



Questions to Ask a Supervising School Board

Considering home education? As a homeschooling parent in Alberta, you must register with a willing school board in order to legally home school. However, it's important to know that you don't have to register with your local school board. Many private schools and school boards inside and outside of Calgary and Edmonton will supervise homeschoolers as long as they reside somewhere in the province. The hard part is "What school board should I choose for this year?" Here is a simple checklist of questions to ask school boards so that you can compare apples to apples. Some questions will be more important to you depending on the age, learning style and personality of your child. A list of willing boards is also included.

Funding

- What programs does your board offer for my children?
- Do you offer Traditional, Blended, Online, Correspondence, Christian, Kindergarten, Junior or High School Programs?
- What are the parent discretionary funding amounts and my requirements for various programs? Who is responsible for the actual delivery of the curriculum and who is responsible for attaining the Alberta Program of Studies outcomes?
- When does the parent discretionary funding arrive for parents? Fall or Spring? In one lump or spread over the year?
- Will the board reserve the right to take back items bought with parent discretionary funding?
- Will the board offer purchase orders?

- When is the parent discretionary funding claim deadline for the year? When is the start date for claiming expenses?
- Do items or private lessons considered for purchase require facilitator approval first? What are items that will not be reimbursed?

Resources

- Are resources such as curriculum, equipment and computers provided or will they be charged out of parent discretionary funding?
- Is there a rental or library fee for online or print 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 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 programs, do I have the option to choose curriculum that is customized for my child, for the teacher delivered portion, if it meets Alberta Program of Studies Learning outcomes?
- 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 provide their own in-house parent support group?
- 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?
- What education philosophies does the facilitator support?
- What is the procedure should a difference of opinion arise between parent and facilitator? How long does it take to receive help from my facilitator?
- Will my facilitator mark my child's work or is that the parent's responsibility on the program/courses I choose?
- How many other families does my facilitator need to accommodate?
- Do your facilitators have training in, and fully support all forms and philosophies of home education: Classical, Traditional, Waldorf, Montessori, Unschooling, Thomas Jefferson, Charlotte Mason, Eclectic, etc?
- What percent of your facilitators have homeschooled their own children?
- What training do they receive in order to support home educating families?
- How many facilitator visits will be per year? What are the requirements for in-person, or telephone visits?

- Is there a charge for facilitator visits?
- Are they at my home or your center?
- If the visits are at your center, what accommodations for younger siblings do you offer?
- How are the expectations/agendas of the visits communicated to me?
- Will they need to speak with/see the children?
- Will the facilitator need to orally test the children in my presence?
- What records/portfolio requirements will the facilitators wish to see?
- 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?
- Are the core program classes free in order to help parents meet Alberta Program of Studies outcomes? If not, is there a charge?
- 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 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? If not, how do you wish the Alberta Program of Studies outcomes to be accomplished?
- Does the board have a Calgary site for offering programming?
- Are the workshops, classes, taught by Alberta Certified Teachers? Or are they taught by non-certified teachers that are supervised by Alberta 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?
- 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 special needs Individual Program Plan?

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 no particular reason?

- Does the school board have a Parent Advisory Council that parents can provide input on important topics of funding and policy? What days, nights, and times do they meet?
- 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 their child's participation in school board and Provincial Achievement Tests?
- What alternate methods of evaluation will you accept?
- Can I get refunds for classes that I cancel with minimum notice?

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