

**DATE:** December 14, 2021

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** Academic Enrichment Program

**ORIGINATOR:** Kathy Muhlethaler, Assistant Superintendent, Operations and Learning Services

**RESOURCE**

**STAFF:** Marnie Beaudoin, David Evans, Valerie Leclair, Ann Parker, Kyle Wagner, Christopher Wright

**REFERENCE:** [HC.AR – Student Admission and Enrolment](#)  
[GAA.BP – Delivery of Student Programs of Study](#)

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## ISSUE

College Board is requiring all jurisdictions using the name Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) program to follow the structure and guidelines set out by College Board, effective September 2022. This does not impact high school programming but will impact junior high Pre-AP sites.

## BACKGROUND

In April 2005, the Board of Trustees approved the Pre-AP alternative program for Grades 7 to 9, where numbers warranted (Attachment I). The Division's Pre-AP program offers an academic alternative program that can be implemented beginning in Grade 7, duplicated as demand requires and offered at several school sites. The program is flexible in terms of how schools organize, manage and deliver instruction. The Pre-AP program is currently offered at the following schools: Dan Knott, Highlands, John D. Bracco, Kate Chegwin, Londonderry, Mary Butterworth, McKernan, Parkview, Rosslyn and S. Bruce Smith.

Launched in the 2018–2019 school year by College Board, their Pre-AP program is a recognized program providing engaging, meaningful, foundational coursework to all students across varying levels of abilities. The program is offered mostly at the Grade 9 and 10 levels. This program offers consistent high standards in focused courses that help build, strengthen, and reinforce students' content knowledge and critical thinking skills.

College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, College Board was created to expand access to higher education. The organization is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators and schools.

College Board previously allowed school divisions to use the name Pre-Advanced Placement with autonomy. However, effective September 2022, any jurisdiction using the name will have to follow the stipulations outlined by College Board. This new structure requires school divisions to follow a specific

set of protocols and pay fees if they continue to name their junior high programs Pre-AP. The structure is very similar to the Division's Primary and Middle Years International Baccalaureate (IB) programs.

As a result of these upcoming changes, Administration will not continue offering the Pre-AP program and proposes offering a locally developed new academic program that will meet the needs of our students seeking academic programming at the junior high level. The current Pre-AP program would be deactivated, effective September 2022. The new academic program would offer students challenging academic experiences by deepening their learning in the core subjects of Mathematics, Science, English Language Arts and Social Studies. There would be no programming costs or fees associated with the delivery of this new program. To guide enrolment and admission into the Academic Enrichment Program, Division schools offering the new program would refer to the HC.AR - Student Admission and Enrolment regulation for enrolment priorities.

## RELATED FACTS

- College Board, which oversees AP and Pre-AP programming advised the Division during the 2019–2020 school year that should the Division wish to continue to use the Pre-AP name at the junior high level, effective September 2022, we would need to comply with their program requirements and protocols.
- If the Division continued using the Pre-AP program name, each school offering the Pre-AP program would pay College Board an annual fee of \$3,000 per Pre-AP course in English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. For each course, the school would receive a full-year course framework, digital instructional resources, teacher materials, learning checkpoint resources and online teacher professional learning modules. Student materials would also cost an additional \$5 per student per course.
- In addition to the issue of fees, should the Division choose to proceed with College Board's Pre-Advanced Placement structure, this could limit schools' flexibility to meet the specific needs of their learning community. The course frameworks, digital instructional resources, teacher materials and learning checkpoint resources would need to be strictly adhered to, limiting a teacher's ability to determine the best strategies and methods of instruction for their students when teaching topics.
- During the 2020–2021 school year, Administration launched a review of the Division's Pre-AP program. This was also seen as an opportunity to review all academic programming with the goal to provide consistency across Division schools and a clearer definition of these programs.
- Pre-AP is not a prerequisite to AP in high school.

## Program Review Process:

### Stakeholder Engagement

As a first step towards a review, key stakeholders (students, parents and staff) were invited to give feedback through an online survey on what was important to them when considering academic programming at the junior high level. The survey was open between February 16 and February 28, 2021.

### The objectives for the engagement were to:

- Provide stakeholder feedback to inform the development of a new junior high academic program to replace the current Pre-AP program.
- Provide information and insight to align junior high academic programming across the Division.

### What we heard from the initial survey

- A total of 1,640 student responses were received with another 477 responses from parents and 164 responses from staff. Approximately 55 per cent of the students who gave feedback were in junior

high and almost 40 per cent were in Grades K–6. Five per cent of the responses were from students in Grades 10–12.

- All participants were also asked to identify one characteristic they would identify as being the most important aspect of a junior high academic program. Overall, high school academic and post-secondary preparation were most important, with extended core learning and leadership development being two other key characteristics identified. Perspective seeking and project-based learning were two other characteristics noted as key by parents and staff but not students.
- Following the close of the survey, a committee of central departments worked on a program description and name for the new program. The program description incorporated the top five areas of importance indicated by the students', parents' and staff's feedback from the survey. The program description is the information parents will see when they look on the epsb.ca website for information about the program. (Attachment II).
- The new name for the program, Academic Enrichment Program, emerged from the top three areas of importance for all three stakeholders which was to extend or enrich the core learning. This was something that all three groups indicated was a top priority. Administration felt the name Academic Enrichment Program actively reflected the feedback received in the survey. The response was also positive when shared with Division staff who also viewed the draft program description.
- To obtain feedback on the name and program description for the Academic Enrichment Program, these were shared with principals of:
  - the Pre-AP program
  - the special needs program, Gifted and Talented
  - the Academic Alternative program (and some of their staff).
- Their feedback was then reviewed by the central committee, the Assistant Superintendents and the Superintendent to create a final draft.

## RECOMMENDATION

- **That the Pre-Advanced Placement program be deactivated, effective September 2022.**
- **That the Academic Enrichment Program be approved as a Division alternative program, effective September 2022.**

## CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

- A new program will provide the Division with an academic stream at the junior high level. This program can be implemented and duplicated as demand requires with continued flexibility and no extra programming costs. Impact on existing sites would need to be monitored.
- The Academic Enrichment Program will offer motivated students the opportunity for deeper engagement and understandings of provincial learning outcomes in Mathematics, Science, English Language Arts and Social Studies. Students will engage in enriched coursework in the core subjects to expand their knowledge and skills through authentic learning and real-world application, while striving for high academic achievement.
- The new program description incorporates critical learnings and skill development that challenges and supports students who have a desire and motivation to learn. This program provides opportunities for students to:
  - Develop academic skills in a challenging and safe learning environment.
  - Develop and apply competencies across subject and discipline areas for learning, work and life.
  - Develop an enriched academic knowledge.
  - Improve work and study skills.
  - Foster robust learning experiences through positive teacher student relationships.
  - Improve their ability to manage rigorous coursework in a supportive learning environment.
  - Develop citizen leadership skills (within a global perspective).

- Prepare for Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate courses in high school and a strong foundation for post-secondary learning, if that is a desire.
- Students who are currently in Pre-AP may transition to the Academic Enrichment Program for the remainder of their junior high programming. This will allow them to continue with programming until they complete Grade 9.
- This program is intended for all junior high students who want a greater academically rigorous and challenging program in a safe learning environment. Students who are successful in this program tend to demonstrate characteristics of academic achievement that would have their current school, in consultation with parents, recommend the program as an appropriate learning environment.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Upon approval of this recommendation:

- In preparation for the beginning of registration and pre-enrolment on February 1, 2022, Administration will meet with:
  - junior high schools currently offering the Pre-AP program to determine if they would like to offer the Academic Enrichment Program
  - junior high schools not currently offering Pre-AP but are interested in offering the Academic Enrichment Program at their school.
- Curriculum and Learning Supports, in collaboration with junior high schools, will develop a Scope and Sequence for each core subject to support the implementation of the new program.
- Communications staff will provide materials to Trustees, schools offering the new program and central staff. These materials will help answer questions and inquiries, and will support communication with families of students currently in the Pre-AP program.
- Programs and Student Accommodation will continue to review the distribution of junior high academic offerings with the goal to ensure equitable access for all students to program sites.

## **ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES**

ATTACHMENT I      Pre-Advanced Placement Program Establishment

ATTACHMENT II     Academic Enrichment Program Description

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## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 26, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Pre-Advanced Placement Alternative Program

ORIGINATOR: B. Holt, Executive Director, Instructional and Curricular Support Services

RESOURCE STAFF: Karen Bardy, Jenise Bidulock, Randy Billey, Gloria Chalmers, Douglas Davis, Sandy Forster, Stuart Wachowicz, Stephen Wright

## RECOMMENDATION

That Pre-Advanced Placement be approved as an alternative program for grades 7 to 9 beginning in the 2005-06 school year or when numbers warrant.

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**Background and Rationale for the Recommendation**

Edmonton Public Schools supports providing a range of alternative programs for students wanting a more academically rigorous and challenging program. Currently, the range of academic alternatives at the junior high level includes Academic Alternative, Middle Years International Baccalaureate and Cogito. At this time, not all sectors of the district offer ready access to one of these programs. Additionally, the district offers a junior high academic challenge program, under the special needs category.

Based on a desire to ensure that students in all sectors of the city have the option of selecting an academic-type alternative program, our current offerings were reviewed. It was determined that our current Academic Alternative would be difficult to duplicate as it is rooted in 30 years of history that has developed into a particular culture. The Middle Years International Baccalaureate involves costs for certification and teacher professional development. Thus, while the district will consider the need for additional sites to meet demand and remain competitive, it is fiscally prudent for the district to explore other options. With Cogito, we are investigating the demand for additional elementary sites that would, in the longer run, provide sufficient numbers of students to expand the junior high offerings.

Because requests were received from several junior high schools to offer pre-advanced placement and because the board approved advanced placement as an alternative program for grades 10 to 12 in the 2002-2003 school year, pre-advanced placement was investigated. It was determined that it would be possible to describe an alternative within the conceptual framework of Advanced Placement that instructs the provincial curriculum but also provides

enrichment in the core areas. An outline of the proposed alternative was forwarded to the western Canadian Advanced Placement representative who advised that such a program could be called pre-advance placement. To address the enrichment aspect and ensure consistency, Curriculum has completed a first draft of a prototype enriched curriculum for each of the core subject (Mathematics, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Health and Physical Education). A copy of the draft curriculum is available in the Trustee's Reading Room. If the recommendation is approved, the curriculum work would be completed by July 2005. The proposed option provides the district with an academic alternative that can be accessed beginning in grade 7, that can be duplicated as demand requires and one that, not unlike the International Middle Years Program, has international recognition.

### **Proposed Alternative Program**

**Name:** Pre-Advanced Placement Alternative Program (grades 7 to 9)

**Curriculum and Program Focus:** This program is described within the Advanced Placement conceptual framework and meets or exceeds the Provincial Program of Studies. It will provide a coordinated, rich and rigorous curriculum and develop analytical thinking and writing skills. It is grounded in the belief that preparation for high intellectual engagement begins by developing skills and acquiring knowledge as early as possible and that this enables more students to perform at high levels. It will involve strategies that engage students in active, high-level learning and foster appreciation of quality work and diligent effort. The intent is to develop students who have a strong work ethic, welcome problematic situations, tolerate ambiguity, seek alternative possibilities and consider evidence on both sides, are reflective and deliberate, make connections among hitherto unrelated events or ideas and revise goals when necessary.

The key program elements include:

- Extensive use of subject-based vertical teams to ensure continuity from grade to grade
- Close links with senior high schools offering advanced placement or international baccalaureate programs to ensure smooth transition
- Use of vertical teams to increase standards, foster greater inclusion, encourage innovation, and bring about coordination with the goal of stimulating enthusiasm and empowering students
- Creation of challenging learning environments through the development of tasks that require active student engagement and encourage students to take intellectual risks and experiment with ideas (i.e., problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning and community service)
- Use of rubrics to assess (e.g., writing as exemplary, commendable, effective or approaches effective) and to enable student self-evaluation
- Use of primary sources and effective questioning
- Requires that students formulate questions and draw inferences from a variety of sources and construct solid verbal and written arguments
- Requires fine arts and second language options
- Incorporates a global perspective, fosters a culture of character and underscores the responsibilities of citizenship through the use of a broad range of resources, some additional curriculum outcomes and the strategies previously identified

**Curricular Support:** The district has developed a first draft of a prototype enriched Alberta Education curriculum for the core subjects (English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Health and Physical Education). Should the alternative program be approved by trustees, this work would be finalized. By developing this curriculum, the district can better ensure that there is in fact rigor, that there is consistency across district sites and that transition to high school options is smooth. In addition, in view of the content and expectations of the prototype draft, the district would support teacher professional development relative to this curriculum.

**Target Students:** This program is intended for all junior high students who want a more academically rigorous and challenging program, who are interested in broadening their intercultural and international perspectives and who wish to develop skills that enable them to become socially responsible life-long learners. These are motivation and performance-based criteria (e.g. honours or near honours marks, standard of excellence on the Provincial Achievement Examinations and above grade on the HLATs). It will assist students to be successful in any high school program, post-secondary or the world of work.

**Staffing:** The program requires staff who are supportive of the program as described and experienced content area specialists. In addition to implementing the key elements, such staff will be expected to participate in vertical teams and to participate in an Advanced Placement professional development offering on a yearly basis and a Summer Institute once every 5 years.

**Costs:** Advanced Placement is an affordable program. At the junior high level, the costs are similar to those of any program, that is, teacher professional development and resource acquisition costs. With respect to professional development, the Advanced Placement organization will ensure that there are yearly Pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement sessions in Edmonton. The cost per teacher for participation in Pre-Advanced Placement professional development is about \$200.00 or \$375.00 for combined Pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement.

**District Support:** It is recommended that a start up grant of \$319 be provided for each student in the first year of implementation and for growth in year two. This recommendation is consistent with district practice over the past ten years. This enables the school location to acquire the resources and to ensure staff has the initial professional training required. There would then be an expectation that the alternative would be sustainable without additional funding.

**Location:** If the program is approved, planning will identify a site or sites based on a number of criteria such as current availability of academic alternatives in the sector, interest and support from the school community, and demand in the sector.

**Program Monitoring and Review:** As with all alternative programs, achievement and staff, student and parent satisfaction will be monitored on an annual basis. During the implementation phase, assistance will be provided to ensure the program is offered as described. Again, as with other alternatives, the program will be reviewed periodically to determine whether modifications are required to keep the program current and viable.

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# Academic Enrichment Program - Program Description(epsb.ca)

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Academic Enrichment Program offers motivated students challenging academic experiences by deepening their learning in the core subjects of Mathematics, Science, English Language Arts, and Social Studies. Students will engage in enriched coursework while striving for high academic achievement. They will also enjoy being challenged to expand their knowledge and skills through authentic learning and real-world application. This program is an opportunity for students to acquire [competencies](#), explore different ways of thinking and concepts to engage in higher levels of learning as global citizen leaders.

### GOALS:

- Offer academically rigorous programming and deepen learning of Alberta Education's learning outcomes in Language Arts, Science, Social Studies and Math
- Integrate core subjects (ELA/ FLA/ Bilingual LA, Science, Social Studies and Math)
- Explore, discuss, and meaningfully construct concepts and relationships in contexts that involve authentic learning and real-world applications relevant to the learner
- Use a variety of effective research-based strategies
- Offer the opportunity to deepen understanding of Alberta Education's learning outcomes
- Prepare students for success who wish to continue their academic coursework in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) programming in high school and in post-secondary education
- Foster the habits of mind that define global citizen leaders with a life-long love of learning while building a strong foundation for post-secondary learning
- Provide an engaging learning environment designed to develop critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication, personal growth and well-being, creativity and innovation.
- Provide opportunities for global citizen leadership

### BENEFITS:

- Development of academic skills in a challenging and safe learning environment
- Development and application of competencies across subject and discipline areas for learning, work and life
- Development of an enriched academic knowledge
- Improved work and study skills
- Positive teacher student relationships to foster robust learning experiences
- Improved ability to manage rigorous coursework in a supportive learning environment
- Development of citizen leadership skills (within a global perspective)

- Preparation for Advanced Placement/ International Baccalaureate courses in high school and a strong foundation for post-secondary learning

#### PROGRAM DELIVERY

- Emphasis on approaches, instructional strategies and real-world applications that deepen learning and exploration of content
- Optional flexible grouping including the use of vertical teams to improve achievement, foster greater inclusion, encourage innovation, and bring about coordination with the goal of stimulating enthusiasm and empowering students
- Creation of challenging learning environments that:
  - require active student engagement,
  - encourage students to take intellectual risks and experiment with ideas (i.e., problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, etc.) and,
  - construct long-term understanding.
- Develop cultural and global citizen leadership through community service

#### ELIGIBILITY:

The enrolment conditions for students include:

- Be enrolled in Grades 7 to 9
- Demonstrate self-motivation, interdependence, life-long learning, positive attitude
- Enjoy a challenge, be motivated to learn, enjoy finding solutions and synthesizing information all while being independent and responsible learners
- Demonstrate characteristics of academic achievement that would have the current school, in consultation with their parents, recommend the program as an appropriate learning environment for them.
- Parental support and commitment are encouraged

Contact a school offering the Academic Enrichment Program for more information about eligibility.

#### ALBERTA CURRICULUM

All Edmonton Public Schools programming is based on curriculum determined by Alberta Education. Students enrolled in the Academic Enrichment Program will receive the same high-quality education offered in all of our programs.

#### TRANSPORTATION

Edmonton Transit is the preferred method of transportation. For more information about busing, contact the school or call Student Transportation at 780-429-8585.