

Chapter 7

Curriculum Links



The vision of Alberta’s education system is to “inspire and enable students to achieve success and fulfillment as citizens in a changing world.”¹ In other words, education should empower students; it should give them the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to make sense of the world around them, to become informed and responsible citizens, and to pursue their future goals by understanding the wealth of opportunities available to them in relation to the broader global context.

Alberta Education recognizes the importance of international education in core documents. For example:

- The Ministerial Order that outlines the goals and standards for basic education in Alberta, states that students should “... understand personal and community values and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship” and “... have opportunities to learn languages other than English and to attain levels of proficiency and cultural awareness that will help to prepare them for participation in the global economy.”²
- The *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12* emphasizes the importance of education in “shaping a preferred provincial, national and global future ...” and highlights the need to “prepare the citizens of tomorrow ... with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in a rapidly changing economy and society.”³
- Alberta Education’s Business Plan for 2010–2013 identifies changes in society and the world at large at an unprecedented pace as a significant challenge and opportunity and recognizes the need for an education system that enables students to “learn the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in an ever-changing environment as members of a local community and as citizens of the world.”⁴

Many of Alberta’s programs of study directly support international education. This chapter will explore where links to international education exist in some of the programs of study. It will also identify some locally developed courses that have an international focus and, finally, will consider how co- and extra-curricular activities can support the international education strategy. What is important to note is that international education activities can be integrated into any program area, when deemed appropriate and where a natural learning outcome can be established.

Programs of Study

Social Studies

The social studies program of studies aims to foster students' understanding of and involvement in practical and ethical issues that face their communities and humankind, with the ultimate goal that students become active and responsible citizens, engaged in the democratic process and aware of their capacity to effect change in their communities, society and the world. To achieve this, students spend time examining the world and its people as well as the dynamics and challenges of the international community. The social studies program of studies has infused international perspectives and themes under the strands titled "Global Connections" and "Culture and Community." Examples include the following.

- In Grade 3, students examine communities around the world and the concept of global citizenship.
- In Grade 4 and Grade 5, students examine how the diversity of immigrants has enriched and shaped Canada.
- In Grade 7, students are introduced to the concepts of intercultural contact ... through an examination of migration and immigration.
- In Grade 8, students learn how intercultural contact between societies leads to significant change and alters each society's worldview.
- In Social Studies 10-1 and 10-2, students consider the question, "To what extent should we embrace globalization?"

Grade 10 social studies students from Queen Elizabeth High School in Edmonton deepened their understanding of climate change by connecting with:

- representatives from the nonprofit organization "TakingITGlobal" who attended the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark
- environmental researchers from the University of Alberta
- students from Nicaragua, the Netherlands, Jordan, Brazil, the USA and other parts of Canada.

Students collectively learned about the concept of global warming, its causes and possible consequences. They shared their observations about how climate change is affecting their communities. They also considered how governments, businesses and consumers could address climate change and what the respective roles of developed and developing countries should be. Students used online discussion threads and videoconferencing to interact with one another.



For more information on this project, contact Queen Elizabeth High School's Centre for Global Education at <http://queene.epsb.ca/academics/international-programs>.

- In Social Studies 20-1, students demonstrate a global consciousness with respect to the human condition and global affairs.
- In Social Studies 30-1, students analyze the impacts of the pursuit of internationalism in addressing contemporary global issues, such as conflict, poverty, debt, disease, environment and human rights.

English Language Arts

The aims of the English language arts programs of study are 1) to encourage an understanding and appreciation of the significance and artistry of literature; and 2) to enable each student to use language competently and confidently for communication, further learning, employment and personal satisfaction. Through the study of literature, students experience, vicariously, persons, places, times and events that may be far removed from their day-to-day experiences. Literature provides insight into other countries and cultures, stimulates awareness and understanding of universal issues and themes, and fosters respect for cultural diversity. For example:

- in Grade 4, students are encouraged to recognize English words and expressions that come from other cultures or languages. (General Outcome 4)
- in Kindergarten to Grade 9, students are encouraged to read texts from diverse cultures and communities and consider how these texts interact with culture and history. (General Outcome 5)
- in grades 10, 11 and 12, teachers have the option of including international texts into literature studies; at each level, students are expected to explain how literary texts relate to the cultural contexts in which they were produced.

International Languages Programs

Alberta Education has developed programs of study for Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Punjabi, Spanish and Ukrainian. All of these programs of study recognize that mastering the vocabulary and grammar of another language is not sufficient. Rather, to be proficient, language learners must also understand the cultural and contextual nuances that affect language use.

Language students in Alberta learn about other cultures and consider the similarities and differences between themselves and native speakers of the language, permitting them to reflect on alternative ways of thinking and living. In some cases, language learners also have opportunities to build relationships with their peers in other countries and gain real-world experience in international cooperation and diplomacy.

All of the languages programs of study have international education outcomes embedded. For example, Grade 6 students in the Spanish Language and Culture Nine-year Program, Grades 4–5–6, identify some aspects they have in common with people their own age who live in the cultures of the Spanish-speaking world (GC–1.2b). Similarly, in the

French as a Second Language Three-year Program of Studies 30-3Y, students research and identify aspects of the arts and popular culture of the Francophone world that have influenced other cultures (30-3Y, 30 R 4.1f).

Fine Arts

Art provides students with the opportunity to explore and comment upon the world around them. While developing artistic techniques and skills, art students are encouraged to think critically about the human condition and to externalize their personal feelings and intuitions or those of their fellow human beings. Visual and performance art also tell stories and, much like literature, expose students to people, times, places and situations that they might not otherwise be able to experience. By studying art from other cultures or countries, students can gain insight into different traditions, values and worldviews. They may also develop an appreciation for the historical and present realities of different people. The list below highlights curricular entry points where global perspectives can be emphasized.

Art

- In grades 1 to 6, students develop an appreciation for the ethnic and cultural aspects of the visual arts in Canadian society, an understanding of art as a common or universal means of expression among all peoples, and an appreciation of artistic accomplishments, past and present.
- In junior high, students consider how art interacts with cultural context. Grade 8 students also consider the impact of man-made structures upon human activity in the modern world.
- In Art 10–20–30, students consider how art interacts with cultural context.
- Art 11–21–31 is a study of culture through images designed to take students from consideration of their own experiences with art, through a historical analysis of art forms, to a more global investigation of art.

Drama

- A specific learning expectation of the elementary drama program of studies is that students will develop empathy through experiencing thoughts and feelings of other people and other cultures, as expressed through their stories.
- In the theatre studies component of junior high drama, students learn that drama exists in every culture and that theatre is a mirror of society.

The drama department from Hunting Hills High School in Red Deer, Alberta brought an international flavour to its dinner theatre production by offering French, Chinese and Spanish cuisine. Each night, audience members enjoyed a different ethnic menu while taking in evening performances of the Middle Eastern folk tale, known in English as “Arabian Nights.”

- In the theatre studies component of Drama 10–20–30, students explore selected elements of drama and theatre that foster an appreciation of theatre as a traditional art form. Theatre nurtures a tolerant worldview by encouraging students to reflect upon the history and broad themes of humanity.

Music

- A general learner expectation of the elementary music program of studies is that students will gain an awareness and appreciation of a variety of music, including music of the many cultures represented in Canada.
- In the junior high music program of studies, modules relating to musical perspective concentrate on national and ethnic music. The following modules are available: Black Music, Music of Canada, Music of Latin America, Music of the Orient, and Music of the United States.
- In Choral Music 10–20–30, teachers are encouraged to incorporate music from other languages and cultures.
- General Music 10–20–30 modules encourage students to develop a knowledge of music history and literature and their relationship to world history and develop an understanding of the music of world cultures. These outcomes are most prevalent in the History of Western Music, World Music and Popular Music modules.
- In the music history section of Instrumental Music 10–20–30 (Levels IV and V), students are encouraged to identify composers from various countries and historical periods.

All students need to be provided with opportunities to share and improve their natural gifts and talents. Many of our refugee English language learners face tremendous challenges as they enter our education system. One particular group, with many different African origins, did share one common talent and that was a love of music, in particular drumming and dancing.

Through the support of an Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) Educational Trust grant, an after-school project was developed that matched students of African ethnicity with their Canadian peers. Under the guidance of a local drum builder, students constructed drums together, made out of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe and goathide drumheads. Another local drummer worked with the students to bring forth some of the drum patterns from their backgrounds, with contributions from both African and Canadian students. The six-month project culminated with the students performing original drumming and dance routines. While the students were brought together through the drumming and dancing activities, each session began with a shared discussion to help both groups of students get to know each other better. In the end, they found that they have a lot in common, and that pizza is a universal food!

Emilie DeCorby, Principal, Edmonton Catholic Separate School District No. 7

Science

Science explores universal principles and extends into the global arena. Alberta's science programs of study provide students with the opportunity to develop scientific and related technological knowledge and skills that will enable them to understand and interpret their world. Science introduces students to the planet in which they live; the planet they share with six billion other human beings and a myriad of organisms. Because natural systems do not obey human-created borders, science extends into a global arena. In Alberta, science students are encouraged to explore the cultural and intellectual assumptions that underlie scientific thought and to examine environmental issues that are intertwined with ethics, global economics and international politics (see the following examples).

- In Grade 4, Topic A: Waste and Our World, students examine natural and man-made waste, its origins, cycles and impacts on the planet.
- In Grade 5, Topic D: Weather Watch, students are encouraged to consider how climate varies in different parts of the world and to identify human actions that contribute to climate change.
- In Grade 7, Unit A: Interactions and Ecosystems, students consider the relationships between human activity and natural environments. The unit highlights concepts of interdependency and interrelatedness and encourages students to identify intended and unintended consequences of human activities within local and global environments.
- In Grade 8, Unit E: Freshwater and Saltwater Systems, students examine the ecological dynamics of freshwater and saltwater systems, their distribution around the world and how humans affect and are affected by these systems.
- In Grade 9, Unit A: Biological Diversity, students examine the concept of biodiversity and how human activity affects it. They also examine the geographical distribution of biodiversity, threats to it and attempts to preserve it around the world.
- In Science 10, Unit D: Energy Flow in Global Systems, students learn about energy flows within the biosphere and consider how they affect the lives of humans and other species. They explore biomes from various parts of the world and consider—from various perspectives—the causes, ways of measuring and possible solutions to global climate change.
- In Science 14, Unit D: Investigating Matter and Energy in the Environment, students consider the impact of humans on the biosphere.
- In Science 24, Unit C: Disease Defence and Human Health, students consider how social, environmental and genetic factors affect human health and the spread of disease.
- In Science 30, Unit D: Energy and the Environment, students consider how global energy demands impact the biosphere and how conventional and alternative sources of energy may inform sustainable development.
- In Biology 20, Unit A: Energy and Matter Exchange in the Biosphere, students examine how energy and matter cycle through the biosphere. They use food chains and webs to trace the interconnectedness of organisms and ecosystems.

- In Chemistry 30, Unit C: Chemical Changes of Organic Compounds, students examine how society can ensure that the technical applications of organic chemistry are assessed to ensure future quality of life and a sustainable environment.
- In Physics 30, Unit D: Atomic Physics, students consider how the risks and benefits of technologies need to be assessed for each potential application from a variety of perspectives, including sustainability.

English as a Second Language (ESL)

The goals of the English as a Second Language Program of Studies are to provide ESL students with planned, systematic instruction and support that will enable them to speak the English language fluently, further their education, and become productive and contributing members of Albertan and Canadian society. ESL classrooms are uniquely positioned to draw upon the cultural knowledge and the unique international perspectives of ESL students, who generally belong to various cultural groups and/or come from different parts of the world. As students interact with one another, they, therefore, not only develop English language proficiency but also intercultural competency.

Health and Life Skills and Career and Life Management

The Health and Life Skills Kindergarten to Grade 9 Program of Studies and the Career and Life Management Senior High Program of Studies help students acquire, practise and demonstrate strategies for dealing with the challenges of life and living. The challenges we face on a personal level often relate to global systems, networks or events.

The aim of the Health and Life Skills Kindergarten to Grade 9 Program of Studies is to enable students to make well-informed, healthy choices and to develop behaviours that contribute to the well-being of self and others. For example:

- in Grade 4, students examine the various factors that influence body image; e.g., culture, media, peers, role models, weight loss industry
- in Grade 5, students identify personal boundaries, and recognize that boundaries vary depending on the nature of relationship, situation and culture.

The aim of the Career and Life Management (CALM) Senior High Program of Studies is to enable students to make well-informed, considered decisions and choices in all aspects of their lives and to develop behaviours and attitudes that contribute to the well-being and respect of self and others, now and in the future. For example, in CALM, students continue to work toward becoming responsible, caring, creative, self-reliant and contributing members of a knowledge-based and prosperous society.

Health and CALM courses also engage students in diversity issues. They emphasize the importance of considerate relationships, and encourage students to make decisions that contribute to the well-being and respect of self and others, including their local and global neighbours.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The Information and Communication Technology Program of Studies encourages students to consider the role and impact of technology in society and to practise using technology in an effective and responsible way. It ensures that students consider the global impact of communication technology. For example:

- in Division 2, students describe, using examples, how communication and information networks, such as the telephone and the Internet, create a global community
- in Division 3, students identify the cultural impact of global communication and explain ways in which technology can assist in the monitoring of local and global environmental conditions
- in Division 4 students analyze and assess the impact of technology on the global community.

Educators in the field also recognize that the best way to learn to use technology and to judge its impact is to engage in activities, projects and problems that replicate real-life situations. By using technology to establish and maintain contact with partners in other countries, educators can provide students with meaningful and real-world contexts in which to develop technological literacy.

Career and Technology Studies (CTS)

Recognizing that globalization has a significant impact on career options and continues to shape the world of work, the Career and Technology Studies Program of Studies encourages students to consider the global scope of the knowledge, skills and attitudes related to specific occupational areas (see the following examples).

- **Tourism Studies Courses**
 - In Travel Destinations 1 (TOU2060), students demonstrate knowledge of world tourism and geography by presenting travel information about North America and at least one other world region.
 - In Travel Destinations 2 (TOU2070), students demonstrate knowledge of world tourism and geography by presenting travel information regarding various tourism regions of the world.
 - In Travel Planning (TOU2080), students create and evaluate an Alberta or Canada tour package and/or an international travel package, including itinerary, tour and attractions information, and traveller information.

Grande Yellowhead Public School Division No. 77 has been offering “Species at Risk,” a combination of three CTS Wildlife courses, by videoconference since 2006.

The course brings in researchers and wildlife management personnel from around the world by videoconference to discuss their work in this area. Presenters have delivered sessions on their work with gorillas in the Congo, lemurs in Madagascar, and tree kangaroos in Papua, New Guinea. In addition to the content coming from researchers from around the world, the course has also had students participate from schools in Saskatchewan and Nunavut.

- **Foods Courses**
 - In International Cuisine (FOD2170), students discover other cultures by exploring their cuisine, and develop a variety of techniques for international cooking and use of specialized tools.
- **Fashion Studies Courses**
 - In Cultural Fashions (FAS3080), students research and learn about the fashions of other cultures and produce a project related to their research.
- **Legal Studies Courses**
 - In Law & the Traveller (LGS2050), students identify and describe the issues and legal considerations that may arise when individuals travel domestically and internationally.
- **Forestry Courses**
 - In Issues & Trends in Forestry (FOR3010), students analyze current local and global issues and trends in forest management, and demonstrate individual and shared actions that foster environmental stewardship.

Social Sciences

Social Sciences 20–30 is intended to complement the Alberta social studies program by encouraging increased understanding of human society and social relationships. It provides opportunities for educators and students to consider how specific disciplines explore and explain the world phenomena. The following social sciences courses contain an explicit international or intercultural focus.

- **Macroeconomics 30** – Students consider the interdependence of the global economic system and examine the current conditions of developing countries through an economic lens.
- **World Geography 30** – Students examine how natural landscapes shape and are shaped by human organization. Topics include “Human Occupance of the World, World Urbanization, Agriculture of the World, and World Transportation and Commerce.”
- **Comparative Government 20** – Students compare and contrast the Canadian political process to the system(s) adopted in the United Kingdom, the United States or the former USSR.

- **International Politics 30** – Students develop an understanding of the importance of international relations. Topics include the nature of power in international relations, historical forms of international relations, international forums for peace, and international forces in the economy.
- **World Religions 30** – Students examine some of the basic beliefs and practices of major religions of the world.
- **Applied Sociology 30** – Students examine the dynamics of social and cultural change.

An International Approach to Teaching

Many of Alberta’s programs of study contain explicit international or intercultural content. However, an international approach to teaching can also help students to link their studies to the broader global context. For example, a teacher of Grade 6 mathematics/science used the book, *The World of 100*, which highlights what the world would look like if it was 100 people, to engage her students in statistics and fractions.

“During our Peace Festival in December last year, I pulled [*The World of 100*] book out and read it to my Grade 6 class. I didn’t have a concrete plan as to what I was going to do with it, but as I expected, the students were quite shocked by many of the statistics presented. This led to a great discussion about disparity and global and regional inequality ... Since there are 25 students in my class, we did some work with fractions to find out how many people in our classroom village would be affected by things such as access to clean air and water, and schooling and literacy ...” (Erin Couillard, teacher at the Calgary Science School Society).

Teachers can utilize the following strategies to integrate international perspectives and content into their lesson planning.⁵

1. Highlight the “international dimensions of the subject area ... what knowledge and skills [would] students need to know to function in the field of study in an international setting?”⁶
2. Include international case studies and examples to illustrate subject area concepts.
3. Incorporate international data, stories and news from or about other countries into discussions and assignments.
4. Design assignments that require students to interact with students from other cultural groups (in Alberta or abroad).
5. Be aware that knowledge is formed in context. How might someone in another country or region view or approach this subject matter? How might his or her perspective or approach compare with ours?
6. Model respect for cultural diversity (e.g., take time to properly pronounce the names of students, acknowledge various cultural holidays) and intercultural competence (see Chapter 6: Cultural Considerations) in the classroom and school.

Locally Developed Courses

Many locally developed courses provide opportunities for international learning. For example, religious studies courses, which were developed to serve the needs of students attending schools in Roman Catholic school authorities, devote 20 percent of course time to comparative religious studies, giving students the opportunity to learn about other world religions.⁷

Some school authorities have elected to develop locally developed courses that specifically focus on international perspectives on learning. For example, Calgary School District No. 19 is currently piloting a course titled “Intercultural Studies 35,” where students reflect upon the concept of culture, investigate their own culture, learn about other cultures, and consider the dynamics of intercultural interactions and cultural adjustment. For more information, contact the Calgary School District No. 19’s International Bureau at <http://www.cbeinternational.ca/>.

Internationalizing Learning

Learning is not confined to classroom lessons that are developed to meet curricular outcomes. It often happens spontaneously as students react to their current circumstances, interact with their peers and their teachers, and participate in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities. These types of learning can also have an international flair and help to establish an international culture in school authorities. For example:

- teachers may, when appropriate, include current events of an international nature to facilitate class discussions or to enhance group or individual projects that students are working on
- interactions within an increasingly diverse student body may spark curiosity or concerns about cultural differences and encourage school staff to develop a campaign to explore and celebrate diversity
- a well-planned and pedagogically sound school trip to another country can enhance curricular study and expose students to new places, people, languages, landscapes and ways of living (see Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad)
- after hearing about an international disaster, a student council may decide to organize a fundraiser for an emergency relief organization and raise awareness about a global issue.

Conclusion

Alberta’s programs of study contain a number of opportunities to integrate international and intercultural content. School authorities can further internationalize learning by:

- adapting internationally focused locally developed courses
- encouraging an international approach to teaching
- supporting co- and extra-curricular activities that consider global issues or promote global understanding.

The most common concern expressed by school authorities that agree with the value of international education and international learning is “how can we fund it?” Funding will be explored in the following chapter.

You may find the following sections in this handbook helpful:

- Chapter 6: Cultural Considerations
- Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad

Endnotes

1. Alberta Education, *Business Plan 2010–2013*, p. 66, <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/resources/guidetoed.aspx> (Accessed August 5, 2010).
2. _____. “Ministerial Order #004/98: Goals and Standards Applicable to the Provision of Basic Education in Alberta,” 1998. <http://education.alberta.ca/department/policy/standards/goals.aspx>. (Accessed August 5, 2010).
3. _____. *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12*, p. iii, <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/resources/guidetoed.aspx> (Accessed August 5, 2010).
4. _____. *Business Plan 2010–2013*, p. 67, <http://education.alberta.ca/department/businessplans.aspx> (Accessed August 5, 2010).
5. Griffith Institute for Higher Education, “Internationalising the Curriculum: Strategies for Academic Staff” (Queensland, AU: Griffith University), http://www.griffith.edu.au/gihe/pdf/gihe_tipsheet_web_int.pdf (Accessed November 9, 2009) and Dale Stanley and Joan Mason, *Preparing Graduates for the Future: International Learning Outcomes* (Vancouver, BC: British Columbia Centre for International Education, 1997), p. 31.
6. Dale Stanley and Joan Mason, *Preparing Graduates for the Future: International Learning Outcomes* (Vancouver, BC: British Columbia Centre for International Education, 1997), p. 31.
7. Alberta Education, Policy 1.2.2 Locally Developed Religious Studies Courses, 2003, <http://education.alberta.ca/department/policy/k-12manual/religious.aspx> (Accessed November 10, 2009).

Note: All Alberta English-language programs of study are available for viewing at <http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/program.aspx>. All Alberta French-language programs of study are available for viewing at <http://education.alberta.ca/francais.aspx>.

