



Checklist for Choosing a Supervising School Board

Considering home education? A simple checklist of questions to ask school boards is vital for parents considering home-based education

Programs

- What programs does your board offer for my children?
- Do you offer Traditional, Blended, Online, Correspondence, Christian, Kindergarten, Special Education and High School Programs?
- Who is responsible to Alberta Learning for the planning, actual delivery and evaluation of the curriculum and program that I'm choosing? (Traditional is parent responsible. Blended are a portion of Parent and a portion of Teacher, and Fully Aligned is totally Teacher responsible. Online and correspondence courses are 100% Teacher accountable, not parent.)

Funding

- What are the parent discretionary funding amounts and my requirements for various programs?
- Is there a School Fee charged for the Blended or Aligned portion of the program?
- Is there a registration fee or deposit charged for the Traditional program?
- When does the parent discretionary funding arrive for parents? Fall or Fall and Spring? In one lump or spread over the year?
- Will the board reserve the right to take back items bought with parent discretionary funding?
- Is there a charge for marking student assignments on the Traditional High School program for marks/credits?
- Will the board offer Purchase Orders?
- When is the parent discretionary funding claim deadline for the year? (Some boards forfeit the unclaimed funding.)
- Do items or private lessons considered for purchase require facilitator approval first?
- What are items that will not be reimbursed?
- Does your board receive infrastructure funding for my child's registration and how is that funding allocated to buildings and facilities for my child's education?
- Are board financial records available for parents to inspect?

Resources

- Are resources such as curriculum, equipment and computers provided free, rented, or will they be purchased from parent discretionary funding?
- Is there a rental or library fee for online or correspondence resources?
- Are there additional fees such as registration, postage and shipping of resources, etc?
- How big is your lending library?
- What types of curriculum do you loan out?
- Do you offer Alberta Program of Studies outcome checklists for parents that are written in layperson's language?
- Do you carry popular brand names (Abeka, Saxon, Math-U-See, Sing Spell Read and Write, Rodeo Chaps, etc) or do you have house brands?
- Do the resources you carry accommodate all learning styles or are they mostly workbooks and textbooks?
- On the Blended and Aligned programs, do I have the option to choose curriculum/resources that is customized for my child, for the Teacher delivered portion, if it meets Alberta Program of Studies Learning outcomes? (This should be "yes", otherwise the school board needs to teach the program.)
- Does the board have a regular newsletter? Monthly, quarterly or yearly?
- Does the board have an email list?
- Does the board collaborate, endorse and support all the major home education support groups?
- Does the board offer the opportunity for home educating families to participate in board sponsored talent showcases, science fairs, spelling bees, debating and other community organized events?

Facilitator

- Can I choose my facilitator?
- Does the facilitator attend professional development training in the culture of home education philosophy and best practices?
- What is the procedure should a difference of opinion arise between parent and facilitator?
- How long does it take to receive help or callbacks from my facilitator?
- Will my facilitator mark my child's work or is that the parent's responsibility on the program I choose?
- How often does my facilitator request visits?
- How many other families does my facilitator need to accommodate?
- Do your facilitators have knowledge of, and fully support all forms and philosophies of home education: Classical, Traditional, Waldorf, Reggio, Montessori, Un-schooling, Thomas Jefferson, Charlotte Mason, Eclectic, etc?
- Is there a charge for facilitator visits?
- Are they at my home or your center? (You have the right to insist upon your home.)
- If the visits are at your center, what accommodations for younger siblings do you offer? (Some boards provide toys and play centres so you can concentrate on the meeting.)
- Are visits phone-based, or in person?
- How are the expectations/agendas of the visits communicated to me beforehand?
- Will they need to speak with/see the children?
- Will the facilitator need to orally test the children in my presence? (You have the right to be present.)
- What records/portfolio requirements will the facilitators wish to see? (Traditional program only.)
- Does the facilitator help write the educational plan in the beginning of the year and offer leads and recommendations for resources if they are not available with the board library?

Field trips, Classes and Workshops

- What field trips/classes do you offer? Are they mandatory attendance? (May be on the Blended/Aligned program)
- Are the core program classes free in order to help parents meet Alberta Program of Studies outcomes? If not, is there a charge? (Teacher delivered classes under the Blended/Aligned Program should be free.)
- Are siblings allowed to participate in family orientated classes? If not, how are they accommodated?
- Are my child's friends not registered with your board allowed to participate with payment?

- What social (non-academic) programs such as dances, free time, do you offer?
- Do you offer music, art, drama, choir, team sports, dance, gym time, second language, math and language arts tutoring, computer studies, food science and other options?
- Does the non-resident board have a Calgary site for offering programming?
- Are the workshops, classes, taught by Alberta Certified Teachers or under the supervision of Certified Teachers?
- Does the board offer a free parent support group?
- Is the parent support group facilitator trained in adult education, home education, and small group facilitation?
- Does the board offer regular workshops, conferences, etc, for parents to support their preferred teaching style? Is there a charge?
- Are their specialists available to offer workshops on specific learning problems? Is there a charge?

School Board Policies

- What is the organizational structure of the school board?
- Who or what organization is the highest responsible person?
- Can you refuse any students/families for any particular reason?
- Can the school board insist on a student's change of program from Traditional to Aligned or reverse? (No.)
- Does the school board have a Parent (School) Advisory Council that parents can provide input on important topics of funding and policy?
- Are parents appointed, or elected to be on the PAT?
- Does any of your funding come from gambling sources such as bingos, lotteries, or casinos?
- What is your board's policy if my child covers less than half the Alberta Program of Studies outcomes on a blended, fully aligned or on-line program?
- Does the board have a code of conduct policy?
- What is the enforcement procedure?
- How do you accommodate parents that refuse school board and Provincial Achievement Tests? (Any parent can refuse PATs)
- What alternate methods of evaluation will you accept?
- Can I get refunds for classes that I cancel with minimum notice?
- Does your board have a Special Needs facilitator and resources available to help parents with special needs? Is there extra cost for those resources?
- Can the facilitator do a special-needs Individual Program Plan?

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