

## Education in Alberta: General Information

**Reference** (available in 2013): <http://education.alberta.ca/parents/educationsys/ourstudents/vi.aspx>

### Provincial Co-operation

Although the provinces and territories run their own educational systems, they are working together to develop common goals and programs in various subject areas.



Alberta took an important step in this direction when it began collaborating with Saskatchewan, Manitoba, British Columbia, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories on core subject programs. Since 1996, the four Western provinces and two territories have been developing common learning standards in Mathematics, English Language Arts and French.

### Grade and School Levels

The following grade and school levels are most common in the province. Some school boards have a middle school structure for grades 5 to 8.

Grade	Age*	Division
Kindergarten	5 years	
1-6	6-12 years	Elementary School
7-9	12-15 years	Junior High School
10-12	15-18 years	Senior High School

\*Approximately

The *Alberta Programs of Study* outlines the Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum. These Programs of Study identify what students are expected to learn and be able to do in all subjects and grades. School boards select instructional materials to help students achieve these standards. Programs of Study have been established for elementary, junior high school and senior high school students. Students must take certain required courses and may choose optional courses, which vary from school to school. Alberta also has an approved program statement for kindergarten.

### Kindergarten

Early Childhood Services (ECS) includes kindergarten programs. Parents may choose whether or not to send their children to ECS programs.

ECS prepares children for entry into Grade 1. ECS programs may be provided through the public school system or private establishments. They must meet government regulations and operate with certificated teachers.

### Grades 1 to 6

Required courses: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Art and Music, Health, and Physical Education.

Optional courses: 15% of instructional time is set aside for optional subjects, such as second languages, Drama and Religious Instruction. Information and communication technology learner outcomes are infused within core curricula in Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies at all grade levels. Courses vary from school to school, according to local needs and priorities, and parental input.

### Grades 7 to 9

Required courses: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Physical Education, Health and Personal Life Skills. Information and communication technology learner outcomes are infused within core curricula in Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies at all grade levels.

Optional courses: Schools must offer two provincially authorized optional courses except where instruction in a language other than English is offered. Then only one provincially authorized optional course is required.

In junior high schools, the majority of courses are offered for the full school year.

### Grades 10 to 12

High schools offer many different course choices:

- Academic
- Career and Technology Studies
- Registered Apprenticeship Program
- Off-campus Education
- Fine Arts
- Knowledge and Employability

Programs vary by district and school. Parents and students should bear students' future career and study plans in mind when choosing courses. School counsellors can be helpful in this matter.

In senior high schools, courses may be offered for the full school year or on a semester basis.

### The School Year

The school year usually extends from September to June 30 with minor variations from system to system. Some schools are now providing year-round schooling and other alternative timetables, and others start their school year in August rather than September.

Most schools close down for two months of vacation in July and August, as well as two weeks of Christmas/winter vacation and an Easter/spring break.

The number of instructional days may vary from 190 to 200 days.

The number of instructional hours vary per grade levels :

- Kindergarten - 475 hours
- Elementary & Junior High - 950 hours
- Senior High - 1 000 hours

### Other programs

Other programs are available in addition to basic education programs. They vary from one jurisdiction and school to another, depending on local interest, and may consist of a course, sets of courses or an entire program of studies. They include: International and Aboriginal Languages, Fine Arts, and English as a Second Language programs.

### *Languages*

To receive their high school diploma, all students must successfully complete an English 30-level course.

Schools are not required to teach a second language. However, provincial curriculum is available for many second languages. Alberta Education supports French programs to encourage all students to learn Canada's other official language. Students are also encouraged to learn other languages. There are three types of language programs:

- alternative language programs (immersion), in which the second language is used for 50% to 100% of the school day at the elementary level and 40% to 80% at the secondary level;
- bilingual programs, in which the language is used between 25% and 50% of the time and is used to teach other subjects besides Language Arts, such as Art, Music and Social Studies;
- second language programs, which teach a particular language as a course.

In addition to French, provincially developed language programs are offered in: Blackfoot, Cree, Chinese, German, Italian, Japanese, Punjabi, Latin, Spanish and Ukrainian. Many school boards have developed their own programs, including Arabic, Chinese, Chipewyan, German, Hebrew, Mandarin, Polish and Portuguese. Greek, Hungarian and Swedish are also available locally, but they are not always offered every year.

### *Fine Arts*

In grades 1 through 6, students take compulsory courses in Art and Music, and learn dance as part of Physical Education. Many elementary schools also offer Drama as an option.

Students in most junior and senior high schools have access to optional Art, Music and Drama courses. Some schools run programs focused on Fine Arts.

### *English as a Second Language*

English as Second Language (ESL) instruction is offered to both Canadian-born and foreign-born students by local boards in schools according to need. Some schools offer ESL assistance in both elementary and secondary grades.

ESL programs help students learn English more quickly and adjust to Canadian cultural values, customs and social expectations. Students spend the rest of the time in regular classes.