



LIFE, ACADEMIC, WORK SKILLS (LAWS)

Parent Handbook

This alternative non-credited classroom program is offered at Memorial Composite High School in Stony Plain and Spruce Grove Composite High School.

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Introduction

The Life Academic Work Skills (LAWS) program provides an alternative non-credited classroom program for students with mild/moderate to severe cognitive delays and a significant impact on their adaptive functioning. LAWS focuses on functional literacy and numeracy skills which are adapted or modified learning outcomes from the Alberta Programs of Study, personal and social development, daily living skills, vocational skills, and recreation and leisure skills. Students are involved in community activities, outings, and work placements to further develop their skills. Students enrolled in the LAWS program have access to individualized programming and support and lower teacher-to-student ratios, while continuing to access universal supports offered at the school. Administrators, Inclusive Education Lead (IELs), teachers, educational assistants, therapists, Student Services facilitators, and other consultants collaborate with parents and students (where applicable) to provide the support required by students. Additionally, students have access to an on-site sensory space as well as adaptive communication tools, as needed.

At the successful completion of their Grade 12 year, LAWS students are encouraged to participate in the school's graduation exercises, and awarded a Certificate of Completion. LAWS alumni may consider entering the workforce, community based programming, or attending a Transitional Vocational Program at a post-secondary institution.

Philosophy

Every student has an equal right to education in the school system with their age appropriate peers. The Education Act currently states that an individual “who at September 1 in a year is six years of age or older and younger than 19 years of age” may access education. For some students, in order to promote a successful transition to adulthood, their education is recommended to extend beyond the classroom to include non-school environments. Through this integration, students will acquire the living and working skills necessary for continued pursuit of independence upon graduation from high school.

When students enter the program, competence is presumed. Literacy and numeracy are identified as life skills and a comprehensive approach is utilized in daily instruction by ensuring all students have a voice, a way to write, a way to read, and a way to engage.

Eligibility

To be eligible for this program, a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) and relevant psycho-educational testing must identify their need for specialized programming. Placement in this program is through an individual intake with the student, present school, parents and high school staff. The personalized details of the programming will be established at that time.

Program Priorities

In the LAWS program there are four overarching priorities we work on:

Daily Functional Literacy

The students will be exposed to and work on developing their individual literacy skills in the realm of daily living. Daily living functional literacy includes the manner in which we read, write, and communicate information utilizing language. Language development and communication are key components of the literacy program to support students in expressing their wants and needs. Language may be both verbal and/or non-verbal (with the utilization of an augmented communication device).

Daily Functional Numeracy

The students will be exposed to and work on developing their individual math skills in the realm of daily living. Daily living functional math includes the manner in which numbers play a role in our daily lives. Functional math programming includes exploring numbers and concepts around us such as measurement, time, and money. These are essential areas of understanding to build skills for daily living.

Skill Building

Our students will have the opportunity to participate in opportunities both within the school setting and in the outside community to build their work-related task experience. The goal is for students to build their capacity in order to eventually support their transition into adulthood. These experiences build work-based skills such as following directions, listening to the requests of others, following through with the expectations set forth by a supervisor, all of which are an important part of building programming in the realm of life skills.

Socialization

A key component for students to experience success in life, is the ability to communicate and socialize appropriately with others, and to develop a sense of belonging. Communicating effectively with others is also a skill that supports individuals entering adulthood. Building confidence and ability in this realm requires practice. Our students have opportunities built into the daily program to engage in socialization activities where communication is the key purpose. These activities may involve group projects, games, shared projects, and community social interactions. They also provide opportunities to observe and understand appropriate interactions in a social setting across multiple environments.

Program Components

The Individual Education Program Plan (IEP)

The IEP is developed at the beginning of the year based on the student's individual needs. Parents, students (where applicable), teachers, educational assistants and therapists develop goals and objectives for the IEP. The goals and objectives, as well as strategies and supports are updated as needed during the year and updates are sent home throughout the school year.

Daily Routine

Each classroom designs consistent routines and expectations for students that help foster safe and welcoming environments.

Technology

Technology is utilized on a daily basis in many practical meaningful ways to make learning accessible for all students. Students will have access to a variety of tools including Smart Boards, Chromebooks, iPads, educational apps and C-pens to support student learning.

Augmented and Alternative Communication

The LAWS program has support from IELs, facilitators, consultants, and trained staff to help explore strategies and tools that are available. They may recommend tools which will enhance the student's communication skills. Some examples are low tech core vocabulary boards, high tech communication devices with appropriate apps, PEC visuals, and Big Mac switches.

Staff and Support

A comprehensive team approach is used to ensure the individual needs of the students are met. Members of the team include parents, teacher(s), IELs, educational assistants, school administration, Student Services facilitators, and consultants such as physiotherapy, vision, hearing, speech language pathology and occupational therapy. The teacher is responsible for coordinating the planning, development and evaluation of your child's IEP and overseeing the implementation of the program as a whole.

Transition Planning

Transition planning is an ongoing component of the LAWS Program. A collaborative approach is used to develop these plans. The transition to high school, and then school to work and community programming for young adults can be a difficult and confusing time. An emphasis on transition planning is imperative at the high school level. Parents are encouraged to attend school-organized information and transition events.

To assist families with transition planning, staff will provide information regarding:

- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)
- Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD)
- Possible program/group home options for adults with disabilities through contact information and information nights (as applicable)
- Trusteeship & adult guardianship

The divisional Family Supports facilitator can support parents in meeting with outside agencies.

For further information, please see Appendix A.

Parent/Guardian Involvement

Parental/Guardian involvement is of the utmost importance in the LAWS Program. The school invites you to become involved through at-school activities, the formulation of the IEP, daily communication via email or agreed upon software/apps, and monthly newsletters. Please read all notices that go home, as they will contain valuable information about future plans or activities.

If there are any questions or concerns at any time please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher.

Your Role as a Parent/Guardian:

- Stay in contact with the teacher(s) through various means such as electronic means, conversations, formal reports, and engage in family/school conferences;
- Advise the school of absences or if the student is running late: a call to the office or directly to the classroom is greatly appreciated, as plans may need to change if some students are missing.
- Share relevant information with the teacher(s) to support programming i.e. developmental history, current needs and anything which may influence the day for your student.
- Support your student's program by working at home on activities.

Fees

Fees are found and paid through Powerschool and will cover the cost of field trips as well as baking/cooking in the program. Students have also raised money to allow us to participate in various activities throughout the year. Students who are registered in complementary courses may have additional fees assessed.

APPENDIX A: Transition Supports & Services

Many agencies and organizations have wait lists, and it can take time to get services in place for your child. We recommend looking into what supports you will be utilizing after high school during your child's last year of the LAWS program. Applications for AISH should be completed prior to your child's eighteenth birthday. This will help ensure the transition to life after school is as smooth as possible.

Many of the organizations below can provide services and support while your child is still in school. Please let a team member know if you need assistance accessing any services to support your child.

Group Homes and Respite Contacts

Maitland House (Community Aim).....	780-960-0593
Rehoboth.....	780-963-4044
Unlimited Potential.....	780-440-0708

Other Community Supports

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH).....	Avril.Frost@gov.ab.ca
Eco Medical Equipment.....	780-483-6232
Gateway Association.....	780-454 0701
Glenrose Hospital.....	780-735-7999
Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD).....	Brittany.Malo@gov.ab.ca
Spruce Grove Family and Community Support Services.....	780-962-7618
Stony Plain Family and Community Support Services.....	780-963-8583