



Calgary Board of Education

The Traditional Learning Centre Program

Frequently Asked Questions Grades 1 to 8



The Traditional Learning Centre uses teacher-directed instruction and character education to foster reflective thinking, continuous learning and responsible citizenship. It is a celebration of cultural diversity and commonly held values. The virtues-oriented school environment prepares students to meet the moral, technological and global challenges of the 21st century.

What is the Traditional Learning Centre?

The Traditional Learning Centre is a whole group instruction, teacher-directed, educational program. There is a dual emphasis on academic rigour and character education through a classical liberal arts education.

What is a classical liberal arts education?

The program provides a balance between the humanities, sciences, and fine arts while developing basic skills in language and mathematics. French begins in Grade 1 and band starts in Grade 5 in middle school settings. All areas of the Alberta Program of Studies are taught and enriched, including physical education and art. Accelerated enrichment opportunities are available in Grades 7 and 8 in preparation for high school.

How is mastery of the basics achieved?

Foundational skills such as phonics, spelling, grammar, reading, writing and math are taught in a formal, sequenced manner. Lessons are carefully structured to guide students through concepts. Daily homework supports the work being done in class and includes parents as partners in the educational process. Whenever possible, students are grouped in language arts and mathematics at their appropriate instructional level in order to maximize success. Accommodations are provided for students experiencing occasional difficulties.

How is this different from other schools?

Traditional Learning Centres are Calgary Board of Education programs of choice rather than designated neighbourhood schools. We are not able to develop a comprehensive program to meet the needs of every child. Rather we are focused on meeting the mandate of the CBE to provide teacher-directed whole-group instruction and character education to students and parents who choose this particular form of education.

What is teacher-directed instruction?

Desks are usually separated into rows facing the board. The teacher stands at the front of the room and directly instructs the whole class. Students participate through a variety of multi-sensory responses including speaking, listening, viewing, reading, questioning, and writing.

How do you get them to think?

First, concepts and skills are taught explicitly. Then an opportunity is provided for creative expression. Higher level thinking and problem solving activities may include the use of manipulatives, group work, computer programs, experiments, independent research and centers. However the activities are carefully structured to maintain a positive learning environment for all students.

How is the program enriched?

In general, the TLC curriculum goes beyond the basic requirements set by the province and assumes that students start with a base of grade level skills. French begins at Grade 1 and continues through junior high. Band begins at Grade 5 in middle school settings. Vertical enrichment (compaction of curriculum) begins in Grade 7. Many students will complete Math and Science 10 in junior high and receive significantly enriched Humanities instruction.

What is Character Education?

The three pillars of character education are respect for self, others and the environment. Each month a different virtue is emphasized. The focus is on commonly held values shared by all cultures such as responsibility, perseverance, honesty, friendliness, love, and compassion. Students meet each day in a character circle. If there are any issues that arise, the group discusses them during this time. The emphasis is on group responsibility and problem solving. This positive, proactive approach creates a climate of mutual respect with high expectations for behaviour within the learning community and beyond.

Where do you get your teachers?

All teachers are certified by the ATA and screened by the CBE. Those new to the TLC receive in-service professional development support and are mentored by experienced TLC teachers. Individual teaching styles vary. All teachers, however, share a passion for teaching, the ability to structure lessons to maximize student achievement, high expectations for student performance and well-developed classroom management procedures.

What is the student profile?

The profile of students who are successful in the program includes:

- Average abilities and grade level achievement (minimum)
- Ability to focus, listen, and follow directions without delay
- Self-motivated, independent, willing to be challenged academically
- Willingness to do daily homework and wear a uniform
- Respectful of self, others and the environment

What about special needs?

Students on an Individual Program Plan (IPP) should fit the overall profile for TLC students and benefit by whole group direct instruction. In some circumstances, students may need to be screened by the Student Support Services Specialist before being accepted into the program to ensure a match between student needs and program delivery. On an ongoing basis, there is no additional support or small group instruction for students requiring a significantly modified individual program as this is not consistent with the program mandate.

What about ESL students?

ESL students who fit the student profile do very well in this program because it is structured, sequenced, and uses explicit phonics and grammar. Small group assistance is provided as needed to enhance written and oral language development. Cultural diversity is celebrated through multi-cultural events.

What about students with attention problems?

Many students have ADD. The program works well for them if they are properly diagnosed and treated because the teaching is structured and distractions are kept to a minimum.

Because whole group instruction requires everyone's attention, a student must be able to sit still, listen and follow general instructions without delay. If a child consistently requires redirection, it is an indicator that this program is not a good fit.

Are students asked to leave?

During kindergarten and the first year a student is in the program, teachers will be attentive to academic or behavioural concerns. If a student is not experiencing success, remedies are first looked for within the school. In extreme cases, the Student Support Services Specialist will be involved to help parents find an alternate placement for the following year. In later years, such decisions are made in consultation with parents, students, staff and specialists taking into account the academic and social needs of the child and the inherent nature of the program. Before March 15 of the Grade 8 year, students are screened to determine grade level of achievement and the fit for the high school program.

How are students selected?

1. Parents complete a registration form
2. Parents submit last year's report card and the most current report card
3. TLC requests completion of the "Teacher Reference Form" by current teacher
4. Parents sign parent/student commitment form
5. Parents schedule entrance test if requested by the school (for students entering Grades 3-8) to enable appropriate grouping for the following year.

Every effort will be made to accept students who are registered by March 15 after which they will be placed on a wait list and registered as space becomes available.

What is your discipline policy?

The expectation is that every individual in the school will model respect, responsibility and positive character values. If incidents arise in the classroom or on the playground, students are encouraged to discuss them during character circle. Positive restitution and relationship building are vital. Parents, staff and students are all integral to the discipline process and creation of a virtues-based environment.

What does the junior high program look like?

Middle school grade configurations differ from site to site. Grade 9 is located at the high school. The emphasis on academic rigour and character education continues at this level. Students have the opportunity to engage in Pre-Advanced Placement studies while continuing with French and music education (Grades 7 to 9).

Do you use computers?

ICT (computer) outcomes are integrated into the regular program. Students develop basic technology skills to enhance learning as appropriate to each grade level.

What about parent involvement?

School Councils meet regularly. The Council acts in an advisory role to the school and supports various curricular and extra-curricular activities and a related organization may be involved in fund raising. Parents can also be involved in the library, office, special projects or classroom, depending on the needs of the teachers and age of the students. Monitoring and assisting with your child's homework and general support of the character education focus is the major parental commitment.

What about homework?

Every student is expected to complete daily homework. Parents are asked to monitor and edit the child's work in order to provide immediate feedback. A daily agenda (K-8) outlines work done during the day and provides an opportunity for communication between the home and school. Parents are asked to sign the agenda to confirm that the work has been completed and edited. If the child has experienced difficulty, a note should be sent to the teacher through the agenda along with an e-mail address or phone number. Students in Kindergarten through Grade 2 should not be working more than an average of thirty minutes per day. Upper grades may be up to an hour. Agenda signatures and the degree of

parental monitoring would decrease as students move through high school and have established work and communication habits with home.

Do you have a lunch program?

Yes. Lunch fees are established by the Board of Trustees in the spring of each year. TLC conforms to School Board policy. Some sites have cafeteria service, others do not.

Do you have before and after school care?

Each school has different arrangements. For specific information, contact your local TLC.

I understand the students wear uniforms?

Research indicates that uniforms improve behaviour and attitude in students. Students from Kindergarten to Grade 4 have the same uniform. Grades 5-6 girls switch from a tunic to a kilt, and at the junior high level the sweater changes from green to navy. High school students wear blazers with kilt/pants. Uniforms are purchased through Halpern's Uniforms at 5911 – 3 Street SE (403-252-9342). Navy pants, white shirts and black shoes may be purchased anywhere. Physical education clothing may be required for gym in upper grades, and it is mandatory in junior/senior high. Check with your local TLC. Students require black, non-marking shoes and gym shoes. Please mark your child's name in all clothing. As schools become more established, School Councils may be approached to set up a uniform clothing exchange.

Are there any other costs? Busing?

Currently all students living outside the walk zone are bussed for a fee. Schools may have limited transportation service, and parents are responsible to ensure their children travel safely to and from congregated stops. Congregated stops may not be located in each residential district or within walking distance for students. Congregated stops are located based on factors such as ease of access for the bus, public space for students to gather and available parking for parents. Requests to add or move congregated stops will not be considered.

Can I get a school tour?

In order to keep disruptions to a minimum, school tours are scheduled through the school office. Each school offers an information night in early January and an open house in the spring for kindergarten parents. Please check the web site or leave a message on the answering machine.

School Sites

Please refer to website for school locations:
<http://www.cbe.ab.ca/programs/Choices/prog-tlc.asp>