



PROGRAMS OF CHOICE AND SPECIALTY ACADEMIES

Context

The B.C. Ministry of Education Curriculum highlights “A curriculum that enables and supports increasingly personalized learning, through quality teaching and learning, flexibility and choice, and high standards.” Student choice and direction are necessary to support the curricular direction.

Policy Statement

The board supports personalized learning through the provision of Programs of Choice for students at all levels.

Guiding Principles

1. Students will be introduced to different subjects and disciplines on a course by course basis by attending discoveries, exploratories, or taking locally developed and Board Approved core and elective courses throughout their educational journey.
2. To maintain high standards of teaching and learning, all programs of choice will be subject to the following criteria:
 - a. Be cost neutral to the School District over time;
 - b. Be compliant with all Ministry and School District requirements, including those regarding funding claims, course credit reporting, scheduling, safety considerations, collective agreements, and accepted accounting practices;
 - c. Focus on building meaningful credentials for the BC Graduation Program;
 - d. Specify the enhancements that are being provided beyond regular programming;
 - e. Be fully equitable in regard to program enrollment and opportunity, without ability restrictions acting as a barrier to participation; and,
 - f. Be subject to periodic reviews to determine if the Program is meeting student needs and adhering to the requirements listed above.
3. Specialty Academies can be used to offer a Program of Choice that relies on user fees to provide its enhanced experiences. They are subject to additional requirements listed in Ministry regulation 219/08, in the Administrative Procedures for this policy, and Board Policy 703 (Fees and Subsidies).
4. Fundraising is permitted as a means to offset program fees.

Definitions:

Programs of Choice -- Courses of study beyond the regular classroom that provide opportunities for students to engage more deeply in areas of interest by extending the Ministry Curriculum. These programs are created by staff selected by students and/or their families as a means for a specialized learning experience.



QUALICUM SCHOOL DISTRICT

BOARD POLICY 507

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Specialty Academy – A Program of Choice that meets the criteria established in Ministry regulation 219/08, and provides an enhanced experience for students requiring a student fee payment to be cost neutral to the School District.

References:

- [Administrative Procedures to Board Policy 507: Programs of Choice and Specialty Academies](#)
- [Board Policy 703: Student Fees and Subsidies](#)
- [Building Student Success B.C's Curriculum](#)
- [Ministry Regulation 219/08: Specialty Academy Criteria](#)

Dates of Adoption/Amendments:

Adopted: 2022.05.24

Amended: **2025.04.22**



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES TO BOARD POLICY 507
PROGRAMS OF CHOICE AND SPECIALTY ACADEMIES

Purpose

1. The purpose of this administrative procedure is to set the requirements for programs and choice and specialty academies in the Qualicum School District.
2. This administrative procedure must be read in conjunction with the Board Policy 507: *Programs of Choice and Specialty Academies*.

Application Process

Staff interested in providing a specialty academy at their school may, with their principal's approval, apply in writing to the Superintendent of Schools through the District Director of Instruction, before seeking approval from the Board of Education.

Applications must substantively address the following:

- Provide a rationale on the program's educational merits and/or avenue to support the District Strategic Plan that clarify the need for additional costs;
- Specify the enhanced experiences that will require user fees;
- Include a clear budget and proposed user fees;
- Have opportunities for bursaries or fee waivers in place so that cost is not a barrier to participation, as per [Board Policy 703](#); and,
- Show clear alignment to [Ministry Regulation 219/08](#).

Minimum Enrolment

While specialty academies may be approved without a roster, operating the program in a given year will typically rely on adequate subscription. Exceptions can be made on a one-year basis with approval from the Superintendent of Schools or designate.

References:

- [Administrative Procedures to Board Policy 507: Programs of Choice and Specialty Academies](#)
- [Board Policy 703 and Administrative Procedures: Student Fees and Subsidies](#)
- [Building Student Success B.C's Curriculum](#)
<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/overview>
- [Ministry Specialty Academy Criteria Regulation 219/08](#)

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