

Choosing a Homeschooling Board



Choosing a supervising homeschool authority can be stressful. Many people recommend their board based on what works for them. However, what works for one family may not work for you.

You have to make your choices on what your family needs, and what each child needs. This depends on your children's age (age 6 or 13?). Younger children need plenty of play based learning and older children are ready for more seatwork and thus, you need to choose between more field trips or more textbooks. Temperament (easy-going or persistent?) is another factor because you will need less structure for easy-going children and more structure for a more spicier temperament child. Personality (extravert or introvert?) weighs in on the need for more social events or more home time; and learning style (online or kinesthetic?) is important because some kids can't read from a screen and need to learn by moving around. No one can possibly know what your child needs, except for you.

Every board on the list in the files section will provide you with great traditional, parent-directed home education program support. They have to because it is expected in the Alberta Government Home Education Regulations. Remember that you are only committing for one year. If you dislike your facilitator assigned, you can request a change from your

Principal. If you dislike your school authority you can switch to another. If you can't resolve anything, you can call Alberta Education.

There are slight differences between the big public school boards, and the private schools. Field trip options, funding caps, levels of parent support, delivery formats offered, and availability of curriculum all factor who to choose. The key is the right fit.

The big, fully funded, (100% of base funding plus many other categories) trustee run, public and separate (Catholic) school boards are:

Calgary Homeschooling (Calgary Board of Education), Centre for Learning at Home, CFL, or Okotoks, (Christ The Redeemer School Division), School of Hope/Vermillion (East Central Catholic School System), Argyll (Edmonton Public School Board), Northstar Academy (Golden Hills School Division), T.H.E.E. (Elk Island School Division), Battle River School Division, Palliser Without Borders (Palliser School Division) and Peace River School Division.

The smaller, partially funded (60-70% of base funding with no funding for buildings, buses, books and much more), Board-of-directors run, independent schools are:

By Design (Summit West Independent School), Koinonia, Wisdom (Gilbertine School), Ursa (Third Academy School), Phoenix, Roots, Bearspaw Christian Schools, Hope Christian, Ignite and others.

Here are some **general considerations** that might help you narrow down the list:

If you want lots of classes, field trips, activities and socialization, go on the traditional, parent-directed, home education programs with the big public/separate boards or the big private schools as they have the registration numbers to warrant running all that extra programming.

If you want to be left alone and do your own thing, go with any of the supervising boards. They will all be happy to leave you alone except for the minimum government requirements such as a filing a home education plan, and 2 teacher visits per year.

If you want hand-holding and lots of encouragement and support from experienced facilitators who have homeschooled their own children, go with the private schools who are more likely to have facilitators that have homeschooled their own children and understand the uniqueness of home education learning.

If you want a timely cheque payout, and less pickiness in funding reimbursements, and school-imposed caps, go with the big public/separate boards who have the economies of scale to absorb clawed back costs when the government rejects your receipts.

If your child wants high school credits and a diploma under Section 6 for your child's hard work that is self or parent-designed and meets the high school course outcomes under the Alberta Program of Studies, but is registered under traditional home education, look for the authorities that offers Section 6 under the Home Education Regulations. Not all children are motivated to earn credits or learn online and can register with any board under home education.

If you don't want to teach, and you want distance education delivered by a teacher that teaches and assesses through school designated, paper-based manuals, or online text, or live webinars, go with the big public/separate boards or the smaller private schools that offer "Teacher-directed," "online," or "paper-based." This is not home education. This is school in your living room. You have no control over the program. Daily synchronous (real time) contact is expected between your child and their teacher, not you. There is no funding for this. There may even be fees. The school can loan out supplies (through the Supplemental Resource Form) but items purchased are requested back at the end of the year by the Alberta Education directive. You get report cards and a parent-teacher interview. It's just like a physical school, but delivered through the airwaves. Your job as parent is to support your child in the school. You do not control anything.

If you want to teach some subjects, but outsource other subjects to the school, look for the school authorities that offer "Shared Responsibility."

If you want to unschool or do a self-directed education plan, and totally keep to yourself, go with any of the boards and make it clear to assign a facilitator that will respects self-directed education and the way you want to do things. You control everything on a home education program.

If you want extra funding for a child with special needs coding, the Education Act insists that you have to be on a Distance Education (school) program and not home education. However, due to lobbying by Alberta Homeschooling Association, the government is now funding programs and testing to support children in home education with special needs. These are delivered through AISCA and available to children regardless of the board their parents register them under.

You know best! Remember, you can register *each child* with a different board, depending on what they need for the year. One year, I had 4 different school authorities! Commitment is only for one year and you can still change up to the count date of September 29 every year.

Use this chart as a guideline only as the author strives for accuracy. Please contact the individual organizations to get up-to-date information on what they offer.

Here is the big list of homeschooling boards that is constantly updated:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1QsHMZz8rJOf7VKK4yegs_YTzrJxi7ucYIT6CTQUnBBs/edit#gid=0

Be sure to check out the board's interviews and videos at our website:

<http://albertahomeschooling.ca/schoolboards.html>