



# ABLE

Academy of Business  
Literacy & Entrepreneurship

## Charter Approved: January 2026

### Introduction

#### Vision

Every student can thrive in school and in life. At ABLE, we give students the confidence and skills to succeed in whatever they choose—whether that’s university, trades, professions, the arts, or starting their own business.

#### Purpose

School should prepare students for the real world. At the **Academy of Business Literacy and Entrepreneurship (ABLE)**, this happens through **Human-Centred Design Thinking (HCDT)**—our whole-school way of learning.

The HCDT cycle is: **Empathize** (understand people’s needs) → **Define** (state the problem) → **Ideate** (brainstorm solutions) → **Prototype** (make a first version) → **Test** (try the solution with real people to see if it works and if they would use or buy it) → **Reflect** (learn and improve). Students use this process to uncover **real problems people are experiencing in their communities** and design solutions that work.

Each year, every student designs and **launches a business or community venture**. Launching means **taking their solution to market**—selling a product, offering a service, or delivering value that people adopt because it meets their needs.

While every student gains venture-launch experience, the skills they develop—financial literacy, research, teamwork, and communication—are **transferable to any pathway**. Whether starting their own enterprise or contributing inside a company, profession, or community organization, ABLE graduates are ready to solve real problems in the real world.

In short: the Academy of Business Literacy and Entrepreneurship gives students the skills and confidence to solve **real problems for real people**, while proving success in the marketplace. **This is not a STEM magnet or a CTS program—it is a whole-school pedagogy where**

every subject, from Math to Social Studies to the Arts, is applied through HCDT and venture creation.

## Teaching Philosophy

Teachers facilitate interdisciplinary, venture-centred learning where Alberta outcomes are mastered through HCDT. Iteration, critique, and authentic audiences build resilience, adaptability, and leadership. **ABLE is not vocation-based—it prepares students for diverse pathways through transferable competencies.**

## Students

ABLE welcomes diverse learners from across Alberta. Every student is ABLE to:

- Achieve rigorous academic outcomes.
- Apply empathy to **problems people are experiencing in their communities** and convert validated needs into market-responsive ventures.
- Build resilience, agency, financial independence, and purposeful career pathways.

## Goals & Measurable Outcomes

### Goal 1 — Innovation & Venture Creation (through HCDT)

**Outcome:** Each year, every student applies the full HCDT cycle—Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, Test, Reflect—to **design and launch a business or community venture** that responds to a real problem people are experiencing.

#### Measures:

- 80% of students complete all six stages of the HCDT cycle, documented in portfolios.
- 80% of students show adoption evidence of their venture (feedback, uptake, or sales).

**Plain talk:** Every year, your child will launch a venture and prove it works, because real people use it or buy it.

### Goal 2 — Academic Mastery in Real Contexts (applied through HCDT)

**Outcome:** Students meet or exceed Alberta Programs of Study outcomes by **applying core subject knowledge inside their business and community ventures**, ensuring learning is rigorous and relevant.

## Measures:

- 80% of students demonstrate proficiency in core subjects:
  - **Math** in budgets and forecasts,
  - **Science** in testing and iteration,
  - **Social Studies** in research and civic context,
  - **Language Arts/Arts** in pitching and storytelling.
- Teachers moderate each other's assessments to ensure fairness and consistency.

**Plain talk:** At ABLE, academics aren't separate. Your child learns Alberta's curriculum by using it to solve real problems through ventures.

## Goal 3 — Readiness & Pathways (demonstrated through HCDT ventures)

**Outcome:** Students graduate ready for post-secondary, trades, professions, or entrepreneurship, equipped with financial literacy, communication skills, and **venture-launch experience**.

## Measures:

- 100% of students prepare budgets and forecasts each year.
- ≥90% of students deliver at least two public pitches per year; 100% deliver at least one.
- 100% of students graduate with a professional portfolio documenting launched ventures, including adoption evidence.

**Plain talk:** By graduation, your child will have launched ventures, managed money, and pitched ideas with confidence. These are skills they can carry into starting their own business—or into any profession or company they choose.

# Improved Student Outcomes

At the **Academy of Business Literacy and Entrepreneurship (ABLE)**, improved outcomes describe what each student will know, do, and demonstrate if the charter goals are successfully met. Outcomes are **student-centred, observable, measurable, and rooted in Human-Centred Design Thinking (HCDT)**.

## 1. Innovation & Venture Creation (through HCDT)

### Students will:

- Empathize with people in their communities to uncover **real problems currently being experienced**.

- Define those problems clearly, generate ideas, prototype, test solutions with real users, and reflect on results.
- **Design and launch a business or community venture** each year, demonstrating adoption through user feedback, uptake, or sales.

**Measured by:** ≥80% of students completing the HCDT cycle and ≥80% showing adoption evidence in portfolios.

## **2. Academic Mastery in Real Contexts (applied through HCDT)**

**Students will:**

- Apply Alberta Programs of Study inside their ventures:
  - Math for forecasting and budgets
  - Science for testing and iteration
  - Social Studies for research and civic context,
  - Language Arts/Arts for pitching and storytelling.
- Demonstrate critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving through venture artefacts.

**Measured by:** 80% of students demonstrating subject proficiency, assessed through rubrics moderated across teachers and embedded in portfolios.

## **3. Readiness & Pathways (demonstrated through HCDT ventures)**

**Students will:**

- Build **financial literacy** by preparing budgets and forecasts, then comparing results to projections.
- Strengthen **communication skills** by delivering at least one public pitch each year (most deliver two).
- Graduate with a **professional portfolio of launched ventures**, including adoption evidence and personal reflections.
- Show adaptability and confidence for post-secondary, trades, professions, or entrepreneurship.

**Measured by:** 100% of students producing budgets and forecasts; ≥90% delivering two public pitches; 100% graduating with complete portfolios.

# Grades Offered

Grades 7–12.

## Student Selection Criteria

### Access & Eligibility

ABLE is open to all students in Grades 7–12. Admission is not based on prior achievement, grades, or background. **Admission is open to all; when oversubscribed, entry is by transparent lottery.**

### Application Process

Families complete an application form (online or paper). Parents may add a short note about their hopes; students may share a short note or video about their interests. These are **not** used to rank applicants—they simply help teachers understand students once enrolled.

### Selection Process

- If applications  $\leq$  capacity: all applicants admitted.
- If applications  $>$  capacity: transparent lottery system used.

### Lottery Priorities:

1. Siblings of current students.
2. Children of ABLE staff.
3. Students who live within ~30 minutes by public transit.
4. All other applicants.

### Timing & Waitlist:

- **Main lottery:** February (week after Family Day) for September entry.
- **Mid-year lottery:** November for February entry.
- **Additional openings:** filled from waitlist.
- **Sustained interest:** students who remain on the waitlist get one additional entry the next year.

**Transparency:** All lotteries will be conducted openly and fairly, with oversight from the ABLE Board.

# Curriculum (Above and Beyond Alberta Programs of Study)

The Academy of Business Literacy and Entrepreneurship (ABLE) delivers all Alberta Programs of Study. **Our pedagogy is Human-Centred Design Thinking (HCDT), which defines *how* we teach.** HCDT is applied across all subjects through the cycle of *Empathy* → *Define* → *Ideate* → *Prototype* → *Test* → *Reflect*.

**Alberta's Programs of Study form the foundation of ABLE's teaching. What follows are curricular elements that are not part of the provincial Programs of Study and not available as system-wide, required learning in public, Catholic, or existing charter schools.**

**Building from this pedagogy, ABLE offers curriculum beyond the Alberta Programs of Study, which defines *what* we teach in addition.** This curriculum ensures students apply core subject learning in real-world contexts through:

- 1. Annual Venture Creation (Grades 7–12):** Every student designs, launches, and evaluates a venture each year. Ventures are group-based in Grades 7–9 and transition to pairs or individuals in Grades 10–12, culminating in a Grade 12 Capstone Venture reviewed by external mentors.
- 2. Understanding Human Needs and Markets:**
  - Grades 7–9: Students research accessible communities (families, neighbourhoods, parents' workplaces, sports/arts groups) using primary research (interviews, surveys, observations). They apply **demographic analysis** and learn **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs** as a framework for identifying real problems.
  - Grades 10–12: Students expand to regional, national, and global audiences using secondary research and **psychographics** (values, motivations, lifestyles, decision drivers).
- 3. Financial Literacy Embedded in Ventures:** Budgeting, forecasting, profit-and-loss, break-even analysis, cash flow, credit, and risk are progressively embedded in ventures, moving from small-scale in Grades 7–9 to advanced modeling in Grades 10–12.
- 4. Digital Media, Storytelling, and Marketing:** Recording studios are part of curriculum, enabling students to produce videos, podcasts, and campaigns. Storytelling grounded in empathy is emphasized: students learn to frame a person, a problem, and a solution that matters. Grades 7–9 create posters or short videos; Grades 10–12 develop full digital strategies including video ads, social media campaigns, and ROI analysis.
- 5. Pitch Competitions and Public Showcases:** Pitching is curricular, not extracurricular. Grades 7–9 present in in-school showcases with community judges. Grades 10–12

participate in external events such as *Platform Calgary youth showcases*, *Bow Valley College's Innovation Rodeo*, *Junior Achievement's "Big Pitch" (Alberta)*, and the *Blue Ocean Student Entrepreneur Competition (global, virtual)*. The Grade 12 Capstone Pitch is the culminating public demonstration.

## Scaffolded Progression by Grade

### Grade

### Above-and-Beyond Focus

- 7**      **Explore problems in *family/neighbourhood/local* contexts.** Conduct primary research to uncover real problems people are experiencing. Apply demographics and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Create small group ventures with simple budgets. Share through posters or videos. Pitch informally in class.
- 8**      **Expand into connected communities** including parents' workplaces, sports teams, or arts groups. Ventures include basic forecasting. Students create 1–2 minute group video pitches and present in a **school-wide showcase** with community judges.
- 9**      **Engage broader community groups.** Use HCDDT independently. Ventures integrate across subjects with profit-and-loss basics. Present at a **school pitch competition** with external evaluators.
- 10**     Ventures shift to **regional audiences**. Projects transition to pairs or individuals. Introduced to psychographics. Finance includes break-even analysis and forecasting. Develop **regional campaigns**. Participate in **external pitch events** (e.g., Platform Calgary, Innovation Rodeo).
- 11**     Ventures expand to **national audiences**. Apply psychographic analysis. Finance includes cash flow, credit, and risk. Develop **national campaigns** with storytelling and targeting. Compete in **JA's "Big Pitch" or Blue Ocean virtual competition**.

- 12 Capstone Venture:** Demonstrates mastery of HCDD, finance, and storytelling. Address a **large-scale or global problem people are experiencing**. Produce a full digital strategy. Success is defined by **market adoption—people buy or use the solution**. Culminates in the **Capstone Pitch** to an external industry/community panel.

**Each of these elements;**

Venture creation, market research, financial literacy, digital storytelling, and authentic pitch competitions is intentionally designed as a curriculum beyond Alberta Programs of Study, ensuring ABLE students graduate with learning experiences and competencies not available in any other Alberta program.

## **Communication of Innovations**

ABLE was established to contribute to innovation in Alberta's education system. In keeping with the intent of the charter school framework, ABLE communicates its innovations outward to the broader education community, showing how its approach impacts student learning and sharing lessons learned that may inform education across the province.

Each year, ABLE will engage in the following three practices:

### **1. Digital Hub (Innovation Yearbook): A short annual update posted on ABLE's website**

Illustrating how Human-Centred Design Thinking (HCDD) is applied in practice through one representative student venture and one teacher reflection. Each update highlights evidence of impact on student learning, engagement, and application, and is retained year over year as a public record of ABLE's innovation.

### **2. Hustle & Flow (Educator Exchange): An annual opportunity to share practice with the education community at large**

Where educators from beyond ABLE are invited to bring a classroom challenge, instructional idea, or project and work through the HCDD cycle together. The session focuses on communicating how ABLE's approach impacts student learning and on sharing practical lessons learned that educators can adapt in their own school contexts.

### **3. External Knowledge Sharing (Conferences & Teacher Education): Presenting ABLE's learning to the wider education sector**

Through presentations at education conferences and engagement with Alberta post-secondary and pre-service teacher education programs. These opportunities focus on communicating ABLE's innovative practices, evidence of student learning, and insights gained through

implementation, contributing to professional learning and continuous improvement across Alberta's education system.

## Charter Amendments

Amendments may be initiated by the Charter Board or petition of Society members. Proposed amendments circulated in advance and voted on at an AGM or special meeting. Adoption requires  $\geq 60\%$  approval of members present and voting.

In accordance with Section 9 of the Charter Schools Regulation (AR 85/2019), all amendments passed by the Society will be submitted to the Minister of Education for review and written approval. No amendment shall take effect until Ministerial approval is granted.

## Dissolution of the Charter School

If the charter is repealed or terminated, ABLE will be dissolved per regulation.

- **Notice:** Written notice to the Minister by January 31 of the school year in which operations will cease. Parents, staff, and stakeholders notified at the same time to allow at least one semester for planning.
- **Transfer of Students:** Formal engagement with receiving school authorities to coordinate placements; all records transferred per Student Record Regulation.
- **Disposition of Assets and Records:** Assets disposed of in accordance with the Charter Schools Regulation and the Education Act; financial and student records finalized and transferred.

## Any Other Information

ABLE has been deliberately designed to meet the requirements of the *Charter Schools Regulation (AR 85/2019)*.

- **Distinctiveness:** ABLE is not CTS, Junior Achievement, or electives. Those are optional or fragmented. ABLE requires every student in Grades 7–12 to create and launch ventures as a for-credit curriculum.
- **Innovation:** Human-Centred Design Thinking is applied across all subjects, with curriculum beyond the Programs of Study that includes ventures, financial literacy, digital storytelling, and authentic pitch competitions.
- **Improved Student Learning:** Graduates leave with portfolios of documented ventures, financial and communication fluency, and proof of adoption or sales.
- **Public Interest:** Ventures address real human problems, benefiting students, communities, and Alberta's economy.

**In short, ABLE is significantly different, innovative, improves student learning, and is in the public interest, as required by regulation.**

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