

## Administrative Procedure 220

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Added March 2009

### FOCUS PROGRAMS

#### Background

Focus programs are deemed to be specialty programs that provide an intensive study of a particular discipline that enhances the lifelong learning, and / or career interests of students. Such programs are valuable in furthering student motivation to complete school, responding to the giftedness of students, and fulfilling learning potential. Holy Spirit Catholic Schools favours a balanced perspective in promoting the range of opportunities that will be available to students within a “focus program” format. Board Policy 1: Mandate, Mission, Values, and Goals maintains that on the one hand, our schools are called “to develop the utmost intellectual, physical, social, spiritual and emotional capabilities of each child, while on the other, “provide equal opportunity for all.” For this reason, a school’s consideration of the basic Catholic education programming needs of all students takes precedence over the provision of focus programs. The procedures outlined within Administrative Procedure 317 are dedicated to ensure that focus programs find their appropriate place within the collective needs of schools and the school division.

#### Value and Core Commitment Link

“Excellence in Learning”

- “We provide opportunities for each and every student to discover and become the person God created him or her to be.”

“Stewardship”

- “We ensure our resources and efforts best serve the educational needs of all our students.”
- “We are receptive to our stakeholders.”

#### Procedure

1. The philosophical basis for a focus program is to develop congregated program settings in response to the individual interests of students.
2. Basic Catholic education refers to a school’s responsibility to meet the expectations of Alberta Education’s definition of education, while offering religious education as a required locally approved core subject for all students. Such education also enhances the permeation of the Catholic faith in all areas of associated study. All students who enroll in focus programs will be expected to meet the requirements of basic Catholic education, as previously defined.

3. Applications for all new focus programs are to be made annually to the Superintendent by March 1 of the school year prior to the actual implementation year.
4. Existing programs do not require annual applications, but will only continue to exist by virtue of evidence that the program continues to meet the expectations of this procedure. It is the Principal's role in monitoring the viability of existing programs on this basis.
5. Such applications will provide the following information:
  - 5.1 An indication of the extent of student interest for the program
  - 5.2 A proposal ensuring that:
    - 5.2.1 Costing is based upon sustaining or lowering overall class size relevant to the province's and Board's class size requirement;
    - 5.2.2 The program does not diminish resource and educational expertise that would be available for students within a construct of basic Catholic education;
    - 5.2.3 The program provides first priority to students who are resident to Holy Spirit Catholic Schools;
    - 5.2.4 The program is complementary to a student's interest in accessing core and option programs already available within the school community;
    - 5.2.5 The program is being instructed by certificated teachers functioning as employees within Holy Spirit Catholic Schools;
    - 5.2.6 Curricular fees in addition to basic programming dollars will be stipulated and rationalized;
    - 5.2.7 The program is complementary to a school's ability to annually achieve fiscal results that demonstrate a break even or surplus position.
6. Based upon the proposal pre-requisites, the Superintendent will report focus program proposals to the Board and will pre-approve all focus programs prior to their implementation.
7. Superintendent pre-approval of additional focus programs will be dependent upon a school's ability to meet parameter 5.2.5.
8. Focus programs will then be approved by the Principal of the school, subsequent to the advice of school councils.
9. The public promotion of focus programs will occur concurrent to the promotion of other course programs being provided within the school community. This assures that the Principal will have sufficient data regarding the extent to which a focus program affects resources available to all other courses of interest to the student body.

10. Focus programs that are named as “academies” will assure that the appropriate program philosophy relevant to public education is applied: “a school offering training in a special field of study.”