



## Section Five: Instructional Programs

### **540 - PROPOSALS FOR SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE DISTINCT SCHOOLS, UNIQUE PROGRAMS AND SPECIALITY ACADEMIES**

#### **Introduction**

The Board of Education is committed to serving the diverse educational needs of students while focusing on student achievement. The Board may, within the parameters of provincially prescribed and/or locally developed curriculum, support school, parent and/or community-initiated educational programs, or Proposals for Substantive Change which provide a particular educational emphasis and/or philosophy. Depending on the actual program established, there may or may not be a charge associated with provision of the program; however, the district’s financial hardship policy (Policy 425 and 425R: *Student Fees*) will apply.

Should schools want to establish a distinct school, unique program or specialty academy, the Superintendent must first be consulted and then a proposal for substantive change must be approved by the School Planning Council and submitted to the Board of Education for consideration. In order to be considered for implementation at the beginning of September, the Board must receive the proposal by no later than the last day of February.

Availability of space, economic factors, ability to provide qualified staff, evidence that there is sufficient demand, and a plan to address financial hardship will all be considered in determining whether the proposal for substantive change will be approved.

Board Authorized Courses (BAC) are locally developed grade 10, 11 and 12 courses, the requirements of which are outlined in Policy 541.

#### **Definitions**

##### Distinct School

A school that provides a curriculum with a specific school-wide educational focus (e.g. traditional or fine arts), or creates a unique school identity (e.g. mandatory uniforms).

##### Unique Program

A program that fulfills a recognized educational need separate from existing programs and services, but within the parameters of provincially prescribed and/or Board authorized curriculum, and provides educational options for students, parents and staff (e.g. International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement or Elementary/Middle School Okanagan Language).



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### Specialty Academy

An educational program that emphasizes a particular sport, activity or subject area, and meets the prescribed criteria set out in the regulations (BC Ministry of Education Specialty Academy Criteria Regulation 219/08 dated October 15, 2009). Fees may be charged with respect to the direct costs incurred in providing the specialty academy which are above the costs of a standard educational program.

### **Policy**

To ensure that the underlying principles of public education and quality of educational programs are maintained, proposals for substantive change must be approved by the Board. Where a program is approved, the implementation will be the responsibility of the school.

1. Proposals for Substantive Change must include the following and follow the format outlined in Appendix 540A:
  - 1.1 operate within the parameters of the School Act and regulations and authority of the Board of Education, follow all relevant Board policies and conform with collective agreements;
  - 1.2 be free from any religious, political or ethnic affiliation;
  - 1.3 have a clearly articulated vision, ensuring equitable access opportunities for all students;
  - 1.4 provide a rationale for fulfilling an educational need separate from existing programs and services;
  - 1.5 provide a brief summary of the proposed plan including program delivery, instructional time and anticipated results;
  - 1.6 outline the qualified staff required and whether external expertise will be sought;
  - 1.7 outline expected changes clearly demonstrating the impact on students, staff and parents;
  - 1.8 provide an analysis of the impact to the school facility, transportation, neighbouring district schools, other area schools and home schooling;
  - 1.9 outline fees relating to the direct costs incurred by the school, if any, in providing the proposal for substantive change that are above the costs of providing a standard educational program;
  - 1.10 be funded at the same levels, by the district, with respect to resources and staff as those established for all other schools/grades/programs and incur no extraordinary costs for program maintenance, with any additional costs being the responsibility of the student. No additional costs will be borne by the Board of Education;



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- 1.11 include the process to inform parents/caregivers/students of the District’s financial hardship policy (Policy 425 and 425R: *Student Fees*), (e.g. newsletters, meetings, notices to parents, course selection handbooks, and at the time of registration);
  - 1.12 be housed in facilities where space permits and which are suitable to the program;
  - 1.13 be maintained without additional transportation assistance from the Board;
  - 1.14 outline the consultation/promotion process with the school community (including the Parent Advisory Council); and,
  - 1.15 include an evaluation process.
2. Upon receipt of a proposal, the Board may direct the Superintendent to conduct a feasibility study which will include consultation as per Policy 715: *Consultation with Partners in Education*.
  3. Any proposed changes to approved distinct schools, unique programs and specialty academies (e.g. increases in fee structure and/or program delivery) must be brought to the Board’s Education and Student Services Committee in December of each calendar year for review and a recommendation to the Board for approval, prior to announcing the continuation of the distinct school, unique program or special academy for the upcoming year.