



EDMONTON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

## **A Newcomers' Guide to Junior High Education in Edmonton Catholic Schools**



**Information and Suggestions for Your Child's Success in School**

*English Version*



## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to acknowledge the dedication of the following individuals who assisted the One World...One Centre, Intercultural Services in the development and production of A Newcomers' Guide to Junior High Education in Edmonton Catholic Schools.

This handbook is adopted from "The Newcomers' Guide to Elementary School in Ontario" and "The Newcomers' Guide to High School in Ontario", the projects of the Settlement Workers in Schools program (SWIS) in Ontario which were funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada's ISAP Project.

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## Introduction

***“Our classrooms look as global villages of many cultures and languages. Students with English as a Second Language (ESL) needs are part of almost every school population in Alberta.”***

*Alberta Education - ESL Guide to Implementation 1996 (Elementary)*

This guide provides information and suggestions that will help you establish good communication with your child's teachers. Good communication makes it easier for the teachers to get to know your child and for you to understand what is happening in school. It will make the adjustment to a different school system as smooth as possible. Your involvement will help your child be a successful student.



Consult this guide as your child progresses through junior high school. Use the index to select the sections that you need.

The Guide is available in eight (8) languages: Amharic, English, Filipino/Tagalog, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian and Vietnamese. It will be translated into more languages as needed.

In this guide, the word 'parent' includes guardians, caregivers and other family members.

## Getting Ready for Junior High School

### Junior High School Systems in Alberta

Choice is one of the important principles of Alberta's education system. When it comes to selecting a school, parents and students can choose from a wide range of publicly funded options: Public, Separate, Francophone, Private, and Charter Schools. In each system, district school boards supervise the schools.

For more information about school choices in Alberta see: [Choosing a School in Alberta](#) or [Education Options](#).

### How Edmonton Catholic Schools are Unique

Edmonton Catholic Schools offer the same core program as public schools. However, Catholic schools are unique in several ways:

- All subjects are taught from a Catholic perspective and Catholic values are part of everything that students learn.
- All students study religion as a core subject in each year of school.
- Students participate in daily prayer, reflection and other activities that develop their Catholic faith.
- In Catholic schools, students learn the skills and knowledge that promote equality, democracy, and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society.



***In Edmonton Catholic Schools, we treat each child as a valued and unique member of God's family.***

For more information about education in Edmonton Catholic Schools, see: [www.ecsd.net](http://www.ecsd.net).

## Reception of Newcomer Families/Intake Protocol



Registration and intake of newcomer students in Edmonton Catholic School District is provided at One World...One Centre. At the time of registration all newcomer students whose first language is not English will be assessed to determine their proficiency and level of support for ESL programming. At the same time the Liaison Workers will assist you in the completion of admission documents and provide information on the variety of resources and support that are available to newcomer students and their families.

You will be asked to fill out school forms such as:

- **Student Registration Form**
- **ESL Assessment Permission Form**
- **Student Intake Form** based on collection of background information and prior education of your child. All the collected information will help the teacher plan appropriate learning outcomes for your child.
- **Family Needs Assessment Questionnaire** which will determine what information about community programs and support may be of interest to you. Lack of information could prevent you from making good use of them.

On page 4 of the Student Registration Form, you will be asked to read and indicate their agreement or consent in the appropriate place on the following provisions:

- **Student Responsible Use Agreement**  
This document describes the responsibilities your child has related to the use of Edmonton Catholic Schools' information resources such as computers, internet and email.
- **Using and Disclosing Personal Information**  
This document describes how and when school district staff may collect and use your child's personal information.
- **District Public Website Guidelines**  
This document describes when and what personal information can be posted to a District website.
- **Media Participation Consent**  
Schools need to obtain parental consent before allowing students to participate in certain school events. Consent is required because at these events items that may be considered private such as students' work and/or the students themselves could be photographed, videotaped or recorded by parents, visitors or media. This information will be used to celebrate student's

achievement and to provide information about education in Catholic schools and/or the work of the Catholic School Board. Please take the time to read and check off all the sections you agree to. In case you change your mind after the fact you can withdraw your consent at any time.

### ♦ Consent to Communicate Through Electronic Means

The bottom of page 4 states that Edmonton Catholic Schools requires your consent to use email as an option for communicating school or school district information. Some of these communications may include information about offers, advertisements or promotions related to school activities such as yearbooks, fieldtrips, lunch programs, photos, or similar related school activities. Without your consent, school may not be able to send you these types of communications electronically. If you choose not to consent, you will only receive attendance messages and emergency messages.

## Documentation Required

You need to provide all of the following information to register your child for school:

1. Proof of student's immigration status – either one of:
  - student's and one of the parent's Permanent Resident Card or Confirmation of Permanent Residence
  - parent's Work or Study Permit and child's/children's Visitor or Study Permit(s) if available
  - Refugee Protection Claimant Document or Notice of Decision for Convention Refugees
  - student's Study Permit (*International Students*)
2. Student's Birth Certificate
3. Student's Baptismal Certificate, if the student is Catholic and if the certificate is available
4. Proof of guardianship - required if the student is under 18 years of age and is not living with a parent
5. Document to verify home address – driver's license, utility bill, lease agreement or any other document with your name and address



## Intercultural Services

Educational success for immigrant students is enhanced when connections between the school, students' families, and communities are established and reinforced. Edmonton Catholic Schools Intercultural Services plays a significant role in facilitating this. The Intercultural Services staff welcome and support newcomer students and their families in Edmonton Catholic Schools.





Five Intercultural Liaisons, under the direction of the One World...One Centre Manager, provide support services in these different languages: Amharic, Croatian, Filipino/Tagalog, Serbian, Spanish, Russian, Tigrinya, Ukrainian and Vietnamese. If the language that you speak is not listed above, please let your child's teacher know and the school will provide the interpreter you require. The Intercultural Services staff likewise provide the same

services to the English-speaking newcomer families in ECSD.

The Intercultural Services staff do not just act as interpreters. They too have moved to Canada from different countries and therefore have personal knowledge of the community they belong to, the ethnic lifestyles, and the educational system of their home country. The Intercultural Services staff that belongs to your ethnic community will also be able to understand your needs, fears and expectations. They will be able to provide you and your child with plenty of support.

The Intercultural Services staff will:

- provide you with information about school systems in Alberta, school procedures and events, and school expectations, as well as general information about Canadian life and culture,
- provide teachers and school personnel with information about your home country's educational system, its culture, your expectations and needs,
- provide interpretation services for you when you need to communicate with your child's teachers, school administrators and other personnel involved in your child's education during school registration, parent-teacher conferences, open houses and other school events,
- translate documents, report cards, immunization records, letters, newsletters and all other materials requested by schools,
- connect you to various local settlement and community agencies.

**For more information about services provided by the Intercultural Services staff, please call (780) 944-2001. If you have difficulties communicating in English, please leave a message in your own language.**

## Helping Your Child Adjust to a New School

### Dealing with Anxiety

Young people often find it hard to leave their friends and relatives and move to a new country. It is normal for them to feel a mix of excitement, anger and sadness as they adjust to living in a new culture.

They may also find it very stressful to adjust to a new school. Anxiety can affect the way your child thinks and feels. It may be hard for your child to learn if he or she feels anxious.

Frequent discussions with your child about school will help you know how things are going at school and provide an opportunity to offer advice and support. The discussions help you to know if he or she is having difficulty and whether a teacher or the learning coach should be contacted



#### **Suggestions**

- Talk regularly about school. Don't wait until there is a problem.
- Encourage your child to talk about school. Listen for what is going well and what might be difficult. Don't wait until there is a problem.
- Share your own feelings about how you are adjusting to a new country.
- Take time when the family is together to talk about making the change to a new culture. Explain that it is normal to be anxious when making big changes in your life.
- Talk about situations that used to be difficult but are easier now. Celebrate small successes like the completion of the first two months in Canada.
- Get to know your child's friends and make your home a welcome place for them.
- Tell the teacher that your child is feeling a little anxious so that the teacher can help your child feel more comfortable.

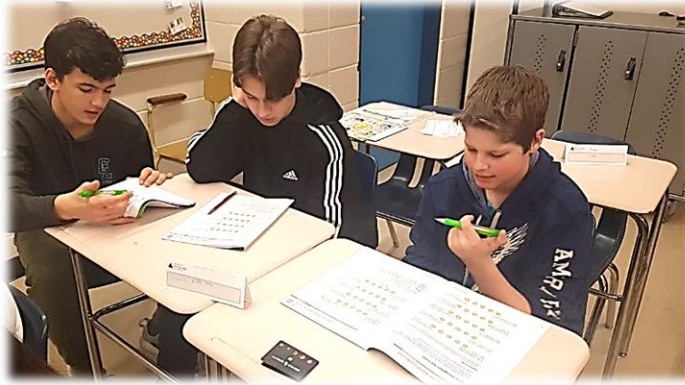


### ***Honesty***

***Be noble of mind and heart, generous in forgiving***

## Teaching and Learning in Edmonton Catholic School Classrooms

### How Students are Taught



Teachers use many ways to help students learn in class: lectures, discussions, question and answer sessions, research assignments, field trips, projects and team assignments with other students. Some of these methods may be unfamiliar to newcomer students.

Teachers may give students problems to discuss and solve, rather than facts to memorize. In every subject, students are encouraged to learn how to think critically.

This means that they learn how to decide what is true and what is false. Students learn how to interpret, analyze and evaluate information. They also learn to think logically, ask questions, form opinions and express ideas to their whole class.

Language skills are an important part of each subject. Students are expected to participate in classroom discussions, speak to the whole class or to groups of other students. For example, in mathematics, a student might be asked to explain how an answer was calculated.

Students are expected to be able to research a topic in the library or on the Internet, to write about what they have learned and give their point of view. They summarize their work in a project.

We live in a global community. Teachers plan learning activities to help students appreciate the experiences and contributions of peoples of all cultures and backgrounds.

#### ***Working in Groups***

*Working in groups helps your son or daughter learn to co-operate with other students, share responsibility and listen and learn from the opinions of other students. Your child will practice his or her English and develop skills such as how-to research, form and test opinions, take initiative, pose questions and take risks.*

### **Suggestions**

- Talk to your child about the differences in teaching styles and methods between the schools in Alberta and in their home country. Explain that it may take time to adjust.
- Encourage your child to talk to the teachers about how he or she is doing. It will show the teachers that he or she is eager to learn
- Tell your child that it is appropriate to ask for help from teachers. Students are expected to ask questions when they don't understand something or need help.
- Talk to the teacher if you would like more information about how the classroom is organized.

- Find out about extra-curricular activities like sports, clubs and music programs. They are usually open to all students and are supervised by a teacher. These programs are a great way for students to practice their English.

Edmonton Catholic Schools' programming follows that of [Alberta Education](#), offered within the context of a Catholic Christian community. More information on subjects, programs and courses available can be found on [My Child's Learning: A Parent Resource](#) (Grades 7-9) and [2Learn.ca for Teens](#).

## **Text Books and Learning Materials**

In Canada, you don't need to buy textbooks for your son or daughter. They will be given to the students in schools. Textbooks are the property of the school and must be returned in good condition. You must pay for lost or damaged books.

## **Lockers**

Students will be given a locker for storing his or her school supplies and clothing. They are properties of the school and are usually cleaned out at the end of the term or semester. The locker should not be used to store valuables and the school is not responsible for damage or theft of locker contents. Schools usually sell the lock they want students to use. Students are sometimes provided with locker break in order to exchange books for classes.



## **Homework**

Homework is one good way parents can see how their son or daughter is doing in school. You should expect the student to have homework almost every night. The amount of homework depends on the grade.

Students should expect at least one hour of homework. By grade 9, they should expect up to two hours of homework per night. All students are expected to read each night. Your child's teachers can explain what homework they expect to be done.

To get help with your homework through multimedia learning resources please see: [LearnAlberta.ca](#).

## **No Homework?**

### **Suggestions**

- Ask your son or daughter to show you what he or she did at school.
- Talk to the teacher if there is often no homework.
- Encourage your son or daughter to spend time reviewing what has been covered in the past few days and to plan ahead for future assignments and tests.
- Ensure that your son or daughter takes responsibility for nightly reading in English or first language.

## What Students Learn

### Programs of Study



In Alberta, all publicly funded schools follow the curriculum outlined in the Programs of Study. They describe what students are expected to know and do in each subject by the end of each course.

Alberta Education publishes curriculum documents for each subject. Teachers use the curriculum documents to plan learning activities. The documents are posted at: [Programs of Study](#).

Core subjects at Junior High schools are: Math, English Language Arts, Social

Studies, Science, Religion, Health and Life Skills and Physical Education.

Optional subject areas may include: Career and Technology Foundation (Food and Fashion, Computer Technology Courses, etc.), a language other than English (French as a Second Language, International Languages, First Nation Languages, etc.), Ethics, Environmental and Outdoor Education, Fine Arts (Art, Drama, Music), and Locally Developed Courses.

To see what students are expected to learn in each grade, including overviews of subjects and topics go to Curriculum Handbooks for Parents at:

[My Child's Learning: A Parent Resources](#).

***You can get information about the Canadian education system, Canadian culture and available programs at Edmonton Catholic Schools and much more from the Intercultural Liaisons in the language of your choice.***

**Call 780-944-2001**

#### ***Excerpt from the English Language Arts Curriculum, Grades 1 to 12:***

*From Kindergarten to Grade 12, students are developing knowledge, skills and attitudes in six language arts areas: Listening and Speaking; Reading and Writing; Viewing and Representing. Students learn to compose, comprehend and respond to oral, print and other media texts.*

*They experience a variety of texts from many cultural traditions.*



### ***Loyalty***

***We strive towards loyalty to the vision, mission, goals and fundamental purpose of our school district.***

## **English as a Second Language (ESL) Programming**

When they come to Canada, most newcomer students are proficient in their first language but may have limited English skills. Other students may have been born in Canada but are just beginning to learn English when they start school. English as a Second Language (ESL) programs help these students catch up to their English-speaking classmates.

All students learn at different rates, even two children in the same family. Within one or two years, most newcomer students are able to use English to communicate in day to day situations. However, students may require five to seven years to develop the ability to read, write and understand academic materials in class at the same level as their English-speaking classmates.

Some students have missed a considerable amount of time in school or have not learned to read or write in their first language. Junior High ELLs with limited literacy and/or formal schooling may be recommended for the District Newcomer Program.



### ***Types of ESL Support***

*Edmonton Catholic Schools supports inclusive ESL programming which may include:*

- *extra assistance from their classroom teacher,*
- *working with an ESL teacher, Learning Coach or Educational Assistant*
- *enrollment in an ESL option*

## **Stages of Learning English**

All children who are learning a new language move through a series of stages as they learn English. Your child's teacher may refer to the stages of learning English. Described simply, they are:



1. Learning to use English for basic communication.
2. Learning to use English in familiar situations with support.
3. Learning to use English in new situations with support—the child is developing more independence.
4. Learning to use English at the same level as English-speaking classmates. This stage usually takes between 5 – 7 years.

For more information about learning English as a Second Language, see: [English as a Second Language \(ESL\)](#).

### **Suggestions**

- ◆ Talk with your child in your first language. Provide opportunities for your child to continue learning his or her first language while learning English. Children who express themselves well in their first language find it easier to learn English.
- ◆ Encourage your child to continue to read and write in his or her first language. Teachers find that students who read and write well in their first language learn to read and write English more quickly. They also find that students are more able to keep up in science and math. Many public libraries have multi-lingual books, CDs, videos and DVD collections. Library cards are free!
- ◆ Encourage your child to participate in group activities with other students after school where he or she will be speaking in English.

### **Flex Time**

Some junior high schools offer an exciting learning initiative called Flex. Flex sessions give students the opportunity to choose from a variety of sessions that change every week. These sessions are designated blocks of time during the school day (usually on Thursdays) that are student directed but teacher supervised. Students can extend their learning, pursue individual interests, collaborate with peers, or where necessary, seek remediation and learning supports.

### **Religious Education Program**



Religious Education in Edmonton Catholic Schools support existing programs as outlined by the National Catholic Office of Religious Education as well as programs developed locally with the approval of the Alberta Catholic Bishops. Religious Education is an essential and integral part of the life and culture of Edmonton Catholic Schools. Through Religious Education, students are invited to develop the knowledge, beliefs, skills, values and attitudes needed to build a relationship with God and community through the person of Jesus Christ.

As an integral part of the Religious Education Program, prayer will help children to learn and reflect upon their journey of faith with God and Jesus.

[Religious Education Program](#) integrates the same goals and objectives of all good education. These involve the development of an individual physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially as well as spiritually.

## **Integration of Faith Into all Subjects**

To promote the faith development of students, all aspects of the curriculum reflect Catholic teachings and values, e.g. students learn hymns as part of the music program.

## **Sacramental Preparation**

If your child has not received the Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Communion or Confirmation yet, please contact your parish. Some schools work with local parishes to prepare children for the Sacraments.



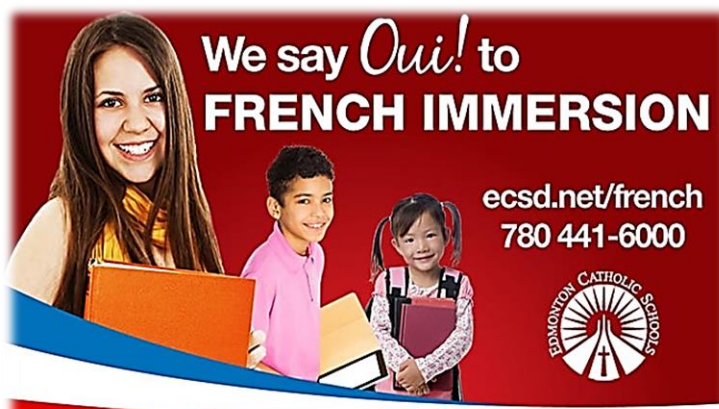
**"Whatever you do, do everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

Colossians 3:17

## **Language Programs**

Edmonton Catholic Schools' language programs provide children with a wealth of experiences and advantages that benefit them within the classroom walls and beyond. Information about some of these programs offered by our school district are included to this Guide. More information about language programs offered at Edmonton Catholic School District, benefits of second language learning, and more can be found at: [Language Programs](#).

### **a) French Immersion**



French Immersion is designed for students who have the desire to learn French. Students may register in kindergarten or grade one. At the Elementary level, the language of instruction for all subjects except Religion is French, and students also have regular English Language Arts classes beginning in Grade 2. Particular attention is given to developing an appreciation of the French culture by offering annual cultural events and/or

entertainment. Thirteen schools currently offer French Immersion programs.

For more information about French Immersion program at our schools see: [French Immersion Program](#) or speak to the school office staff.

## **b) French as a Second Language Program**

The French as a second language (FSL) refers to courses in which the French language is taught as a subject. Its overarching goal is to enable students to communicate in French in a variety situation. FSL also enables students to better understand francophone cultures in Canada and in other countries of the world. FSL is taught 95 hours per year at the elementary and junior high levels, and 125 hours per year in senior high.

## **c) Language and Culture Programs**

Learning a second language will help your child enhance academic growth and excellence, enrich and complement your child's first language, facilitate fluency in additional languages, encourage new ways of thinking, and develop an appreciation for cultural diversity in Canada and in the world. The Edmonton Catholic School District offers a variety of second language programs: Nehiyaw Pimatisiwin Cree, Filipino/Tagalog, Italian, and Spanish. Learning a second language helps open doors to exciting career opportunities and to better participate as a member in the world community.

## **d) Bilingual Programs**



Bilingual programs aim for students' high academic achievement and strong communicative skills both in English and in the target (second) language. They provide a rich environment for the learning of languages, cultures and subject-area content. Bilingual education strives to provide intensive language learning environments and enriched cultural experiences that maximize student opportunities for learning. Students develop an appreciation for other cultures and communities throughout the world.

Edmonton Catholic Schools offer Polish, Spanish and Ukrainian Bilingual Programs. Check which bilingual programs are offered at Edmonton Catholic School District at [Bilingual Programs](#).

## **Inclusive Education**

Inclusive Education programs provide extra support to help students with significant learning difficulties or special needs within their community schools. Some students need short term help and others have complex learning and health needs.

Students may need help because of physical, intellectual, emotional, behavioral, speech, language, vision or hearing difficulties, or because of serious problems interacting with other

people. The model is based on full inclusion, with support at the classroom/school level, specialized classes integrated in regular schools, or placement in district programs. Programming at the community school is considered as the first option.

A lack of English language skills is not an indication of the need for specialized programs. However, if your son or daughter is having difficulty with his or her school work or relating to other students, it may be a sign of a significant learning difficulty. Sometimes problems are a normal part of adjusting to a new language and school. Information about a student's academic skills in his or her first language, like a previous report card, often helps teachers identify the source of the student's difficulties.

If you are concerned that your son or daughter may have significant learning difficulty, talk to your child's teacher. The teacher has a number of informal ways to assess your child. If necessary, you or the teacher can request a formal assessment of your child.

The school is required to follow Inclusive Education procedures to assess and determine if your child with severe needs qualifies for a District Program. You will be asked to provide written permission indicating your agreement for your child's assessments. You will be obligated to attend consultation meetings related to the assessment process. Qualified personnel who conduct assessments will interpret the results for parents, teachers and others who are involved with the student's program. They will make program planning recommendations. If you require translation assistance for these assessments, please contact One World... One Centre at (780) 944 2001 and ask to speak to an Intercultural staff member in your first language.

For more information about the education of students with special needs and Inclusive Education see: [Inclusive Education for All](#) or [Diverse Learning Needs](#).

### **Focus Schools and Alternate Programs**

Students attending Edmonton Catholic Schools have a choice of a variety of focus programs. These include: Jean Forest All-Girls Leadership Academy, International Languages Programs, Early and Middle Years International Baccalaureate Programs, Accelerated Math and Science Programs and more. There are focus schools that have Fine Arts, Sports, Science and Technology Academies. These varied programming options accommodate a broad range of strengths and interests.



For more information about focus schools and alternate programs you can see at: [Focus Schools and Alternate Programs](#).

## **Student Behaviour**

### **Code of Conduct**

The school staff is committed to making the school free of negative factors such as abuse, bullying, discrimination, intimidation, hateful words and actions and any form of physical violence. Your school has a Code of Conduct that encourages peaceful problem-solving techniques and the creation of a safe and welcoming environment.

The school and your child's teacher will develop rules to help students follow the Code of Conduct. The rules are explained to students and are usually posted in the school. They are based on the role of student as outlined in the section 12 of Alberta School Act.

Anyone participating in a school activity including students, parents or guardians, volunteers, teachers and other staff members, is expected to follow the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct applies even when the activity is not on school property but is school-related.



### **Suggestions**

- ◆ Ask for a copy of your school's Code of Conduct.
- ◆ Encourage your child to become familiar with the school and classroom rules.
- ◆ Remind your child that there are serious consequences for fighting and other forms of inappropriate behaviour.
- ◆ Tell the teacher that you want to be informed if he or she has a concern about your child's behaviour.
- ◆ Speak to your child's teacher, and the principal if necessary, if you feel that the Code of Conduct or school rules are unfair to your child.
- ◆ Talk to the teacher if you are concerned about another student's behaviour.

### **Mandatory Consequences**

Schools will apply mandatory consequences when students commit certain kinds of inappropriate behaviour. The range of consequences includes verbal and written warnings, detentions, suspensions and expulsions from school. The principal determines the length of the suspension. Parents will be called when a student is suspended and will be well informed and given every opportunity to be involved in any expulsion process.

## **Behaviour that Can Result in Suspension or Expulsion and Police Involvement**

- Fighting
- Threatening
- Swearing at the teacher
- Trafficking in drugs or weapons
- Robbery
- Use of a weapon to cause bodily harm or to threaten serious harm
- Physical assault causing bodily harm
- Vandalism
- Sexual assault
- Providing alcohol to minors
- Possession of alcohol

For more information about suspension and expulsion check Administrative Procedure 355 in [Student Suspension and Expulsion](#).

### ***Extract from the Policies and Regulations, ECSD/ School Conduct***

#### ***Definitions:***

***Harassment*** occurs when one person subjects another to unwelcome verbal or physical conduct because of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical or mental disability, age, ancestry, or place of origin. Unwanted physical contact, attention, demands, jokes or insults are harassment when they negatively affect the learning environment.

A ***weapon*** as defined under the Criminal Code of Canada includes any item that is designed to be used as a weapon or any item a person uses or intends to use as a weapon intended to inflict injury.

## **The Role of Parents in Dealing with Behaviour Problems**

Some changes in a student's behaviour may be a normal part of adjusting to a new school, language and country. If a teacher is concerned about a student's behaviour or relationship with other students, the parents may be contacted.

The teacher will explain what the school is doing to help the student and may suggest what can be done at home. Working together, parents and teachers can give a clear message about what behaviour is expected at school.

If you have any concerns, do not hesitate to talk to a teacher or the school counselor. Useful information on a variety of topics concerning your child's wellness and safety can be found on [Partners with Parents - Wellness and Safety Information Series](#).

## **Concerns About Another Student's Behaviour**

When students feel another student has treated them in a way not permitted by the Code of Conduct, they should report it to a teacher. They should not try and solve the problem without a teacher. For example, a student who has been hit by another student should try and walk away rather than hit back. The student should immediately report the assault to a teacher. . H.S. pg.34

## **Dealing with Concerns**

If you have any concerns about whether your child is being treated equitably, it is very important to speak to school staff. Usually, the first step is to talk to the teacher involved and then the principal or assistant principal. If the problem is not resolved, contact the School Operation Services (780-441-6000) and ask for assistance.

More information about parent-school conflict protocol and procedures see at: [Dealing with Conflict Management](#).

## The Report Card

### Understanding the Report Card

Students will receive report cards two or three times a year. At each reporting period, students will receive a multiple page document with extensive information on student achievement and growth.

Your child's work will be assessed through descriptors that reflect the key learner outcomes in the Alberta Program of Study. Report cards will report about your child's:

- **Achievement** – An area of success or general comment about understanding of outcomes in that unit with reference to a project, task or learning activity from that term.
- **Comments on Student Learning** – An area of growth and a specific strategy to provide guidance to allow for student progress.
- **Learner Skills** – Consists of two components: Self-Management and Citizenship. These skills reflect your child's preparedness, motivation and completion of assigned work as well as the extent to which your child demonstrates cooperation, collaboration and appropriate behaviour. Teachers select indicators for each category.



Some schools are now using electronic reporting. Parents or guardians may view their child's report card as well as class assignments, grading information, attendance and more through the Edmonton Catholic Schools website at: [powerschool.ecsd.net](http://powerschool.ecsd.net). For more information about **PowerSchool Parent Portal** refer to page 30 of this Guide.

### How the Work of English Language Learners (ELLs) is Evaluated on the Report Card

English Language Learners (ELLs) will need time to develop their skills in English. The ESL level of your child will determine the work they will do. ESL levels are determined by annual assessments in listening, speaking, reading and writing using the Alberta Education ESL Proficiency Benchmarks. In some cases, a student does the same work as other students. In other cases, a student may do work that looks somewhat different from what the other students are learning because it is adapted to meet the benchmark level of your child. If your child is receiving adaptations, this will be indicated on the report card. As your child learns more English, the teacher will begin to give him or her mainstream programming and assessments.

Be sure to attend the Parent-Teacher Conference at your child's school. There, you may ask your child's subject area teachers any further questions you may have.



## Education Policies



Provincial legislation requires all schools to observe certain policies and practices to protect children and help them be successful in school. Your school is committed to a school environment where all students are treated with respect, dignity and understanding. School policies ensure that there is no discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, religion, gender, sexual orientation,

handicap or family status. The policies also ensure that the above are not barriers to success in school. If you have a concern, it is very important that you speak to the teacher or the principal.

For more information about the rights of all members of the school community, see the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission and its publications at: [Alberta Human Rights Commission](#).



### *Dignity & Respect*

*We are called to value each person, and to treat one another with compassion*

## School Attendance is Mandatory

The law requires students who are between six (6) and seventeen (17) years of age to attend school. If a student has been away from school for a long period of time, the school board will investigate the reasons for the absence and may refer the matter to the [Attendance Board](#).

If your child is going to be out of school for a long time, tell the teacher ahead of time. Sometimes the teacher can suggest learning activities for your child while he or she is away from school. For more information about school attendance, see Guide to Education, School Act pg.10: [Alberta's Education Act](#).

## Grade Placement According to Age

When students register at school, their grade placement is determined by their age, not by the grade they completed in their country of origin.

### **Edmonton Catholic School District Policy**

*Age appropriate grade placement  
with grade appropriate instruction.*

## **School Boundaries**



Usually your home address determines where your child will go to school. Each school has a boundary of streets and homes that belong to that school called the *catchment area*.

Students may be able to attend a school that is outside of their catchment area if the program being offered at that school is more appropriate for the student. These schools accept students from within their school area first, and when space is available, they accept students who live beyond it.

To locate the school in your area, fill in the requested information on the following link: [Locate a School](#). For more information about the programs in Edmonton Catholic High Schools, see: [Guide to Schools](#).

## **Confidentiality**

All conversations with school staff are confidential. Without your permission, school staff will not share information about your son or daughter's school work or family situation with non-staff, other parents or community members.

## **Reporting Possible Harm to Children**

When a school staff member observes signs that someone may be abusing, mistreating or neglecting a student, or if a student reports that something bad is happening to him or her, the law requires the teacher to inform the organization in your community that is responsible for protecting children (called Alberta Human Services).



For more information see: [Edmonton Police Service - Family Protection](#) or visit Alberta Government's [Human Services Alberta - Abuse & Bullying](#) site.

## **Bullying or Harassment**

If you suspect that your child is being bullied or harassed by another student, ask questions about what is happening at school.

Some students worry that the bully will try to get revenge if they tell the school. Talk to the school staff about how to make sure your child is safe. All schools have policies against bullying and harassment and want to know if a student is being bullied or harassed, even if it is happening away from school.

More information about the resources and support provided to students and staff in Edmonton Catholic Schools can be found at: [A Safe, Caring, and Nurturing Learning Environment](#).

To find out how to recognize and prevent bullying and how to promote healthy, respectful relationships in your school community, see: [Bullying Prevention, Bullying Helpline](#).

## School Procedures

### Absence from School

Students are expected to attend school each day and to arrive before school starts. Teachers keep a record of students who are absent and report them to the school office. If your child will be absent, please call the school before the start of school. Most schools have a message machine for recording absences. Please call again for each day that the student is away. When leaving a message, speak slowly.

#### **Sample telephone message:**

*This is (your name). My child (child's name) is sick today. My child's teacher is (teacher's name).*

Some schools use a recorded message to call parents. If you are not home and do not have a voice mail system, you may not get the message. In addition to phone calls, many schools also require a signed note from parents when a student returns to school.

Students are **strongly** discouraged from missing school for family vacations during the school year. For the rare occasion when this is necessary, students and parents are expected to inform the school in advance and complete the appropriate form.

### Alberta Student Number (ASN)

The Alberta Student Number (ASN) identifies each individual Alberta learner. Through the use of Alberta Student Number (ASN), the education communities in Alberta will have better information to evaluate programming and emerging trends in student choices across the education system.

### L u n c h

Students have a lunch break in the middle of the day. The time may vary from school to school. Most students bring lunch to school. Some junior high schools may have food concessions with healthy choices for lunch. Lunch is typically eaten in the school hallways or gymnasium. Students are expected to remain on school property for the entire lunch period. Students wishing to leave the property to go home for lunch may do so only with written request by the parent/guardian to the principal.

### Bus Transportation

If your child is in a focus program or academy or if you live a long distance from the school in your attendance area, they will require ETS bus transportation. Yellow bus service is also available at some Junior High Schools. A monthly fee is charged for this service. Bus passes (ETS and Yellow Bus) are available at a subsidized price through your child's school.

For more information please check with your individual school or see:

[ETS Trip Planner](#)



[Student Transportation.](#)



## **Field Trips**

Field trips are an important part of the classroom program. Teachers may arrange for students to visit a museum, park or even theatre to see a play. In the days before and afterwards, children work on materials connected to the trip.

The school requires written permission to participate in a field trip. Your child will bring home a letter for you to sign. Please sign the form and return it as soon as possible. You may be asked to pay an admission fee to participate in some field trips.

Teachers usually welcome parents who wish to accompany students on the field trip.



## **Supervision of Students in the Schoolyard**

During lunch recess, your child will be supervised in the schoolyard. Students are not supervised at other times and you should not leave young children in the schoolyard early in the morning or late after school. If your child stays at school for lunch, the school will supervise your child. In all cases, students may not leave the school grounds without parental permission.

## **Keeping Contact Information Up-to-Date**

When you register your child, you list your home and work phone numbers as well as the name and numbers of a friend or family member as the emergency contacts. Teachers use these numbers to call you about your child's school work or in case of an emergency. If these numbers change, please notify the school.

### ***Call the school when:***

- *your child will be absent for any reason,*
- *you change your phone number or address, or*
- *you have a question, concern or suggestion.*

## **Dress Code**



All schools have a dress code. At registration, the school will provide each student with information about the dress code. In some junior high schools this important information can be found in the Student Handbooks. Generally, all schools request students to dress appropriate and in a manner, that demonstrates respect and modesty, and is appropriate within a Catholic learning environment.

Most junior high schools require students to wear running shoes, shorts and t-shirts for physical education classes in the gymnasium. Each school has separate change rooms for boys and girls. They must have these clothes available in their locker, and they must be laundered frequently.

## **Cold Weather Policy**

During winter, in the event of a heavy snow storm, bus transportation may be delayed or cancelled. When there is bad weather, listen to local radio or television broadcasts for announcements of bus service cancellations. In extremely cold weather or on rainy days, students may be kept indoors at lunch time and at recess.



## **School Holidays**

Schools usually run from the first Tuesday after Labour Day in September until the end of June. There is a Christmas vacation near the end of December and a Spring Break vacation at the end of March. At the beginning of school, students will be given the exact dates. Schools will also be closed during holidays and non-instructional days.

## **Computer Access**

All schools have computers that students can use during the day and just before and after school. Internet access is governed by district policy. Parent authorization is required for student usage of the Internet. Inappropriate use of computer equipment will result in the loss of access to the network and computers.

Public libraries and some community centers have computers that are free to use. For more information about Edmonton Public Library locations and services they provide see: [Computers at EPL](#)

## **Nut Free Schools**

Some students have severe allergies to nuts and will get very sick if they eat or are exposed to food containing even small amounts of nuts. To ensure the safety of these students, many schools adopt a “nut free” policy. If your school is “nut free,” please do not send any food containing nut products to school.

## **If the Student Gets Sick at School**



If your child becomes sick or has an accident while at school, someone will call you at the phone number on the school Student Information Records. If the parent cannot be reached, the school will call the emergency contact person that you named when you registered the student. Many schools have a staff member with first aid training. If the accident or illness is serious, the school will call an ambulance and a staff member will accompany your child to the hospital.

### **Immunization**

Provide the school with your child's immunization record from your home country. Schools can provide translation of this document if necessary. Your child should be immunized according to the recommended immunization schedule in Alberta.

For more information, contact the Capital Health clinic in your community or visit the website: [Immunizations](#).

### **Allergies or Health Problems**

Notify the school if your child has any health problems or allergies. If your child must take medication during the school day, you and your child's doctor will have to fill out a form. All medication must be stored in the school office during the school day. H.S. pg. 35

### **Vision and Hearing**

Vision and hearing problems make it harder for students to learn. Many students do not even know they have a vision or a hearing problem. They may think that everyone sees or hears the way they do. Vision and hearing may change as children grow. That is why regular check-ups are so important to students.

#### **Suggestions**

- Arrange to have your child's eyes checked every two or three years. Alberta Health and Wellness pays for annual visits to an optometrist or ophthalmologist up to age 18.
- Encourage your child to wear glasses, contact lenses or hearing aids, if necessary. If your child is reluctant, meet with the school counsellor or one of the teachers and together you can help your son or daughter feel comfortable.
- Speak to a doctor about checking your child's hearing.



For more information about health care support provided to low income families by Alberta Government, see: [Alberta Child Health Benefit Program](#).



### **Fairness**

*We seek unity without uniformity, symmetry without sameness, and diversity without divisiveness*

## **Parent's Involvement and Good Communication with the Teacher**

### **Your Involvement Helps your Child to be Successful**



Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their son or daughter's education and to speak to the teachers when they have a question or concern. It is important to establish good communication with teachers. Studies show that parent involvement helps children be more successful.

When parents and teachers talk, parents hear what teachers expect from students and how to provide support at home. Good communication also helps teachers get to know the student better, so they can help make coming to a new school easier.

### **Questions to Ask the Teacher**

Here are some questions that parents often ask teachers about their child:

- What are their strengths and weaknesses in English?
- How much time should they spend on homework?
- Do they show any special interests?
- How do they relate to other students?
- How can I help my child at home?

### **Communicating with the Teacher**

Teachers know that some parents who are learning English may find it difficult to talk to them. They appreciate the effort you make to speak to them about your child.

#### **Suggestions**

- ♦ Call the school office and leave a message for the teacher. Give the school office staff your name and number, your child's name and grade and the best time for the teacher to call you. Teachers can return your call during the day or at their earliest convenience. (Contacting teacher -Elem.)
- ♦ Ask the school if Intercultural Services staff are available to help you talk with the teacher. (Call 780-944-2001 to request the services).
- ♦ Ask a friend or family member (not a child) to accompany you to the school or to speak with the teacher on the phone. Remember to arrange a time so you can be sure that the teacher is available to talk with you.
- ♦ Write down your questions or concerns and send them in an envelope with your child.

## School Communication with Parents

The school frequently sends home information with students, such as newsletters, permission forms for field trips and other messages. Parents should make sure they see every message.

### *Suggestions*

- Remind your child that you need to see school information.
- Create a special place in your home for all school information.
- Post important school notices in your home.
- Return forms as quickly as possible.
- Contact the school office staff, the teacher or the school counsellor if you have a question.

## Meet-the-Teacher Night

Most schools provide an opportunity for parents to meet the teachers and learn about school programs. This usually happens at the beginning of the school year.

Meet-the-Teacher Night is not the best time to discuss how your child is doing with the teachers, but you may make an appointment or arrange a phone call with the teachers, if you have a concern.

### *Meet-the-Teacher Night typically includes:*

- *what students will be learning,*
- *special classroom projects or events,*
- *the homework expectations,*
- *the key rules of behavior for students,*
- *how you can help your child at home.*

### *Suggestions*

Introduce yourself! Tell the teacher that you would appreciate a phone call if he or she has any concerns about your child or if your child has any special accomplishments.

Walk around the school. Visit the school library and gym. It will help you talk with your child about their gym and library activities.

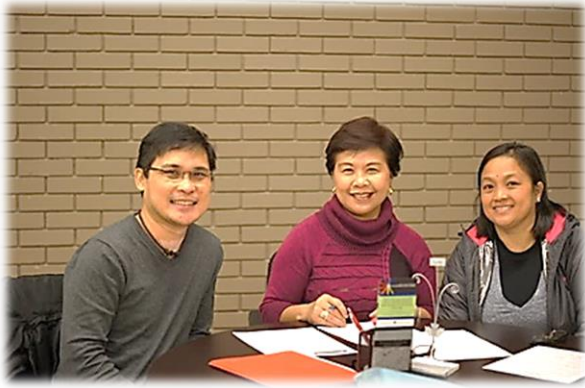
## Individual Program Plan (IPP) or Personalized Learning Program (PLP) Meetings



All students identified as having special education needs, with one of them being second language learning, require an Individual Program Plan (IPP) or a Personalized Learning Program (PLP). This plan is a summary of goals, objectives, strategies and accommodations aimed at enhancing student learning. Parents of English language learner are encouraged to take an active role in the IPP or PLP

process. Ongoing review and revision are important parts of the IPP /PLP process. Review IPP/PLP meetings are opportunities for parents to discuss their child's programming and consider possible revisions. At the meeting parents will be asked to sign the document.

### Parent Teacher Interviews



Parent teacher interview is a conversation between the parent and each teacher about how the student is doing at school. The interviews last 5 to 10 minutes and are usually in the classroom, gym or cafeteria. Many schools can provide an interpreter if you ask ahead of time or you can contact the Intercultural Services, One World...One Centre and request the services of the staff who can interpret in your first language.

Interviews are held in November and in March. At the interview, the teacher will discuss the report

card and how the mark was determined. The teacher can also discuss how he or she is helping the student and how you can help at home.

At the interview, sometimes parents and teachers agree to meet again or talk on the phone. Stay in contact, even when things are going well. Tell the teacher that you want to be called if he or she has any concerns, or if your child has done especially well.

Teachers encourage students to attend the interview to talk about their work. If there are issues that you want to discuss without your child present, arrange another interview with the teacher.

#### ***Parents often ask the teacher:***

- *How is my child progressing in learning English?*
- *In what subjects is my child learning the regular curriculum for the grade?*
- *In what subjects is my child receiving extra support? What kind of support?*
- *How much time should my child spend on homework?*
- *How does my child interact with other students?*

#### ***Suggestions***

- Talk to your child before the interview to find out what he or she enjoys about school and what is difficult.
- Consider what you want to ask the teacher. Keep notes to help you remember your questions.
- Interviews are usually scheduled every 10 or 15 minutes. Ensure that you are there at least 5 minutes earlier so you can have your full scheduled time with the teacher.
- Sometimes parents and teachers need to meet again or talk on the phone to follow up their conversation. You or the teacher can suggest another time for follow-up.
- Afterwards, discuss the interview with your child. Emphasize the good things that were covered and be specific about concerns. Explain any plans that were arranged.
- Stay in touch with the teacher even if things are going well. It sends a positive message to your child.

## **School Open House**

Schools host special events called Open House. At these events, you will have an opportunity to tour the school, find out more about specific school programs, meet staff, students, and other community members. During Open Houses, teachers will also be available to discuss their curriculum and classroom programs. The purpose of Open Houses is to inform parents about the choices they have in choosing a school.

Open Houses usually happen in February, March and April. You may be informed about these events through school newsletters or the letters sent home. Visiting Open Houses is especially beneficial when your child is in transition from elementary to junior high or from junior high to senior high school. To find more information on Open House dates, see: [Open House Dates](#).



## **PowerSchool Parent Portal**



PowerSchool Parent Portal is a web-based home-to-school collaboration system linking parents and schools via the internet. The program allows parents to login to the PowerSchool website and view their child's class assignments, grading information, attendance, teacher's comments, report cards and demographic information. Parents can easily communicate with teachers via e-mail or receive automatic notification of unexcused absences, missing assignments, or failing grades. School fees can be paid on line as well. In addition, if your child takes the yellow school bus, you can access the bus schedule, including pick-up and drop-off times.

Parents or guardians may view their child's student information through the PowerSchool website only after they have registered with the school and received a user ID and password. The instructions on how to create an account, how to access your child's report card and how to add another student to existing parent portal account are translated in many languages. Please visit [Translated PowerSchool Information](#) link if you need assistance in your language. If the language you require is not available, please contact Intercultural Services, One World...One Centre at 780-944-2001. A member of the Intercultural staff will assist in contacting an interpreter in your first language.

In addition, to maintain the integrity of student data, the PowerSchool application stores all student information in a "read only" system, so the information is protected from modification. For more information visit: [Parent Tools and Links](#).

## **School Meetings and Events**

Schools may organize special events such as student performances and multicultural fairs.

From time to time, schools organize presentations about school related issues such as Literacy, Mathematics and how to help your child succeed. These events are a great way to spend time with your child and learn more about the school.

## **Fundraising Requests**

From time to time, you may receive a letter from the school requesting a financial contribution to support school activities that are not covered by the regular school budget. Donations are voluntary.

## **School Council**



Every school has an advisory group of parents, community and parish members and school staff called the [School Council](#).

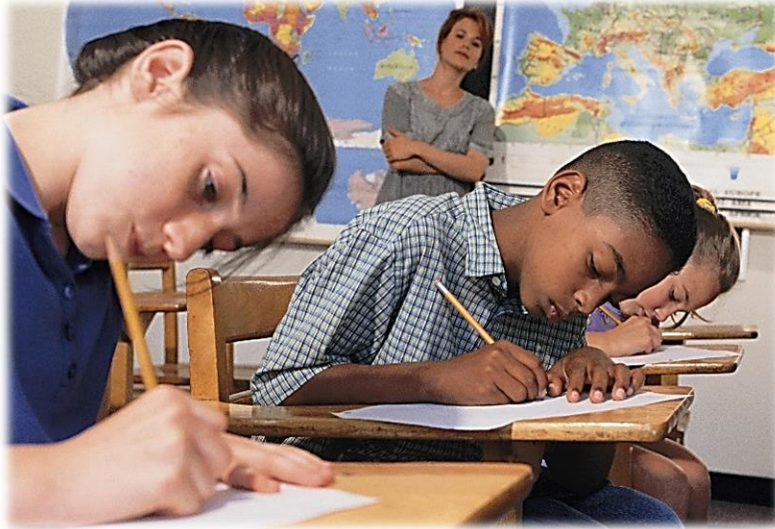
The Council discusses school policies and plans with the principal. All parents may attend Council meetings and are encouraged to participate in the discussion. All parents are eligible to be members of the council. In some Edmonton Catholic Schools, members are formally elected to the Council; in

other schools, parents simply volunteer to be on the council.

## ***Suggestions***

- ◆ Ask the school office to give you the name and phone number of the chair of the School Council.
- ◆ Contact the chair of the Council to discuss how you wish to become involved in the council.
- ◆ Attend School Council meetings to learn how they work, ask questions, make suggestions, or give your opinions on matters which interest you about the school.
- ◆ Talk with the School Council chair or members about how to help the school staff and parents learn more about your community and the needs of ELL students.
- ◆ Create a parent network for informing other parents about school events and for welcoming newcomer families.

## Provincial Achievement Tests



Alberta Education tests students in all core academic subjects in Grade 6 and 9 to ensure our education system maintains a high standard. Students write Provincial Achievement Tests in May and June. Some grade 9 students write PATs in January of each year. The school will send home a letter with the exact dates.

The tests are based on the Alberta Program of Study and are designed to provide information about how well students across the province

are learning to read, write and understand English, and learn Mathematics, Social, and Science.

The Provincial Achievement Test results are not recorded on the report card or on college or university applications. The results are not used to determine any aspect of your child's future.

### ***How can parents help their children prepare for the tests?***

*"One area parents can help their children is in developing strong reading skills. Many of the skills that help students do well on the tests are skills in reading and learning that apply to all areas of study."*

*Parent Guide to Provincial Achievement  
Alberta Education*

Each school and school authority receive a detailed report of its results. The school also receives two copies of each student's Individual Student Profile: one copy for the student's record and the other for the student's parents.

In some cases, if your child has just arrived to Canada and is in the early stages of learning English, he or she may be excused from writing the test. All ELLs are given extra time to complete it. You will be asked to provide written permission to excuse your child from the Provincial Achievement Tests.

For more information, see the Alberta Education website: [Provincial Achievement Tests \(PAT\)](#).



## ***Personal & Communal Growth***

***In Edmonton Catholic Schools, we are an organization of people, committed to the growth of the whole person***

## Getting Ready for High School

The transition from junior high to high school can be challenging. After spending several years in a well-known and secured environment, students must start over again. This might be a frightening and overwhelming experience for them. It can also be an exciting new venture.

You can help your child get through this transition as smooth as possible by staying involved with the school and keeping communication open between you and your child.



### ***Parents of ELL Students Often Ask:***

- *What ESL support is provided at the nearby high school?*
- *Are there special programs or courses that interest my child?*
- *How does the high school meet the needs of ELLs?*

### ***Suggestions***

- Schools have teachers assigned to assist your child in the transition from junior high to high school and ensure that this transition is as smooth as possible.
- Attend the nearby high school Open House to find out available programs at the school.
- Ask a Liaison Worker to accompany you to the Open House. He or she may provide you with useful explanations about programs and new expectations your child will experience in high school.
- Get to know your child's new friends and their families. Have the new friends come over to your house so you can get to know them.

## High School Registration Evenings

Each Junior High School will host a High School Registration Evening which will usually take place in February and March. High Schools within the boundary will be there to offer special presentations about programs and registration process to grade 9 students.

As students begin to prepare for high school registration, their term two marks will become of great importance as it is these grades from the March report cards that the high schools will use to determine the appropriate programming for students.

Students and parents are encouraged to attend these sessions as well as High School [Open House](#) events to learn more about the choices students have for high school.

## Helpful Links

If you are a new immigrant, you may need support with settling in Alberta. There are various settlement agencies that address the needs of new immigrants in our province. Listed below are websites that may give you access to information about the community, health, social services, and government services and agencies that provide settlement support for newcomers.

The Intercultural Services Liaison Workers are always available to assist you in connecting with local settlement, government and community agencies. Through years of experience working with newcomers, they have developed numerous manuals that will guide you to educational journey at Edmonton Catholic Schools as well as your new life in Canada. They can be accessed at [www.ecsd.net](http://www.ecsd.net) under [One World...One Centre - Intercultural Services](#).

### Government of Alberta and the City of Edmonton Links for Newcomers

[Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada \(IRCC\)](#)  
[Moving to Alberta](#)  
[Welcome to Alberta - Information for Newcomers](#)  
[City of Edmonton - New Resident Programs](#)

### Immigrant Serving Agencies in Edmonton

[Catholic Social Services](#)  
[Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers](#)  
[Edmonton Immigrant Service Association - EISA](#)  
[ASSIST Community Services Centre](#)



**ONE WORLD...ONE CENTRE**  
Intercultural Services – Liaison Workers  
12050 – 95A Street  
Edmonton, AB T5G 1R7  
Phone: 780-944-2001