

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION GUIDELINES AND INTAKE PROTOCOL

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1.0 Introduction

Footprints for Learning Charter Academy provides a continuum of supports and services based on children's needs and consistent with the principles of inclusive education, from the time children enter school in Kindergarten until they graduate in Grade 12. We provide a comprehensive range of programs and services to address the diverse learning needs of our student population. Our team consists of school administration, the school Learning Support teacher, classroom teachers, parents, students, and other school and jurisdiction staff who work towards meeting your child's needs (e.g. Educational Assistants). We also access external service providers, as needed, to better meet the needs of our students. We believe that all students should be educated in the most supportive environment possible. We value the importance of parent involvement and recognize that parent support is essential to student success.

2.0 Alberta Education

Guiding Reference: Principles of Inclusive Education as defined by Alberta Education (2020). Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/inclusive-education/what-is-inclusion/>

The following six principles are key to achieving Alberta's vision for an inclusive education system. These principles can guide and inform value-based and learner-centered decisions related to policies, practices and actions at every level of Alberta's education system.

1. Anticipate, value and support diversity and learner differences
2. High expectations for all learners
3. Understand learners' strengths and needs
4. Reduce barriers within learning environments
5. Build Capacity
6. Collaborate for success Alberta Education.

Professional Practice Standards Alberta Education, in partnership with the College of Alberta School Superintendents and other provincial organizations, have designed new Alberta Education Professional Practice Standards for the Teaching Profession. These Standards include a Teaching Quality Standard, a Leadership Quality Standard and a Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard. Two significant changes in these new standards are the addition of specific indicators regarding the professional practice expectations for Applying Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit and Establishing Inclusive Learning Environments.

Additional Resources:

- *Alberta Education Website;*
- *Inclusive Education Alberta Education: Inclusive Education Video Series*
- *Alberta Education: Inclusive Education Library*
- *Alberta Education: Indicators of Inclusive Schools*
- *Teaching Quality Standard School*
- *Leadership Standard*
- *Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard*

4.0 Footprints for Learning Charter Academy

Located in Airdrie, *Footprints for Learning Society (FFLS)* is a newly established Charter Public School Authority with a history of 13 years in Alberta Education. Within the authority, we have one school campus called Footprints for Learning Charter Academy (FLCA), serving 500 students. We offer educational programming through an Entrepreneurship Teaching and Learning Framework that has been developed within the Alberta context for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Our mission is to provide a safe and caring environment where the three pillars of transformational Entrepreneurship, Leadership, and Globalization are set within the domains of Academic Achievement and Holistic Student Wellness. See FLCA website for details and supporting documents: <https://www.footprintsforlearningacademy.com/>

Beliefs

We believe student learning thrives when:

1. The needs of students are recognized and come first.
2. Each student's knowledge, skills, attributes and interests are identified and developed.
3. The learning environment is physically and emotionally safe and secure.
4. Opportunities are provided for challenge, discovery, action and reflection.
5. Each school and the district as a whole function as a Professional Learning Community engaged together in ongoing learning.
6. Parents are well informed and have meaningful opportunities to participate in their child's education.
7. There are healthy connections between the schools and their communities.
8. Relationships between the board, staff, students, and community model mutual respect and support

Background

Inclusion is a values based approach and is a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance and belonging for all students. The FFLS is committed to inclusive education programming to support all children and students in attaining the goals of the Ministerial Order on Student Learning (#001/2013). The Division acknowledges that children have a wide range of learning needs and recognizes the necessity of providing programs and support services for students with unique, diverse and complex learning needs. Educating students with diverse needs in regular classrooms shall be done in consultation with students, parents/guardians, school and division staff.

Inclusion in FFLS and FLCA is characterized by:

- valuing diversity and striving to create environments where all learners feel welcome, feel a sense of belonging and are treated with dignity and respect;
- fostering a growth mindset and high expectations for all learners;
- flexible and responsive environments that can adapt to the changing needs of all learners while embracing differences and celebrating unique strengths;
- multidisciplinary collaborative teams using evidence based instructional practices and strategies to engage all learners and support their optimal achievement and growth.

Administrative Leadership (Principals) will ensure that:

1. The classroom teacher provides a program of individualization and differentiation;
2. An Individual Program Plan (IPP) is designed, in consultation with the parent and other professionals where appropriate, for each student identified with unique needs. (At the ECS level a provider shall lead the PUF programming.)
3. A Positive Behaviour Support Plan is developed and implemented for each student identified as requiring significant individualized support for behavior.
4. Regular communication with parents regarding student programs is maintained and documented.

5. Individual Program Plan reviews that include consultation with parents, are convened by the classroom teacher, in collaboration with the Learning Support Teacher, for all students on IPPs, at least two times per year.

6. All schools have a school based collaborative team structure in place to provide consultation, collaboration, planning and problem solving relating to programming for students with diverse needs.

7. Transition processes are in place for all students.

8. A structured transfer of information, written and/or oral, on all students with IPPs takes place each school year, involving both sending and receiving teachers.

References

Education Act

Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12 Standards for Special Education

Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education

Standards for Psycho-Educational Assessment (1994) Alberta Education

5.0 Terms and Definitions

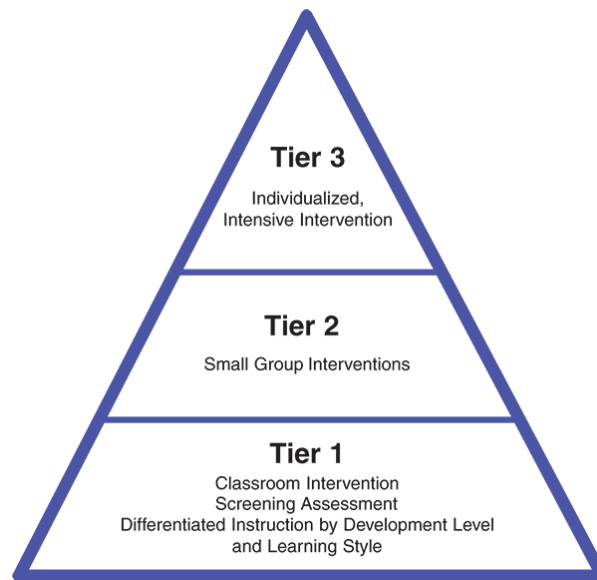
Term Definition	Definition	Example
Accommodation	An accommodation is a change or alteration in the regular way a student is expected to learn, complete assignments or participate in classroom activities. Accommodations include special teaching or assessment strategies, equipment or other supports that remove, or at least lessen, the impact of a student's special education needs. Parents, students and teachers sometimes perceive that accommodations give students with special education needs an unfair advantage over other students. In reality, accommodations give the student the same opportunity to succeed as other students.	UDL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● additional time ● frequent breaks ● use of multiplication tables ● alternative seating
Adaptation	Programming that retains the learning outcomes of the Program of Studies and where adjustments to the instructional process are provided to address the special education needs of	UDL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● simplify instructions ● use pictures and concrete materials ● adapt level of questioning

	<p>the student (Alberta Education, 2004). Students receiving adaptations are typically working below the grade level of their peers, but may also be gifted or gifted twice exceptional.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prompt students to use specific strategies at appropriate times
Modification	<p>Programming in which the learning outcomes are significantly different from the provincial curriculum and are specifically selected to meet students' special education needs (Alberta Education, 2004).</p>	<p>UDL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> modifying learning outcomes by simplifying key concepts, major understandings and skills in content areas simplifying texts to address students' level of ability and understanding lowering the reading level of assignments and assessments for their modified program
K and E	<p>Knowledge and Employability courses are for students in Grades 8 to 12 who demonstrate reading, writing, mathematical and/or other levels of achievement two to three grade levels below their age-appropriate grade.</p>	
Response to Intervention	<p>Response to Intervention is a way of supporting students that identifies strategies, supports and interventions that address students' academic and social-emotional needs at a universal, targetted, and individualized level.</p>	<p>Response to Intervention - Alberta Education</p>
Individual Program Plans (IPPs)	<p>Individual Program Plans (IPPs) are written records which document the individualized planning processes for students with special educational needs. Individualized planning is a continuous and integrated process of instruction, assessment, evaluation, decision-making and reporting.</p>	

6.0 Continuum of Supports

FLCA uses a system of response entitled and published in educational research as The Tiered Response to Intervention. A basic model of this system is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The Tiered Approach to Intervention; commonly referred to as Response to Intervention (RTI).



Universal Programming. Tier 1 is the typical classroom environment. The teaching strategies and instruction used here reflect both methods of differentiated instruction and universal design for learning. Classes are structured and planned to reach every student in the class, regardless of exceptionality, and the curriculum goals are not modified. Throughout this process, the classroom teacher monitors the progress of students and notes students who are struggling and falling behind their peers.

There are many different methods to introduce differentiated instruction (DI) into the classroom. Nancy Hutchinson (2014) offers 10 introductory principles of DI to guide teachers:

1. Consider who the students are and use respectful tasks.
2. Be flexible in grouping students.
3. Form heterogeneous groups (based on abilities, interests, etc.).
4. Ensure all students have text they can read by choosing multi-level texts.
5. Ensure all students can respond meaningfully by providing an array of response formats.
6. Show students how to make connections between new and already acquired knowledge.
7. Help students to use strategies by modelling their use.
8. To engage all students, provide choice.
9. To ensure everyone learns, begin where the students are.
10. To show students what they have learned, create an array of assessment vehicles.

(Adapted from Hutchinson, 2014, p. 8)

7.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Parent

Parents/guardians are important members of their child's school-based collaborative team. All parents need to be informed of their child's progress at school and be involved in making decisions that affect their child's education. School and division personnel are required to ensure that parents have the information needed to make informed decisions. Although parents are not involved in direct implementation within the school setting, parents participate in planning, implementing and evaluating programs and supports by:

- Advocating for their child;
- Providing for their child's basic needs;
- Ensuring that their child attends school;
- Identifying their child's needs and communicating them to the teacher;
- Supporting and encouraging their child's learning at home and at school;
- Providing information that is critical for information gathering, screening, identification and referral processes;
- Providing informed consent for referrals and specialized assessment(s); ● Receiving the results of assessments;
- Participating as a team member that uses the results of a holistic assessment procedure to develop an IPP;
- Providing parent/guardian's perspective as to student strengths and needs;
- Providing informed consent for the content of the IPP and participating in IPP review meetings;
- Following through on IPP goals and strategies in the home and community settings;
- Communicating with the school regarding their concerns, observations and celebrations on a regular basis.

Principal

The School Principal is responsible for the instructional leadership of the school. This includes programming for all students within the school. The principal provides leadership in meeting diverse learning needs within the school and assigns responsibilities to teachers, education assistants and support staff. Administrators adhere to the Education Act - Sept 1, 2019 and Alberta Education Leadership Quality Standards - Sept 1, 2019 that outline School Leadership expectations with regard to the knowledge and abilities needed to create school environments that are safe, caring, respectful, welcoming and inclusive that "result in quality teaching and optimum learning for all school students." As indicated in the Standards for Special Education amended June 2004 document, Administrators of schools are accountable for the delivery and implementation of school-based special education programming and services. In this role, the Principal:

- Communicates and promotes Alberta Education and Footprints for Learning Society expectations, policies, and procedures to school staff;
- Ensures an inclusive model of education where every student has access to quality and optimum learning experiences;
- Works in collaboration with the Learning Support Teacher to support them in fulfilling the expectations of their role;

- Works through a collaborative process between the school and district to determine the school's level of need and prioritization for allocation of resources;
- Collaborates with the Learning Support Teacher to assign duties of Educational Assistants. Supervision of Educational Assistants is under the purview of the school principal.
- Ensures accountability of all staff to adapt and meet the learning needs of all students in responsive and flexible manner;
- As a part of supervision/evaluation, the Principal will hold teachers accountable to the 10 Inclusive Education Parent Handbook inclusive elements of the Teaching Quality Standard;
- Works collaboratively with all staff to establish, implement, review and revise school based processes for supporting the development, implementation and review of Individual Program Plans (IPP's);
- Provides leadership in creating and maintaining an effective response to intervention model within the school;
- Maintains current knowledge of effective practices for meeting diverse learning needs within an inclusive school;
- Works collaboratively with parents and staff to problem solve any concerns around a child's programming and/or supports.

Teacher

Classroom Teachers have the primary responsibility to meet the needs of the range of learners in their classroom. The Classroom Teacher is often the first to observe or perceive a learning difference. The Classroom Teacher works collaboratively with parents and other individuals, both within and outside the school, to develop the most inclusive, appropriate program for all learners in the regular classroom. Teachers adhere to the Alberta Education Teaching Quality Standard that outlines expectations with regard to the knowledge and abilities needed to create inclusive learning environments "where diversity is embraced and every student is welcomed, cared for, respected and safe." In this role, the Teacher:

- Accepts responsibility as the primary educator for all students in the classroom and takes a lead role in the development, implementation and review of programming for all students;
- Creates opportunities for meaningful inclusion of all students in daily activities;
- Implements appropriate universal, targeted and/or specialized strategies to address students' strengths, learning challenges and areas for growth;
- Is aware of and responds to students' emotional and mental health needs;
- Actively participates as a member of the school based collaborative team whose focus is to connect and program for students who are needing support;
- Actively uses knowledge of individual student needs to differentiate instruction to meet the learning needs of every student;
- Develops, implements, monitors and evaluates Individual Program Plans (IPPs) in collaboration with the Learning Support Teacher and in consultation with the school-based team;
- Seeks advice and support from professionals with expertise as needed ensuring consistent communication and collaboration with the Learning Support Teacher;
- In consultation with the School Administration and the Learning Support Teacher, determines specific classroom duties for the educational assistant within the inclusive classroom;
- Communicates student's progress to the parent or guardian on a regular basis (written reports, report cards, team meetings, phone calls) regarding their child's progress, program and any exceptional needs or supports required.

Learning Support Teacher

The Learning Support Teacher (LST) supports individual teachers and school teams to develop differentiated strategies, to coordinate and to monitor the development of programs for children with diverse learning needs. They are focused on instructional leadership and building teacher capacity. The Learning Support Teacher (LST) plays a central role in collaborating with staff so all students can achieve to the best of their abilities. Learning Support Teachers adhere to the Alberta Education Teaching Quality Standard that outlines expectations with regard to the knowledge and abilities needed to create inclusive learning environments “where diversity is embraced and every student is welcomed, cared for, respected and safe.” In this role, the Learning Support Teacher:

Advocacy and Support

- Advocates for inclusive education;
- Works in the classroom with school teams and individual teachers to support instruction that will allow students to receive an education in the least restrictive, most inclusive environment possible;
- Support professional staff as they meet the Teaching Quality Standard in the area of inclusion and inclusive practices;
- Provides input and support to school administration as they determine the direction and planning for service delivery for diverse students.

Collaboration and Communication

- Collaborates with classroom teachers to review pertinent information and documentation for student programming;
- Actively participates as a member of the school based collaborative team whose focus is to connect and program for students who are needing support;
- Coaches and supports staff as they develop their skills and abilities in meeting the diverse learning needs of all students;
- Supports the writing of anecdotal notes, reports, letters to professionals, parents, teachers, and administrators.
- Collaborates on Continuum of Supports and Services with Teachers, EA's, and Administration

Program Development: Collaborative facilitation of the Individual Program Plan (IPP)

- Maintains a current understanding of Alberta Education expectations, criteria and mandates with regard to Special Education;
- Understands the requirements of an Individual Program Plan (IPP) as outlined in the Standards for Special Education document'
- Templates, monitors and evaluates Individual Program Plans, Positive Behaviour Support Plans, Individual Care Plans, etc., in collaboration with the classroom teacher and in consultation with the school-based team'
- Assists teachers in developing and maintaining Individual Program Plans;
- Using professional learning differentiated instruction to support teachers in accommodating the learning needs of all students;
- Supports the accommodation process for achievement testing/diploma exams

Level B Testing can be done by FFLS/FLCA certified professionals as available.

Educational Assistant

The primary responsibility of the Educational Assistant is to work closely with school Administration, Learning Support Teachers and designated classroom teachers to facilitate the delivery of appropriate instructional programs. The Educational Assistant works under the direction of a qualified teacher with regard to planning and implementing programming. The Teacher, at all times, remains responsible for the instruction of students and their learning. Students may receive one-on-one support from the Educational Assistant, work within small groups, or work within the general education classroom. Under the supervision of school administration or a qualified teacher, the Educational Assistants' responsibilities are as follows:

Professional Responsibilities with regards to Inclusion Supports for Students:

- Demonstrates and maintains confidential communication about individuals;
- Demonstrates a positive rapport with students;
- Demonstrates a spirit of cooperation and flexibility;
- Seeks appropriate channels to solve matters of concern;
- Implements all program plans as directed and supervised by the teacher;
- Collaborates with teachers to provide input as they develop programming for students;
- Assists with observations, monitoring and behavior collection techniques; ● Assists with assessing students with diverse needs i.e. scribing, oral testing.

Counselor/Guidance Lead

School counselors provide a continuum of preventative, developmental, remedial, and intervention services and programs. The school counselor's role includes counseling, school-based consultation, coordination and education. The school counselor does not discipline, but rather helps in the development of effective behavioral change or opportunity. Priorities for counseling vary between elementary and secondary grade levels. This role includes:

- counseling students and/or their families to foster growth;
- ameliorating factors at school which may precipitate problems for students;
- enhancing student success through goal setting, assisting with the development of Portfolios, IPPs and activities such as promotion of effective work and study habits, in collaboration with the Learning Support Teacher;
- providing appropriate interventions to assist students with their school-related concerns and social emotional well being;
- Collaborating with parents, teaching staff, community agencies, Elders and the medical community;
- Crisis intervention for individuals, families, and the school community;
- Researching and remaining current with best practices within the area of counseling and social/emotional learning;
- Being a member of the school's Learning Support Team;
- Supporting and/or leading school based health and well-being initiatives;
- Keeping student records;
- Other duties as assigned by the school or senior administration.

8.0 Enrolment Intake Process

Background: FLCA is an accredited charter school in the province of Alberta. Each year, all students, whether returning or new, must complete an enrollment application. Enrollment decisions are made by the administration, considering several factors holistically inclusive of alignment with the FLCA Charter Vision, Mission, Teaching Philosophy, and Program Policies. Priority is given to returning students and their siblings where possible. It is our goal to be inclusive and to ensure that FLCA program will best support the student's success. There is no designated catchment area for school applications of this Charter School.

Application Timeline: Applications are initially open until January 30th of each calendar year for the upcoming school year starting in September. After this date, we determine eligibility and priority for applications submitted by January 30th. Acceptance is then based on a lottery system, with remaining applications waitlisted if applicable. For any open spaces, a new application period will open, following the same process.

Application Procedure:

1. **Online Application:** Families complete an online application form for each child in January during the first phase of the application process.
2. **Document Submission:** Families provide requested documents, such as birth certificates and final report cards from the previous school.
3. **Lottery Selection:** In the second phase, students are selected through a lottery (random selection), with sibling considerations.
4. **Administrative Interview:** Selected families attend an administrative interview focusing on elements of the Charter and programming for the learner, including Entrepreneurship, Spanish, and Global Awareness, to ensure the family agrees to and supports the school's Mission, Vision, and policies.
5. **Assessment and Confirmation:** The administrative team assesses alignment with the Charter, configures class cohorts, and sends confirmation letters to families.
6. **Enrollment Decision:** Families are contacted, and the school awaits their confirmation of enrollment.
7. **Finalizing Enrollment:** This process continues until all available placements are filled.

By adhering to this structured enrollment process, FLCA ensures a fair and transparent system that aligns with its educational goals and community values.