullying, positive social and emotional skills as well as healthy relationships
- **Transitional** or follow up services
- Supporting at risk families whose files have been closed or are transferring out of Children's Services involvement

The Child's Circle workers keep record of all program activity. **Individual client records** will specify the presenting concern(s), the parental involvement, the plan to address the problem, the participants and time frames for identified activities, and indicators of progress in meeting desired outcomes. Collateral contacts, meetings, and referrals are also noted. **Program activity records** will identify each specific service provided, the frequency and duration of each service, and number of participants in each service.

### **Client Information**

Individual client intervention services are available to students and families identified as being at-risk; the target is to reduce the risk factors demonstrated by the student and family and increase the protective factors and the overall potential for success of both the child and family.

### **Referral Procedures**

Children, youth and families may be referred by school staff, parents, themselves and/or outside agencies. The entire referral process is relatively quick, and it may only be a day or two before the family is contacted after the initial referral.

Children, youth and families will be referred to the Child's Circle Program for direct services initially using the FVSD Student Support Services Referral Form. The referral process will also include interview(s) with the family and other involved agencies to determine the risk factors experienced by the family and need for Child's

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Circle services. Anecdotal records of these interviews and any survey information gathered will be retained in the client file.

If a child, youth and/or family is to receive direct support from the Child's Circle worker, a Service Plan is developed by the Child's Circle worker, parent, child/youth, involved school staff and other involved service providers and signed by the parent/caregiver.

In cases where the student or family only present a few areas or are at low levels of risk, but s/he is identified by the school administrator or the family or another agency as being in need of intervention by the Child's Circle worker, the administrator and/or the Supervisor will sign off on the referral. The Supervisor must be in agreement with the referral in all cases.

### **Entrance Criteria**

As follow-up to the FVSD Student Support Services Referral, the Child's Circle worker will engage the family and other service providers/referral sources to determine the risk factors and strengths of the family. Student and family need will be related to the risk factors identified in the Prevention and Early Intervention Framework for Children, Youth and Families.

More specific examples of need may include:

- Social/emotional risk indicators: An inability to establish or maintain satisfactory relationships with peers or adults, a general mood of unhappiness or depression, in-appropriate behaviour or feelings under ordinary conditions, difficulties in accepting realities of personal responsibility and accountability, physical violence toward other persons and/or physical destructiveness toward the environment.
- Physical well-being risk indicators: Hunger, improper/insufficient clothing, unkempt appearance, unmet vision/dental needs, untreated frequent health concerns (colds, coughs, flu, skin disease), fatigue, lethargy, "nowhere to go" purposelessness, "spaced out" or hung over (teens).
- Self-worth risk indicators: low self-esteem, no self-confidence, poor or negative self-image.

### **Transitional/Follow-up**

When families demonstrate the ability to effectively support themselves without the support of the Child's Circle Program, there will be a gradual decrease of direct client services. Transition planning may include referrals to other proactive services within the community, assisting the family to articulate their Circle of Support in which they identify the support people and agencies in their lives upon whom they can call for support, as well as follow-up visits by the Child's Circle worker. The length of the transition period will vary depending on each family's level of risk and needed support. Every family on an active caseload will have a transition plan developed in collaboration with the Child's Circle worker, extended family supports and other community programs.

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### **Exit Criteria**

The desired exit criteria consist of families demonstrating reduction of risk, increased protective factors and self-sufficiency. Parents are required upon exiting the Program (where possible) to complete a final Outcomes Survey as well as a Parent Satisfaction Survey. Families are transitioned out of service with the Child's Circle Program and connected with natural supports or community agencies.

The priority will always be to provide early intervention services for as short a time as possible to avoid building a dependency on the part of the family. The ultimate goal is to empower families by building their protective factors and reducing the likelihood of risk factors developing or reducing the impact of existing risk factors a family may be experiencing.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Child's Circle Supervisor**

The Child's Circle worker provides services to students and families in one or more local schools. It is important to work collaboratively with the administration and staff at each school in an effort to provide effective comprehensive services to students and their families.

The role of the Child's Circle Supervisor is to oversee the Child's Circle workers and ensure effective implementation of the Program across the division. The Supervisor collects data and completes reports; more importantly, this person provides coordination, supervision, leadership and mentorship for the Child's Circle workers. Ongoing direct supervision of the Program and the Child's Circle workers is the responsibility of the Child's Circle Supervisor.



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## Course Sequence Transfer

Reference: *Alberta Education's Guide to Education*

**Senior high school administrators and staff need to have a clear understanding of the criteria students must meet in order to change program routes. The above guide is clear with respect to movement between streams.**

In addition to the above reference, the following guidelines remain in effect:

- Students transferring from a general stream to the more academic stream (e.g. English 20-2 to English 20-1) should attain a mark of at least 75% in the general course.
- A student who receives a mark between 40% and 49% in an academic course may be admitted to the next level in the general stream with principal's approval. Upon successful completion of the general course, the student shall be granted retroactive credits in the prerequisite general course. An example of this would be:
  - A student receiving a 45% in English 10-1 may go on to take English 20-2. If the student passes English 20-2, he or she will receive retroactive credits for English 10-2.
- If a student passes an academic course at one level and then changes into the more general stream for the next level and passes that course, the student shall not receive retroactive credits in the preceding general course.
- Notwithstanding the above scenarios, a principal has the right to waive any prerequisite for any course.

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## **Early Childhood Services**

ECS is currently not a mandatory program, and there is no legal requirement that children attend or complete an ECS program prior to entry to grade 1.

FVSD offers an ECS program in each school offering Primary programming, unless student numbers are insufficient. The program must be supervised by a certificated teacher.

### **Entrance Age**

- A child must be 5 years of age on or before December 31 to enroll in ECS.
- Parents have the right to appeal for an exemption from this policy's age requirement.
- A Child who has documented Mild or Moderate needs will be enrolled if that child is at least 4 years of age on or before December 31.
- A Child who meets the criteria for ESL identification will be enrolled if that child is at least 4 years of age on or before December 31.
- A Child who has documented Severe needs and is eligible for Program Unit Funding will be enrolled if that child is at least 3 years of age on or before December 31.

### **Readiness**

- The readiness levels of all children enrolling in ECS programming will be assessed at the beginning of the ECS year using the Early Years Evaluation tool.
  - This includes the Early Years Evaluation-Teacher Assessment (EYE-TA) at the Kindergarten level and the Early Years Evaluation-Direct Assessment (EYE-DA) at the pre-Kindergarten levels.

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## **FNMI - School-Based Approach and Programming**

### **Framework**

The *First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2002)* sets a framework for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Programs. The *Framework* includes a vision, framework goals and principles, and strategies to enhance the educational opportunities of Aboriginal learners.

### **FNMI Funding**

FNMI funding is distributed based on self-identification of FNMI students at each school.

Specific goals, targets and strategies to improve FNMI student achievement are identified within each school's annual three-year Education Plan.

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## Inclusive Education Services

The Fort Vermilion School Division is committed to supporting **all** students in attaining the goals contained in the Ministerial Order on Student Learning. **All** students will have access to meaningful and relevant learning experiences within welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments. We strive to ensure that **all** students are accepted and have a sense of belonging within their classrooms and school community.

Today's classrooms are made up of a range of diverse learners. In an inclusive education system, all learners and their unique needs are taken into consideration when planning for instruction. Some learners, however, require more specific supports and services than others. These learners, identified below as students with diverse learning needs, include those with mild, moderate or severe needs and gifted and talented students who have been identified with a Special Education code as well as those who are functioning below grade level and those who are experiencing challenges in the classroom or school due to a number of possible reasons, including behavioural factors.

### Guidelines

- 1) Each school shall include students with diverse learning needs in the regular classroom wherever possible and establish appropriate supports and services based upon the academic, physical, medical, emotional and social needs of the individual students.
- 2) Each school shall establish appropriate supports and services to meet the diverse learning needs of students based upon the following:
  - ◆ The academic, physical, medical, hearing, vision, emotional, behavioural and/or social needs of the students
  - ◆ The number of students requiring a specific program or service
  - ◆ The availability of appropriate facilities
  - ◆ The availability of appropriately qualified staff
  - ◆ Program costs
  - ◆ School and division budgets
  - ◆ Other factors significant to a specific program or service
- 3) Diverse learning needs of students will be identified through individual assessment, classroom observation and parental/guardian input. Assessment can include classroom/school based and specialized assessments.
- 4) Teacher(s), in consultation with and approval of the parent/guardian, will develop Individualized Program Plans for students with diverse learning needs.
- 5) **At minimum**, all students identified with a Special Education code (severe/mild/moderate/ gifted) as well as those who do not have a Special Education code but who are functioning well below grade level and for whom program modifications and/or accommodations are in place **must** have an Individualized Program Plan. See FVSD Appendices for a list of current Special Education Codes.

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## Procedures

- 1) Students with significant diverse learning needs will be referred through the Inclusive Education Coordinator at the school for specialized assessment. This includes school-level assessments such as the Woodcock Johnson achievement and oral language tests as well as specialized assessments such as psycho-educational assessments, speech and language assessments, physical therapy assessments, and occupational therapy assessments among others.
- 2) All referrals for specialized assessment **must** have parental/guardian consent.
- 3) Appropriate personnel will inform parents/guardians of assessment results and recommendations.
- 4) Written parental/guardian permission is required before a student is placed on an Individualized Program Plan or in a specialized program, and parents/guardians will be informed of any program change.
- 5) Programming supports and services will be based on classroom, school based and standardized assessment data, as well as specialized assessments administered at the school level or by a qualified specialist(s) where applicable.
- 6) The classroom teacher(s), along with appropriate personnel including parents/guardians, will develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the Individualized Program Plan for each student with diverse learning needs. This plan will be developed collaboratively with, reviewed and signed by the members of the student's Learning Team, including the parents/guardians. Preferably, these discussions will take place in a wraparound meeting involving parents/guardians and all involved school staff.
- 7) Individualized Program Plans will be developed within a reasonable length of time. See FVSD Appendices for the Developing and Updating the IPP Process and Protocol.
- 8) Student progress will be regularly evaluated in terms of stated goals, objectives, strategies and accommodations and reported to parents. At minimum, the IPP will be reviewed with the student's Learning Team, including parents/guardians, two times per year/course; i.e. when the IPP is developed, as well as at the end of the year/course. School staff will update the IPP at minimum one additional time in the year, most often at the mid-year point.
- 9) IPPs will be uploaded to the Admin Centre by the specified dates in the fall and spring of each year.
- 10) All students identified with a behavioural need (codes 42 and 53 among others where behaviour is a factor) **must** have a behaviour plan which is to be uploaded to the Admin Centre as part of the IPP by the specified date each fall. Behaviour plans will be reviewed and updated throughout the year as needed to effectively support and manage the student's behaviour.
- 11) **Reporting:** Schools will upload an annual FVSD Inclusive Education Report to the Admin Centre by the specified date each fall.

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- 12) **Support services** are available to assist with the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all programming for students with diverse learning needs.

**Student Acceleration:** Students are expected to progress through the grades at a typical rate of one grade level per year. No student will be placed in a grade or course beyond the next logical level without the permission of the Assistant Superintendent of Learning. Schools are advised to contact the Assistant Superintendent of Learning when the possibility of accelerating a student is first considered.

**See “Roles and Responsibilities in Inclusive Education” in FVSD Appendices for role descriptions of the Learning Team, Classroom Teacher, Inclusive Education Coordinator, Educational Assistant and School Administrator.**

### **Funding - Inclusive Education**

Funding for students with disabilities (severe, mild, moderate and gifted) is included within the jurisdiction’s Inclusive Education funding allocation.

- ◆ ***Although Inclusive Education funding is no longer determined by the jurisdictional severe disabilities profile, it is still necessary for students to be identified on the September 30 submission as having exceptional (severe/mild/ moderate/gifted) education needs.*** See the most recent Alberta Education Handbook for the Identification and Review of Students with Severe Disabilities and the Special Education Coding Criteria for category descriptions, available on the Alberta Education Extranet.
- ◆ Students identified as having Mild, Moderate or Severe Needs must have medical, physical, psychological or other specialized assessments on file to substantiate the specific need(s) as well as a current Individualized Program Plan that has been signed by the members of the student’s Learning Team, including the parents/guardians. The IPP must be a “living document”; i.e. there must be evidence that it is being implemented, regularly reviewed and updated.

Funding is provided by the jurisdiction to assist schools in providing educational support services for students with significant diverse learning needs. Most often, this takes the form of educational assistance for students with severe disabilities, as well as specialized assessment, consultation, ongoing therapy and support services, and occasionally specialized equipment. Specialized equipment remains the property of Fort Vermilion School Division and may be moved from school to school, depending on need.

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## **Program Unit Funding**

Program Unit Funding is available for children with severe disabilities, subject to approval from Alberta Education, to supplement the cost of educational support services for children up to the age of 6.

- ◆ Children as young as 3 years of age on or before December 31 of a given school year may be eligible for funding, depending on the severity and type of need.
- ◆ Documentation must include a recent thorough assessment (for example, medical, psycho-educational, or speech and language pathology among others, depending on the disability).
- ◆ A Learning Team must be in place to guide the program for each PUF-funded child. The Learning Team should include the parent/guardian, ECS teacher, Inclusive Education coordinator, other school personnel as appropriate and additional service providers who are involved in developing, implementing and monitoring the child's program.
- ◆ An Individualized Program Plan must be in place and implemented.
- ◆ Copies of all documentation, including assessment, program planning and budget information, must be kept on file at the school.
- ◆ The jurisdictional PUF application is created and submitted by Central Office in the fall of each year. Available funds for school-based purchases to support PUF-funded programs will be communicated to the applicable schools once the PUF budget has been finalized.

## **Assessment Services**

- ◆ Psycho-Educational Assessment services are available from contracted and divisional psychologists. Referral access is through the Inclusive Education Coordinator at the school who has the necessary referral forms. Final approval for referrals for psycho-educational assessment is the responsibility of the Assistant Superintendent of Learning.
- ◆ Some students are eligible to access services from the multi-disciplinary team available through Northern Lights Regional Collaborative Service Delivery. This team provides coordinated assessment and consultation services in the following disciplines: psychology, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, educational programming, as well as services for the deaf/hard of hearing and the blind/visually impaired. Referral access is through the Inclusive Education Coordinator at the school who has the necessary referral forms.
- ◆ There is no school cost for the above-mentioned services.

## **Support Services**

Support resources are re-allocated each year based on documented student need. Support ceases when the child/student no longer attends school or no longer requires specialized supports and/or services.

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Two Diverse Learning Coordinators are available to assist teachers in understanding students and developing plans to meet the needs of the students within their classrooms.

**For further information, refer to *Success For All Students*, the division's Inclusive Education handbook. There is at least one copy in each school, typically located with the Inclusive Education coordinator.**



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## Learning Stores

The Fort Vermilion School Division operates Learning Stores in the communities of High Level, Fort Vermilion, La Crete and Rainbow Lake. Learning Stores operate as stand-alone facilities using a variety of approaches to meet the individual needs of students. The goal of Learning Stores is to assist these students in making the transition back into the traditional school, into post-secondary studies, or into the work force.

A *full time* “Learning Store” student is one who

- has completed grade nine
- is not registered in a regular high school
- is at least 15 and less than 20 years of age on September 1
- is unable to attend a regular high school and wishes to continue with a high school education.

A *dually registered* “Learning Store” student is one who is registered in and is attending a regular high school, however is accessing the Learning Store to complement his/her schedule. Dually-registered students will normally only be permitted to register in one course at a time.

Dually registered students will only be registered in a Learning Store for the following reasons:

- timetable conflict,
- course is not offered in the three-year high school plan,
- student wishes to accelerate his/her program and, therefore, is maintaining a full timetable at the regular high school,
- limited progress in current courses at the regular high school, and/or
- extenuating circumstances.

### **Responsibility of the Learning Store re: Dually Registered Students**

- Set short term goals for module completion and long term goals for course completion.
- Monitor the times when students are scheduled to be in the facility.
- Monitor student progress using the information provided on the tracking sheet through joint monthly meetings between Learning Store staff, regular high school staff and the dually registered student(s).
- Be available for parent-teacher interviews twice a year at the same time as the regular high school.

### **Responsibility of the High School re: Dually Registered Students**

- Consult the Learning Store staff prior to acknowledging a student can register at the Learning Store.
- Provide a signed “Permission to Access Learning Store Form” along with appropriate documentation, including a current Course Mark Summary, to the Learning Store.

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- Monitor student progress using the information provided on the tracking sheet through joint monthly meetings between Learning Store staff, regular high school staff and the dually registered student(s).

### **Responsibility of the Student**

- Establish and meet his/her module and course completion goals.
- Successfully complete a 1 credit CTS orientation course where applicable.
- Follow and abide by the Learning Store's policies and procedures. A student agrees to these procedures and policies by signing the "FVSD Learning Store - Student Expectations".

### **Graduation**

In communities where there is a regular high school and a Learning Store, graduating students from the regular high school and the Learning Store will be recognized at a community graduation ceremony. A student will be recognized as a graduate from the school in which most of the credits were earned in his/her graduating year.

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## **Mental Health Capacity Building Initiative**

High Level is the site of one of thirty-seven Mental Health Capacity Building Projects funded by Alberta Health Services. The Student Wellness Project is a collaborative venture between the Fort Vermilion School Division, Alberta Education, and Alberta Health Services among other local partners. The mission of Mental Health Capacity Building (MHCB) is to promote positive mental health in children, youth, families and individuals in the community who interact with children and youth. The MHCB initiative is based on the belief that mental and emotional wellbeing can be developed, nurtured and supported through promotion and prevention efforts. The Student Wellness Project includes a focus on the provision of promotion and prevention services for students within the schools as well as collaboration with local community agencies to strengthen the capacity of the community as a whole to address mental health awareness.

There are three objectives of the Mental Health Capacity Building initiative:

1. Promote positive mental health in children, youth, families and communities by raising awareness, increasing knowledge, building personal skills (such as self-care and self-regulation techniques), developing interpersonal skills and fostering positive community norms (such as support networks, physical and psychological safety).
2. Intervene early by facilitating access to early intervention and treatment services for children, youth, parents and/or caregivers who are at greatest risk of (or are currently experiencing) addiction and mental health issues.
3. Improve knowledge of and access to effective and innovative services across the mental health continuum through community collaborative networks with schools, health supports, and community agencies to coordinate and streamline existing services (while identifying and advocating for unmet needs).

There are four members of the Student Wellness Project team in High Level:

- Project Coordinator/Mental Health Therapist
- 3 Student Wellness Coaches, one located at each of High Level Public School, Spirit of the North Community School and Florence MacDougall Community School

Services are provided to students in ECS through grade 12 and their families in the FVSD schools in High Level.

The focus of the Student Wellness Project is to provide services within a collaborative framework along the continuum from universal to targeted to individualized programming, based on the needs of the individual and the school as a whole.

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Services are provided by project staff as well as other community service providers such as Alberta Health Services – Addictions and Mental Health, Public Health and the RCMP, among others, in collaboration with the Student Wellness Project. Services provided may include the following among others:

- Education and awareness sessions for students, families, school staff and community partners related to mental health, healthy living and positive life choices
- Universal and targeted programs that help students develop skills in areas such as healthy relationships, self-regulation, anxiety and anger management among others
- Support for students facing family crises
- Support during transitions
- Connection of students and families with appropriate community services and agencies

An increasing focus is on impacting the capacity of the community as a whole to promote mental health and prevent mental illness. This will involve significant engagement and collaboration with community agencies and service providers.

A multi-stakeholder Community Collaborative Network, comprised of representatives from the schools, local community support services and agencies such as AHS Addictions and Mental Health, Children's Services, Family and Community Support Services, Youth Activity Centre, RCMP, Parent Link Centre and others, meets several times each year to provide input regarding the ongoing implementation and development of the Student Wellness Project and to identify and mobilize community assets related to child, youth and family mental health specific to the High Level area.

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## **Northern Home Education Centre (NHEC)**

The Fort Vermilion School Division operates The Northern Home Education Centre for parents choosing to educate their children at home. The NHEC is a local service provider with the mandate of assisting parents in their efforts to provide the most appropriate education program for their children - and to help build success for students. NHEC will provide flexibility, allowing for individual students to be taught at home within different time limits and in different ways. It will give students the opportunity to work at their own level and at their own pace. Where parents deem that the opportunity to study at home is the most suitable for their children, NHEC will allow for accessibility, timely support, choice in learning materials, diversity, local perspective, and quality programming. A local office is maintained in La Crete to offer parents the opportunity to meet and obtain assistance on a more regular basis to support the learning needs of their children.

The responsibility of the Northern Home Education Centre Program is to:

- provide information regarding home education regulations and responsibilities
- assist with the registration process
- assist, if required, the parent in developing a learning plan suitable to the student's needs and compatible with the Alberta Program of Studies
- approve the learning plan
- assist, if required, the parent in acquiring appropriate resources for the learning plan
- approve materials required for the learning plan as chosen by parents
- provide assistance to parents when Alberta Program of Studies outcomes are not adequately covered by chosen resources
- monitor the student's progress a minimum of three times a year
- support the parent in efforts to promote life-long learning skills
- assist the parent with educational strategies if required
- provide a Home Notification Form to interested parties

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## **Primary Literacy Support**

Students in the Fort Vermilion School Division who are struggling in the area of reading and writing are provided with effective interventions as early as possible.

Using the Leveled Literacy Intervention program, Primary Literacy Support is intended to assist primary students whose reading and writing skills are just below grade level. The intention is to bring these students up to grade level in a relatively short time frame. This intervention is not intended for students who are significantly below grade level and who are on an Instructional Support Plan/Individualized Program Plan to address their specific learning needs.

The referral process and intervention program within the school are overseen by the Inclusive Education Coordinator. Students are referred by classroom teachers for inclusion in the Primary Literacy Support intervention program. Common assessment tools, intervention strategies and reporting procedures are used by the participating schools. There is a focus on parent/guardian involvement, including in-service and information sessions at the school level, as well as a home reading component.

The program is delivered by Primary Literacy Assistants who work under the supervision of the school's Inclusive Education Coordinator.

Overall support and direction for the Primary Literacy Support program is provided by one of the divisional Diverse Learning Coordinators.

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## **Regional Collaborative Service Delivery**

**Purpose:** The purpose of Regional Collaborative Service Delivery is to enable the collaboration between Children's Services, Community and Social Services, Education, school authorities, Health (including Alberta Health Services), First Nations and community organizations to address identified needs, coordinate and leverage systems, build system capacity, and plan for sustainability in meeting the needs of children, youth and their families.

### **Vision:**

- Children and youth reach their full potential
- Children and youth are successful
- Children and youth are healthy
- Children, youth and their families are secure and resilient

**Regional Vision:** In Northern Lights, a Regional Collaborative Service Delivery (RCSD) Model will improve access of children and youth to the right supports and services, build the capacity of communities to respond to the needs of children and youth, and integrate and coordinate supports and services that enhance the success of students. Our goal is to build a supportive foundation and create connections to support schools and community partners in working together to ultimately improve quality of life for children and youth.

### **Outcomes:**

- Effective Collaboration
- Enable Supports
- System Improvement

### **Eligibility for RCSD services:**

The following are eligible for services through the Northern Lights RCSD:

- Children and youth who are registered with an Alberta school authority or participating First Nations school in the ECS to grade 12 system
- Children and youth between birth and age 20 who have been identified as having a low incidence disability. This includes children and youth who are blind or visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and/or have complex communication needs
- Children and youth with complex and/or intensive support needs between birth and age 20. This includes those children and youth who require significant extraordinary care, due to the severity of their impairments, and services from more than one service sector. Children and youth who require complex and/or intensive support services may include those
  - With multiple impairments, complex mental health and health issues, and/or severe behavioural needs;
  - For whom all currently available resources have been utilized with limited success;
  - Who require fiscal and human resources that strain the capacity of one service sector; and/or

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- For whom there are questions about the safety of the child/youth, the family, or the public
  - Educators and other school staff, families, service providers and community service providers through cross-sector training or skill development

The **Northern Lights RCSD** currently consists of the following:

- Fort Vermilion School Division No. 52,
- High Level Christian Academy,
- Alberta Health Services North Zone,
- Northwest Alberta Children's Services
- Northwest Alberta Community and Social Services.
- Little Red River Cree Nation
  - Expansion of RCSD to the neighbouring First Nation Communities is in the development stages

Currently, the priority areas for the Northern Lights RCSD are as follows:

- Provide an effective, consistent and predictable continuum of services for learners who require mental health/emotional behavioural supports
- Provide an effective, consistent and predictable continuum of services for learners who require speech and language supports
- Ensure coordinated interagency case management and problem solving services for children and youth who have low incidence or complex needs and who require supports
- Provide local, collaborative, multi-disciplinary services for children and youth requiring a coordinated team approach
- Provide equitable access to RCSD supports and services to engaged First Nations children, youth and families attending First Nations schools

The following staffing is in place to provide services through RCSD and Inclusive Education funding:

- RCSD Regional Manager
- 7 Speech and Language Assistants who provide targeted and individualized speech and language programming
- Mental Health Therapists
  - One in the La Crete and area schools
  - Supervision and team support from High Level
- 7 Student Wellness Coaches
  - Two in the La Crete and area schools
  - One shared among the La Crete area and Fort Vermilion schools
  - Two in the Fort Vermilion schools
  - One at Rocky Lane school
  - One at Rainbow Lake School (.3 FTE)
- Local multi-disciplinary team that provides assessment and consultation services to schools within the RCSD region: Psychologist, Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) and Diverse Learning Coordinator



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- Contracted services from the following provide additional support through the multi-disciplinary team: SLP, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing and teacher of the blind and visually impaired.

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## **Success in School for Children and Youth in Care Provincial Protocol Framework**

Success in School for Children and Youth in Care is a cross-ministry initiative involving Education and Children's Services. It was developed to focus on improved educational outcomes for children and youth in care, a particularly vulnerable group of students who often have extraordinary needs due to their life circumstances. The Provincial Protocol Framework and regional agreements lay the foundation for positive working relationships and increased collaboration between the child/youth in care, teachers and other school staff, Children's Services staff, caregivers and other partners. The Provincial Protocol Framework clarifies processes and practices, outlines roles and responsibilities and provides a foundation for partners who are working together to support children and youth in care.

Schools are expected to develop a Success in School Plan for each child or youth in care in their building. The lead for this process, the School Point Person, is the school's Inclusive Education Coordinator. The Inclusive Education Coordinator will coordinate meetings of school staff, the caseworker, caregivers and the child or youth in care to develop and review the Success in School Plan. The expectation is that there will be a minimum of three Success in School core team meetings per year for each child/youth in care. If applicable, the development of a Success in School Plan and an ISP/IPP as well as Learning Team and Success in School core team meetings should be aligned to reduce the need for multiple meetings. See FVSD Appendices for the Success in School for Children and Youth in Care Protocol.

Success in School Plans are to be uploaded to the FVSD Admin Centre by the end of October (or within a reasonable time following the arrival of the student at the school or the child being taken into care) and the end of June each year.