A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

NEW TO WORKING WITH LOW GERMAN-SPEAKING MENNONITE STUDENTS AND COMMUNITIES

The Alberta Teachers' Association

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STUDENTS AND COMMUNITIES

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Introduction

There are vibrant and growing communities of Low German Mennonites across Alberta. Low German Mennonites are conservative Mennonites with Dutch–North German Anabaptist roots. There are diverse communities and denominations within the Low German Mennonite population, yet they all share a common history, cultivate a unique collective cultural identity, uphold a strong sense of belonging and are bound together by culture and their Anabaptist faith.

The migration experiences of the Low German Mennonite people in Alberta are varied and complex, as has been the case for generations of Low German Mennonite groups. Some families retain strong connections to their relatives and villages in Mexico and other Latin American countries, returning during winter months. Some come to Canada never looking back. Some embrace the mainstream culture. Some were born here in Canada.

The Low German Mennonites in Alberta schools are forming their identities and navigating two worlds simultaneously. Working with Low German Mennonite students and their families is exciting and rewarding. This resource provides background information about the Low German Mennonites' history, cultural and religious background and strategies for working with the students in your classroom.

The majority of LGMs in Alberta are returning from Mexico and they may or may not have lived on a colony. Others may have lived in

Western Canada	Ukraine
Texas	Kansas
Russia	Belize
California	Paraguay
Argentina	Bolivia

For the purposes of this document, the acronym *LGM* is used for Low German-speaking Mennonite.

Low German is historically an oral language. While there are several dictionaries and resources available in Low German, you may come across various spellings for the same word. Low German uses phonetic spelling.

LGM School Support Staff

German Teacher/German Liaison Teacher

Some schools hire a German teacher who is often a part of the LGM community. The German teacher usually has various roles and responsibilities, some of which may include

- teaching Low and High German, including reading, writing, handwriting using the German alphabet (gothic letters), singing and praying;
- teaching about LGM culture;
- teaching Bible scriptures to the students, using the German Bible;
- translating documents into Low German;
- recording calls to parents in Low German;
- planning Christmas and Easter programs (song choice, program details and so on);
- leading the German devotional(s) (morning opening, catechism, afternoon worship);
- working as an educational assistant; and
- facilitating meetings between the school and parents.

Low German Mennonite Liaison Workers

Some school jurisdictions have hired an LGM liaison worker (also known as an LGM consultant) to help build relationships, trust and understanding between the school jurisdiction and LGM families. An LGM liaison supports multiple schools in a region. Find out if your jurisdiction has an LGM liaison and, if so, arrange a meeting.

An LGM liaison supports LGM families by

- connecting with LGM families,
- advocating on their behalf on school-related matters,
- promoting the attendance of LGM children at school,
- accompanying the family to appointments (doctor, SLP, OT and PT assessments and so on) to translate and ensure that everything is understood, and
- being available in the evenings and on weekends for parents to call with questions or concerns.

A LGM liaison supports school staff by

- working with school administration and staff to facilitate the education of LGM children;
- providing input regarding LGM children and family needs;
- promoting increased understanding and appreciation of LGM culture;
- sharing information about LGM history, convictions and values, and the challenges of the LGM people;
- answering questions related to LGM families and culture;
- helping with paperwork (for example, school registrations, consent forms, government accountability pillar surveys, assessment forms);
- attending meetings and activities at the school to help with translation and to facilitate trust and relationship building; and
- making phone calls home regarding a child (to arrange a meeting, share information and/or concerns, and so forth).

An LGM liaison works with outside agencies by

- collaborating with and making referrals to organizations that work with LGM families, such as
    - Alberta Health Services,
    - County Adult Learning Programs (CALPs),
    - Southern Alberta Kanadier Association (SAKA) and
    - Early Years Connections.

Historical Background

Religious Revolution

The early 1500s saw a tumultuous time in Europe, including a religious reformation. Martin Luther, a German monk who was critical of the potential abuse of power of the church, challenged or *protested* against the Roman Catholic Church. Luther and a growing number of followers pushed for reforms within the church and the result was the Reformation or Protestant Reformation. The religious landscape in Europe changed drastically as the church split. Supporters of Luther, known as Protestants, adopted his new ideals. Luther's ideas spread across Europe, causing continued uprising, war and persecution. Other Christian groups also broke away from the Roman Catholic Church, including the most radical, the Anabaptists, in 1525.

WIKICOMMONS

Martin Luther

Radical Reformation—The Beginnings of Anabaptism

The Anabaptist movement, or Radical Reformation, began in Switzerland. The Anabaptists (from the Greek *ana*, again) were a group of Protestant Reformers mainly from German- and Dutch-speaking regions.

The Anabaptists' beliefs were distinct from both the Roman Catholic Church and other reformers in the following ways:

Adult baptism

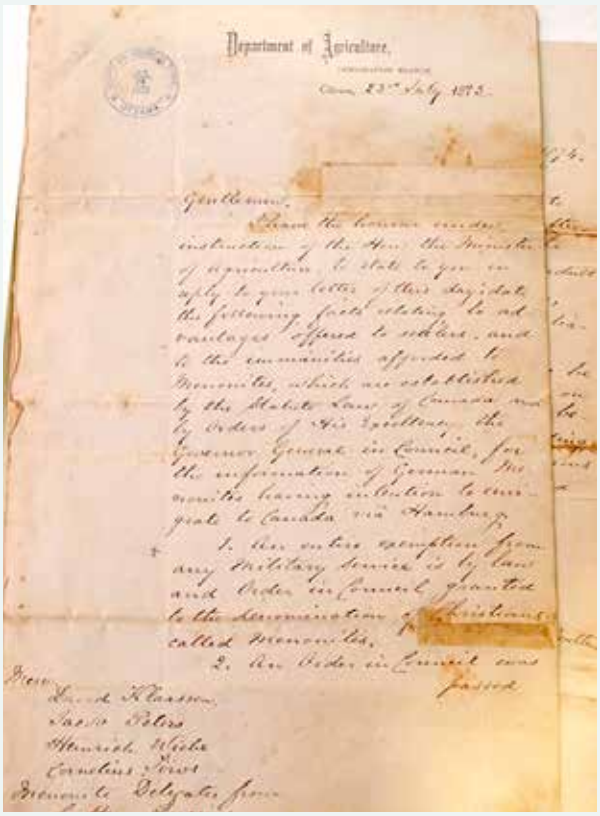
The belief that adults should be baptized by choice, that "infants are not punishable for sin until they become aware of good and evil and can exercise their own free will, repent, and accept baptism" (Encyclopedia Britannica nd). This belief was profoundly different from other Christian groups, who believed in infant baptism, and for whom adult baptism was considered a crime punishable by death.

A literal interpretation of the Bible

Anabaptists believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God and that the Word should guide daily life.

Separation of church and state

In Europe, until the Reformation, the church and the state worked together to build a Christian society. Anabaptists felt that Christianity had been corrupted by politics and that devoutness should be expressed only to God, not to a nation. In essence, they rejected the political system, an extremely unpopular action.



www.canadianmennonite.org/stories/%E2%80%98these-records-are-unique%E2%80%99

In the top left corner of the document, the faded blue ink of a rubber stamp reveals the date this document was written and signed: July 24, 1873.

The letter is a significant historical artifact for Mennonites: it is the original invitation from the Dominion of Canada to Mennonites living in Russia (modern-day Ukraine) offering them land, freedom of religion and exemption from military service.

The document is known as the *Priviligium*. (Note: Both this document and the similar document issued by the government of Mexico in 1921 are referred to as both *Privilegium* and *Priviligium*.)

Pacifism

Anabaptists believe that daily life should be conducted in a peaceful manner, and that conflict should be resolved in nonviolent ways.

No swearing of oaths

Telling the truth at all times is a strongly held conviction of Anabaptists, and therefore there is no need to sign an oath promising to tell the truth.

In 1536, a former Dutch priest, Menno Simons, became the leader of an Anabaptist movement; following his death, in 1561, his followers adopted the name Mennists, which was later anglicized to Mennonites. By the mid-17th century, the majority of Anabaptist groups acknowledged themselves as Mennonites (University of Alberta nd). Over time, Mennonite groups subsequently split for theological, geographical or practical reasons.

In addition, two other distinct Anabaptist groups emerged, one led by Jakob Amman, whose followers became known as Amish, and the Hutterite Brethren, led by Jakob Hutter.

MENNONITE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES, NORTH NEWTON, KANSAS 67117

Menno Simons

A Life of Migration

The Anabaptists aroused fear and hostility with their radical beliefs. Rejected by both the Catholic and Protestant churches, they were forced to the fringes of society and endured widespread persecution across Europe. It was commonplace for Anabaptists to be banished from cities because of their convictions.

Migration was, in many cases, their only means of survival. Thus began their long and complicated history of relocation as a means of preserving their faith and culture. The Swiss Mennonites travelled westward and the Dutch Mennonites, more commonly known as the Russian Mennonites, journeyed eastward. The LGM population in Alberta descends from the latter group.

In 1530, religious intolerance caused Dutch–North German Anabaptists, including Menno Simons, to flee the Low Countries of western Europe to the Vistula Delta in Prussia and to Poland. Allowed to stay in these areas, the Mennonites experienced stability; it was here that *Plautdietsch*, a mixture of Dutch and the Prussian Low German dialect, became their language.

Despite the relative stability in Prussia, the Mennonites were nevertheless subject to religious and economic restrictions. For this reason, when Catherine the Great encouraged Mennonite farmers to settle in Russia (current-day Ukraine) in 1736, many resettled once again with the promise of freedom to practise their religion and to live without outside influences, and an exemption from military service. This migration began in 1788 and represented the first mass migration of the Russian Mennonites.

About 400 families established the first colony, called Chortitza or the Old Colony. Despite harsh conditions, the Mennonites in Russia experienced a measure of prosperity and grew in number to approximately 34,500 by 1859 (University of Alberta nd).

By now, Alexander II ruled Russia and he vowed that no group, including the Russian Mennonites, would have unique privileges. After years of living in isolation, the threat of forced assimilation and forced military service was real. Once again, the Russian Mennonites felt forced to look for somewhere else to live.

HTTPS://ML.BETHELKS.EDU/ISSUE/VOL-66/ARTICLE/PEACE-OR-PERSECUTION-MENNONITE-INVOLVEMENT-IN-THE/

City of Danzig and environs—European Mennonites in 1938

Migration to Canada (1890–1920)

In the late 19th century, the Dominion of Canada was seeking hardworking European farmers to help settle Manitoba, its newest province. The government sent a letter, signed on July 24, 1873 and known as the *Priviligium*, to Russian Mennonites, detailing fifteen provisions it was offering, including free land, religious and educational freedoms, and immunity from military service (Neufeld 2015). A delegation of four community leaders travelled to Canada that year and returned to Russia recommending that they resettle on the Canadian prairies.

Approximately 7,000 Russian Mennonites flooded to the Prairies, becoming the third wave of Anabaptist migrants to the Canadian Prairies (the first wave was Swiss Mennonites, who migrated to Pennsylvania and then to Canada between 1786 and 1836; the second was Amish groups who relocated to Canada from Europe and Pennsylvania between 1824 and 1874).

The Russian Mennonites settled in the 1870s in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, where they were promised a life of separation on land that had been seized from Indigenous communities. Communities settled and worked the land, but by the early 1900s, several factors were negatively affecting their lives:

- **World War I (1914–18)**—Because of their pacifist convictions, some Russian Mennonites were forced into labour camps when they refused military conscription.
- ***School Attendance Act* (Manitoba, 1916)**—This act was legislated by the government of Manitoba and required all students to attend school with a province-mandated curriculum and English as the language of instruction.

Members of some Mennonite groups, including the Old Colony Mennonites, refused the changes instituted by the Manitoba government and shunned members who sent their children to public schools. Feeling displaced once again, the Old Colony Mennonites felt pressure to relocate in order to preserve their unique culture and religious beliefs. Some travelled to Saskatchewan and others went farther afield, to Mexico and Central and South America.

DANIEL BEREHULAK FOR *THE NEW YORK TIMES*
WWW.MENNOPOLITAN.COM/SEARCH/LABEL/LOW%20GERMAN-SPEAKING%20MENNONITES%20FROM%20MEXICO

Children attended a Mennonite school in Capulín, Mexico.

Migration to Mexico

Once again, the church sent a delegation of community and church leaders to various Latin American locations, including Mexico, with hopes of finding a place to resettle. Mexico was regarded as hospitable and, in 1921, the Mexican government offered the Mennonites a *Privilegium*, similar to that which had been offered by the Dominion of Canada. Once again, the Mennonites were promised a high degree of freedom to live separately, practise their religion, maintain their own schools and remain exempt from military service.

Another mass migration ensued in the 1920s, with approximately 6,000 to 8,000 conservative Mennonites relocating to Latin America. Colonies were established in isolated regions, making it difficult for community members to leave and assimilate. Those who settled in Mexico became known as *Mexican Mennonites*.

The Return to Canada

Families began leaving their settlements in Mexico and other Latin American countries in the 1950s, when drought and a shortage of land made conditions extraordinarily difficult. Church leaders did not sanction this relocation, and felt that those who left were rejecting God, but many families felt they had no other choice.

Families continue to move to Canada today, settling in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario where the economies have been strong. Most, if not all, families still have relatives in Mexico, especially grandparents. This accounts for much of the travel to Mexico, particularly during the Easter and the Christmas season. It is also common for families to return to Mexico to attend funerals for family and friends.

Today there are several reasons LGM families may choose to resettle in Canada:

- **Economic reasons**
  Harsh conditions and lack of work in Mexico can make it difficult to earn a decent living and support a family, especially when one is a labourer without his own farm.
- **Better opportunities for children**
  Some families feel that in Canada their children will receive a better education, have better job opportunities and have access to better healthcare.
- **Canadian citizenship or permanent residency status**
  Having legal status in Canada "provides an accessible alternative resource base if family provision in the colony becomes impossible" (Gingrich 2013).
- **Drug violence in Mexico**
  The Mennonite community is not immune from the impacts of drugs and the violence that often accompanies them. Some families come to Alberta to avoid having their children affected by the drug trade.

Beliefs and Convictions

LGMs are Christians and follow a literal interpretation of the Bible, with emphasis on the New Testament. They accept that the Scriptures are the Word of God; some important beliefs are

1. Baptism upon confession of their faith to Christ
2. Communion (The Lord's Supper) honouring Christ's sacrifice
3. Washing of the saints' feet
4. Marriage
5. Ordination of elders/bishops, ministers/pastors of the Word, deacons

—Adapted from Zavada 2018

Religion is a way of life for LGMs. Life is centred on Christ, the Bible and simple living. Being obedient to community practices and beliefs is one way in which faith is expressed. A strong belief in living a life separate from the world is adhered to, although in recent decades in Alberta, some LGM community members have felt it necessary to interact with mainstream society.

MENNONITE COMMUNITY PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION, THE CONGREGATION (HM4-134 BOX 1 PHOTO 010.8-27). MENNONITE CHURCH USA ARCHIVES, GOSHEN, INDIANA.

Salem Mennonite Church in Tofield, Alberta, on August 9, 1948.

Conformity

"We've always done it that way."

LGM believe that they should live separate from the world, citing literal interpretations of Romans 12:2, "And be ye not conformed to this world," and John 17:16, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (www.kingjamesbibleonline.org). Guided by these New Testament passages to live *in* the world but not be *of* the world, LGM recognize change as moving toward the ways of the world and feel that it should therefore be avoided.

In maintaining an insular, communal lifestyle, LGMs are better able to protect their religious and cultural identities. It is generally accepted that increased contact with non-LGMs and knowledge of "worldly" affairs jeopardizes the collective LGM identity (Longhofer 1996). The Low German term *Jemeenschoft* translates as the state of living as a community in harmony separate from "the world" (Saunders-Currie 2017).

> The church and the world are distinctly separate institutions with different desires, goals, and accomplishments. Christians are not to be conformed to the world. God has set forth a clear standard of righteousness, which must not be compromised by worldly dress, amusements, or other worldly attractions. Entertainment provided by movies, musical instruments, radio, television, and the improper use of the internet detract from the sanctity and simplicity of one's spiritual life in Christ and should be avoided. (Church of God in Christ, Mennonite 2018)

In the collectivistic culture of LGM communities, focus is on the spiritual well-being of the group. Individualism is believed to cause tension and, in extreme cases, nonconformity may result in excommunication from a community.

An emphasis is placed on tradition and the familiar, as can be seen as the important Low German phrase *Soo est daut emma jewast* (We've always done it that way).

Depending on the level of conservatism, the following ethnocultural markers may distinguish LGMs:

- *Plautdietsch* language (Low German dialect)
- Traditional dress
- Distinct gender roles
- Structured daily routines
- Education by the church
- Geographically separate settlements

The Church

Mennonites believe that in order to live the Word of God, not only must one be active in the church; one must also live out one's beliefs in the community. Religion is a way of life, and the church is the focus of the community. Most LGMs worship in church each Sunday, commonly with men seated on one side and women on the other. While services differ depending on the church, a typical church service includes prayers led by the minister, a sermon and congregational a cappella singing. Singing is a very important part of worship. Depending on the level of conservatism observed, children may attend Sunday school or a youth group within the church. Sunday is a day of rest, and work is forbidden.

The Structure of the Church

This structure may vary depending on the denomination. Males hold each of these positions.

Bishop

- This position is elected for life
- Administers the ordination of pastors and deacons, baptism, marriage and the Lord's Supper (communion)
- Oversees the local congregation

Minister/Pastor

- This position is elected for life
- Assists the bishop in his duties
- Preaches in church on Sundays
- Offers pastoral care to community members (caring for, visiting, comforting, counselling and so forth)

Deacon

- This position is elected for life
- Guides community members wishing to become members of the church
- Keeps birth records
- Allocates funds to families in need

Song Leaders

- Lead singing at Sunday services, funerals and weddings

Mennonite Denominations

As evidenced by the numerous branches of Mennonites around the world, history has seen many internal divisions within groups. This is equally true of LGMs in Alberta. Each denomination has unique characteristics and exhibits its Mennonite identity and practises its faith across a broad spectrum; however, all are descendants of the Old Colony or Russian Mennonites and all have the same principal beliefs (Wiebe 2014a).

CHURCH DENOMINATION	DEGREE OF OBSERVANCE	WORSHIP
Old Colony Sommerfelder	Most religiously and culturally conservative.	• Sunday services • Worship in High and Low German • Sunday school; some have youth groups
Friedensfelder (Peace Valley) Reinlander Kleine Gemeinde	Moderately traditional religiously and culturally.	• Sunday services • Worship in Low German or a combination of Low German and English • Sunday school and youth groups
Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference (EMMC) Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC)	Most religiously and culturally progressive, influenced by Evangelical faith and culture. May appear indistinguishable from non-Mennonites.	• Sunday services • Worship in mostly English • Sunday school, youth groups and youth events outside the church

Marriage and Family

The LGM community views marriage as a biblical covenant, an agreement between God and his people, and as such it is a sacred, lifelong commitment. Marriage is accepted only as the union of a man and a woman.

While practices vary by community and even by family, dating rituals typically begin around age 16 or 17 and are relatively short lived. It is common for families to set aside times for visiting with friends and relatives on Wednesday evenings and after church on Sundays. During this time, groups of youth usually spend time together socializing, and matches are often made, usually with friends or neighbours (Mennonite Central Committee [MCC] Ontario 2014d). Don't be surprised if your students are tired or absent from school on Mondays and Thursdays, as visiting often goes late into the evenings and may or may not include alcoholic beverages, even for youth.

In some communities, familial and church approval of a union is necessary. Both partners take baptismal classes and are baptized (and therefore become members of the church) before the wedding.

Marriage is as sacred a ritual as baptism and takes place at the church in front of the whole congregation. The ceremony is similar to a regular Sunday service, with many songs and hymns, and is followed by a large reception involving the whole community. Friends, food and fellowship abound, and gifts are given to the couple.

Common-law marriages are not accepted within the LGM community.

Independence from the family and the creation of a new household typically accompany marriage. Unlike the dominant culture [in Canada], there is no concept of a young adult venturing out into the world to seek their identity prior to marriage.

LGMs accept the institutions of marriage and family as divine and part of God's plan. Large families are embraced because children are seen as gifts from God. For most, birth control is understood as sinful, although some families do consider family planning if a physician recommends it for health reasons.

Traditional families have very structured routines and practices within the home. For example, mealtimes are at set times, and there are scheduled daily chores, scheduled weekly tasks and so on. Less conservative families may not adhere to such structure.

Family members have a strong commitment and duty to one another and maintain close relationships. Decisions are made in the best interests of the family unit rather than those of individual members. As Wiebe notes, "[d]iscipline is commonly handled by the father in a typical Mennonite home. If a child is disciplined at school, this will generally be supported by most parents and reinforced at home" (Wiebe 2014b).

Gender Roles

Gender roles in LGM communities are distinct. From a young age, girls are taught homemaking skills and boys are taught to work the land. Examples of important roles of females are childbearing, childrearing, cooking, cleaning, sewing, quilting and some outside chores. Examples of important roles of males are breadwinner, working outside of the home, leadership roles within the church, farming/labour and outside chores.

SUPPLIED BY REDCLIFF MENNONITE ALTERNATIVE OUTREACH PROGRAM (RMAP) SCHOOL

Culture

Most cultures are dynamic, but over hundreds of years LGM communities have steadfastly and successfully worked to keep theirs static. In ultraconservative communities, few things have changed about their closed, communal lifestyle across the centuries. In recent decades, however, some cultural shifts are emerging.

ISTOCK

Farmers' Market with local Mennonite farming communities

Language

Plautdietsch, or Low German, is the language spoken in the home and community and is recognized as God's language. High German is used in church services and taught at school. *Plautdietsch* is an important expression of the LGM ethnoreligious identity.

Low German is mainly a spoken language, so alternative spellings exist. It is common for parents to have limited or no English skills. They may also have limited language skills in German because they are taught only to read the Bible in German.

Clothing

An obvious characteristic of traditional LGMs is their clothing, recognizable throughout history and emphasizing the simplicity of life. Their distinctive, plain clothing helps mark LGM communities as separate from mainstream society and acts as a way to engender modesty. Vanity is seen to take away from the simplicity of Christianity and is therefore considered by many to be sinful. LGM apparel generally does not include bright colours, jewellery or cosmetics.

Women's Attire

Women and girls typically wear long, dark print dresses, which are often homemade. Dresses cover up to the neck, go past the elbows and are always worn below the knees. Some females wear a *Düak* (a devotional head covering) for prayer, as a sign of submission to God and as a symbol of their status in the community as baptized and/or married. It is believed that the head covering ensures that God hears their prayers. Female members of the church do not cut their hair. It is believed to represent love and it is often worn tied back.

Men's Attire

Men and boys generally wear dark, loose-fitting pants with button-up shirts that are usually tucked into their pants. It is common for men and boys to wear a hat or cap, except for prayer, when it is removed as a sign of reverence for God.

You may notice less conservative Mennonites wearing clothing much like their non-Mennonite peers, although it is generally still not flashy, bright or revealing.

Emotional Expression

At times, your LGM students may appear to show a flat demeanour and may be reluctant to discuss feelings. Children are typically taught to behave in a manner in which emotion is contained. They may speak about feelings and events in a factual and blunt manner; for example, a child might say "My grandma died," without seeming to attach any emotion to the statement. This should not be misinterpreted as a lack of emotion. In fact, LGM have a wonderful sense of humour and see humour across many contexts.

SUPPLIED BY RMAP SCHOOL

Girl's attire

Food and Drink

Food is an important component of Mennonite culture because meals emphasize the strong connection to community. Potluck meals with community members are common and provide opportunities to share delicious food, share news, discuss events and celebrate.

A traditional LGM family enjoys four meals daily: breakfast (typically sweet foods), lunch, dinner and an evening meal called *faspa* (typically sweet foods).

Common foods are fried meat, vegetables, homemade canned pickles, beet soup (*borscht*), fruit soup (*kledermusse*), cottage cheese perogies (*veraniki*), *schmaundt fat* (cream gravy), bread, buns and pastries. Double buns are often eaten at special occasions. Many families also eat homemade Mexican cuisine, such as salsa, avocado, tamales, enchiladas, burritos and tacos. Much of it is deep fried. Processed foods common in the dominant culture are also frequently consumed.

The conservative LGM community disapproves of alcohol and tobacco and regards them as temptations; however, some choose to consume either or both.

Music

Song, particularly singing in unison, is fundamental to worship in LGM communities. Some groups still use the *Ausbund*, a Swiss Brethren hymnal originally published in 1564. In some communities musical accompaniment is not permitted, while in others it is.

Holy Days—Helje Doag

Families attend church services and gather with extended family to observe these important religious days. Christmas, Easter and Pentecost celebrations often continue over three days and are referred to as the first, second and third day of the holiday. Most students will not attend school on these days. (Note: the first spelling of each Holy Day is Low German and the second is High German.)

ISTOCK

Veraniki (cottage cheese perogies)

Christmas—Wiehnacht/Weihnachten
(December 25, 26, 27)

Most families prefer to observe only the religious aspect of Christmas, honouring the birth of Christ. Children sometimes set out a bowl on Christmas Eve and find it full of small gifts from Nätklos in the morning. Adorning a tree is generally not customary, because it contradicts the need for simplicity. Some families acknowledge the mainstream idea of Santa Claus.

Epiphany—Helje Dree Kjeenijch/ Heilige Drei Koenige (January 6)

Honours the visit of the three wise men to Jesus.

Good Friday—Stelle Friedach, and Easter—Oostren (Sunday, Monday, Tuesday)

These days are typically observed from the religious point of view, reflecting on the death of Jesus. Some families accept the mainstream ideas of the Easter bunny (the *Oosta Hos*) and Easter eggs.

Ascension—Himmelfoat/Himmelfahrt
(Sixth Thursday after Easter)

Commemorates the ascension of Jesus into Heaven.

Pentecost—Pinjsten/Pfingsten (Seventh Sunday after Easter and the following Monday and Tuesday)

Celebrating Christ's spirit descending, seen by some as the birth of the Christian church. Pentecost is often an important time for baptisms.

Other Days of Interest

Valentine's Day is not a celebration that all will participate in. Some students will bring cards or small gifts for classmates, while others will not participate at all or be absent on this day.

Halloween and related activities are usually discouraged and can be very sensitive topics for many LGM families.

Remembrance Day

Many LGM families disapprove of activities related to Remembrance Day because they often focus on the military aspect of the day, which contradicts their conviction of pacifism.

School Picture Day

Not all students will be able to have their picture taken. Some families will allow their child to be in the class photo but not have an individual photo taken.

Funerals

Students will typically be absent from school, because whole families attend funerals of community members. Funerals generally take place three days following a death.

Butchering

Older children will often miss school for butchering.

Cultural Customs

Building your cultural competence and learning about the cultural uniqueness of your LGM students and families is critical to cultivating trust and relationships. It is important to recognize that behind parents' apprehension about certain topics or activities is a strong desire for their children to maintain their cultural and religious beliefs and a fear of losing them to mainstream culture. Open dialogue with parents may help to alleviate these worries.

Cultural customs vary widely depending on the degree of conservatism the family observes, but some LGM families

- pray before and after mealtimes and refrain from reading or watching TV/movies during mealtimes (at home and school);
- may be hesitant to allow their children to swim, skate and/or attend field trips (for fear of water or lack of knowledge about these activities);
- generally do not accept co-ed swimming for children, beginning at 9 or 10 years of age;
- disapprove of using musical instruments and do not allow dance;
- segregate themselves at public events, males on one side and females and children on the other; and
- have husbands speak on behalf of their wives in public; this shouldn't be misinterpreted as women not having the opportunity to voice their opinions—important decisions are usually made together.

Note that girls may feel more comfortable wearing their dresses in gym class. Some students will participate on school sports teams and may modify their dress (for example, pants instead of shorts for girls).

Cultural Etiquette

There are many ways in which non-Mennonite staff can demonstrate their sensitivity to LGM beliefs and culture, some of which include

- wearing modest clothing, avoiding low-cut and sleeveless tops and short skirts;
- avoiding boldly or wildly coloured hair;
- covering tattoos and piercings;
- refraining from acknowledging the pregnancy of a woman;
- understanding that women are not to be alone with men and vice versa;
- refraining from swearing or using the terms *Mexican Mennonite* and *Oh my god!* because they can be deeply offensive; and
- not interrupting, which can be insulting.

Work

Historically, the LGM community has been known for its resourcefulness and strong work ethic. Families, including children, work together as economic units. Children are seen as capable and are given familial responsibilities far before some of their peers in the dominant culture. It is expected that the wages of older children contribute to the family's finances for as long as they live at home or until they get married.

Like their *Ackermaun* (farmer) ancestors, today's LGM families highly value an agrarian lifestyle. Subsistence agriculture is considered unifying, a way to work as a family unit. Drawn to the farmlands of Alberta, most LGM men find work in the agricultural sector where they can work with their hands. Many work as farm labourers on potato, onion, sugar beet and dairy farms, at feedlots, and at seeding and livestock operations. Most of these jobs are seasonal, resulting in unemployment for parts of the year. Though some in mainstream society perceive those who work the land as unmotivated and unskilled labourers, for the LGMs, blue-collar work enables them to carry past traditions into the present day.

SUPPLIED BY RMAP SCHOOL

Building a barn

Despite a tradition of being highly skilled in farming, once in Alberta, LGM men are increasingly dependent on lower-wage jobs, rather than working their own land as they once did. Families may enter a cycle of low-paying work, poverty and the reality of financial stress, yet some LGM note that they still experience a higher standard of living here compared to that on a Mexican colony.

Other LGM secure construction or manufacturing jobs (road building, welding, fabrication and so forth) and in some parts of the province, more LGM work in these sectors than in the agricultural sector. Like farm labour jobs, these positions are usually seasonal, and LGM families often return to Mexico or other Latin American countries in the off-season.

SUPPLIED BY RMAP SCHOOL

Milking a cow

Education

For centuries, LGM have seen education by the church and family as a means of accomplishing separation from "the world." Education from outside sources has been met with enduring distrust. It is accepted that basic education, which consists of learning to read the Bible in German, the catechism and sacred hymns, is adequate for a humble way of life and too much education is a burden (Gingrich 2013). The emphasis on faith, family and work takes priority over higher education.

Many parents attended colony schools in Mexico prior to their arrival in Alberta and some did not attend school at all and may be illiterate in Low German. Those who attended Mexican colony schools likely completed their education around age 11 and some sooner. There were frequently gaps in instruction when students had to work.

Not all LGM in Alberta attend public schools. Strong misgivings about the education system mean that some children are home schooled, while others attend church-sponsored "congregant" schools modelled after colony schools in Mexico (groups of home-schooled students taught together) set up by the community; still others are part of the "invisible youth" and receive no formal schooling. Some LGM students are transnational and travel between Canada and another country.

SUPPLIED BY RMAP SCHOOL

Taking the school bus

Parents who send their children to a public school often experience significant internal conflict. They unequivocally want the best for their children and recognize that in Canada that means receiving an education, but they deeply wish to sustain their culture and faith through their children. Even learning English can be seen as an encroachment on traditional religious and cultural boundaries.

Traditional Mennonite Colony Schools in Mexico

Students	• Begin school at age six • Girls receive six years of schooling and boys seven or eight years
Teacher	• Male community member • Little to no formal teacher training • Works under the supervision of the minister • Low-status position
Curriculum	• Basic reading, writing and math • Learn to read and write in High German • Learn to read and handwrite blackletter Gothic script
Resources	• The High German Bible (Old and New Testaments), the catechism, *Gesangbuch* (hymnbook), *Fibel* (primary reader)
Methodology	• Rote learning
Classroom	• One room • Boys sit on one side, girls on the other
School year	• Six to seven months

Health

In LGM communities it is traditionally the family's responsibility to teach children about health concepts. When teaching or talking about health-related topics with your LGM students and parents, it is helpful to consider their unique background, knowledge and experiences in this context.

In relation to LGM health and health care practices, the Mennonite Central Committee Canada notes the following:

- Medical checkups/physicals are often not routinely practised.
- Some families are reluctant to share medical diagnoses.
- Immunizing children for communicable diseases has become a more readily accepted practice; however, there may be gaps in immunizations.
- Speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and counsellors have not traditionally been accessible. Consequently, the relevance and benefits of these services within the Canadian context are unknown; families may be afraid to accept support services and therefore decline the services without comprehending the potential benefits for themselves or their children.
- A clean home is a highly valued sign of being a good mother and housewife.
- Though cleanliness is valued, the understanding of what makes something clean or dirty may differ from current Canadian norms. For example, multiple people may use the same bath water and towels or share utensils while eating or drinking.
- LGM families value nourishing meals and eating together. Providing substantial meals that are made from basic ingredients (flour, eggs, milk, potatoes and meat) is very important to the identity of being a good mother and wife. However, understanding of the nutritional value of food items is minimal. Many schools model healthy eating choices by implementing a healthy snack and/or lunch program.
- Some LGM families have limited oral hygiene practices and may experience barriers to accessing professional dental care (cultural differences, limited language abilities, financial restrictions and so forth).
- Personal hygiene practices, such as showering regularly, and body odour may be an issue for some of your students. Be sensitive when discussing this issue with parents, because some may become defensive and feel that you are criticizing their ability to take care of their children.
- Alcohol use, smoking and drug abuse are present within the Low German population.

Adapted from MCC Ontario 2014a

Historically, health issues were attended to within the LGM community. Today, most LGM parents prefer to keep with this practice. Over-the-counter herbal remedies, referred to as "medications" within the community, are frequently used. Families favour visiting LGM "massage therapists" and "chiropractors" over certified health practitioners. The overwhelming majority of these "massage therapists" and "chiropractors" are self-appointed and do not have official credentials.

Sports

Recognize that some of your families may allow their children to participate in competitive school sports (for example, volleyball and basketball teams) and others may not. Some families are agreeable to their children playing team sports within the school, seeing it as being "for fun," but may not support the competitive nature of interschool competitions and the trophies, ribbons and medals that often accompany them. Some girls who participate in sporting activities choose to wear their dresses, while others wear pants.

SUPPLIED BY RMAP SCHOOL

In the gym

SUPPLIED BY RMAP SCHOOL

Reframing Challenges as Opportunities

Alberta classrooms are complex environments, and LGM students share commonalities with students across the province. However, your LGM students also face unique challenges and opportunities, and it is essential to understand these in order to provide welcoming and supportive learning environments, facilitating the success of each student.

Many of your LGM students are among the first in their families to attend public school, and perhaps any school. The world view and lifestyle of LGM families generally do not fit well into the structure and value system of mainstream public schools and, in sending their children, LGM parents have made significant accommodations to their cultural and religious beliefs.

With this in mind, which of the following challenges do your LGM students identify with and how can you help make them feel safe and comfortable in your classroom?

Challenge: Language

Students are often complex English language learners (CELLs). Some may be foreign born and others Canadian born. Most are learning two languages simultaneously and have parents with limited English language skills. Many experience difficulty with academic language, particularly in science and social studies.

This can be an opportunity to

- ensure that you engage in thorough assessments (informal and formal), identifying student strengths and areas for growth;
- focus on literacy, targeting strategies to learners and finding an intervention program that works for your school (such as levelled literacy intervention or an ESL teacher);
- explicitly preteach and reinforce subject-specific vocabulary;
- promote the use of students' first language—encourage students to share their ideas and responses in Low German and have a more proficient speaker share them with the class;
- teach students the value of maintaining their first language;
- check often for understanding;
- involve service providers from outside of the school (for example, the Mennonite Central Committee, immigrant-serving organizations); however, be aware that in conservative LGM groups, the church is the social system of the colony and people may not be accustomed to working with outside agencies;
- organize English language classes for parents, ideally at the school;

Culturally responsive teachers know their students well and build on students' prior knowledge, stretching them beyond the familiar in a safe and encouraging classroom environment. They value the diverse knowledge and experiences students bring to class rather than seeing differences as problems to be overcome. They facilitate respect and empathy among students as members of a diverse society.

(Glaze, Mattingley and Levin 2012)

- organize Low German classes for school staff; and
- watch *your* language. A phrase like *Oh my god!* can be highly offensive to some LGM students and their families. It's best to refer to your students as *children*, because the word *kids* may be disrespectful for some parents.

Below are some common issues that arise as LGM students learn English. Consider direct teaching and continuous reinforcement in these areas:

- English consonant sounds are often confused with Low German and High German consonant sounds:
  - Confusion of the *ch* and *sh* sounds
  - Students may say *shair* instead of *chair*, *ships* instead of *chips, shop wood* instead of *chop wood*
- Capitalization of nouns within sentences (as is done in German)
  - Students may write *The Dog ran toward the Fence*.
- Incorrect subject–verb order
  - Students may write a direct translation from German—*We will to the store go*.
- Number reversals
  - 28 in German is *achtundzwanzig*, which translates as *eight and twenty*, so children often say and write 82.

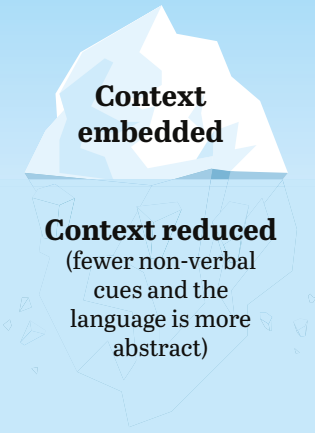
BICS and CALP

Most second language learners become adept in basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) within one to two years. This means that they can navigate social conversations with their peers quite easily and chat about things in their everyday environment. It is common to mistake this conversational proficiency for language mastery, particularly in Canadian-born English language learners. A high level of BICS does not result in academic success, despite the appearance of these learners being fluent in English.

Until learners reach a high level of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), they will likely experience academic difficulty. CALP takes five to seven years to develop. "[T]his type of language is substantially different from the English we use in everyday spoken interactions and it is, therefore, not only a lot more difficult to understand, it is also much more challenging for ESL students to carry over and produce that language in their written assignments or 'to use' during discussions" (Meyers 1993).

Adapted from Ontario Ministry of Education 2013

Cummins's Iceberg Theory



BICS Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills

The language necessary for day to day living, including conversations with friends, informal interaction

CALP Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

The language necessary to understand and discuss content in the classroom

Did you know?

Low German Mennonites may have three or more names. A common name is used socially and another name may be used for documentation purposes (MCC Ontario 2017b). All school staff should be aware of these name variations.

Challenge: Limited Formal Schooling

Many of your LGM students have limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). Some older students and their parents have never attended school and, because of their belief in living separately from "the world," your LGM students may arrive in your classroom with limited background knowledge and experience in comparison to their non-Mennonite peers. Parents often have low literacy levels or are illiterate in English and perhaps also in Low German.

This can be an opportunity to

- learn about your students and their families—ask questions about beliefs and practices and understand that these may vary from family to family;
- engage your students with hands-on, experiential learning activities and use high-interest literature and resources;
- help your students make connections between their personal and cultural experiences and what you're teaching—doing this as a staff and with district consultants may be beneficial; and
- reassure your students that they are capable learners.

Did you know?

In traditional colony schools in Latin America, students are often assigned seats based on their ability—students who do well academically are typically seated on the aisles, while those who struggle are seated near the walls.

Challenge: Gaps in Education

Access to continuous education is often limited due to work and travel. It is common for your students to be absent from school to work at home and in the fields. Some parents tolerate their children's attendance at school in exchange for working to help support the family financially, often during the summer and harvesting time (September/October).

In addition, many LGM families return to Mexico seasonally to work and connect with family. This migration cycle follows an agricultural timeline, not the school year. Many will begin the school year in September, be absent during the winter months and return in the spring.

This can be an opportunity to

- establish flexible schedules that accommodate the need to balance education and work (for example, develop individual student plans addressing the timing and location of learning);
- understand and accept that parental decisions about attendance may relate to differences in priorities, values and familial goals for their children;
- provide individualized programming using Universal Design for Learning (UDL), modifying and adapting instruction as needed;
- focus on essential learning outcomes and create learning activities/assignments that address multiple key outcomes; and
- build review into each lesson and check frequently for understanding.

Challenge: Low High School Completion Rates

While the number of LGM students in Alberta has drastically increased and continues to do so, compared to their non-Mennonite peers, LGM students have a very low rate of high school completion. It is common for students to leave school prior to Grade 9 (boys often work as farm labourers and girls often stay home to care for younger siblings). Some in the LGM community feel that a high school diploma is unnecessary for their lifestyle, despite the potential job opportunities and financial benefits. Others recognize the benefits of completing high school.

This can be an opportunity to

- offer choice and blended instruction (direct instruction and self-directed programs) to allow flexibility in the timing, pace and location of learning;
- develop and nurture trusting relationships with students and parents in order to demonstrate that rather than threatening, the curriculum you are teaching is relevant and practical and can fit into their lifestyle and belief system;
- communicate to parents that you are choosing culturally appropriate resources;
- reinforce your intent to "not change [them] but to support [them] in who [they] are and give [them] … new tools so that [they] can … hang on to that even better" (Brubacher 2016); and
- include church elders and men in discussions—permission and acceptance from the community is essential for the success of your students (Kulig 1995).

Challenge: Cultural Crossroads

The LGM families you work with are at different stages in their lives in Canada and on their journey into how best to educate their children. Many LGM parents are facing an overwhelming cultural shift. LGM parents' decision to send their children to a public school is onerous. There are strong fears associated with this decision, including the fear that school will cause their children to compromise their beliefs and that they will lose their children to the dominant culture.

Young LGMs in Alberta are negotiating their identity like no other LGM generation before. Those in the public school system, especially, find themselves navigating two distinct world views. Many of your LGM students find themselves caught between two cultures and a blend of values and interests. Their emergent identities may cause them to feel as though their sense of morality is being challenged. Within the confines of the family and church, right and wrong is very straightforward. On the one hand, family and the church teach them that the "other world" poses a threat to their spiritual integrity and that they must leave school at Grade 8 or 9 to contribute to the family. On the other hand, school staff emphasizes the importance

Moving On

Transitioning from elementary to junior high and on to high school can be challenging for many students and particularly difficult for some LGM students. It is common for LGM students at these transition points to leave school to work. You can help facilitate a successful transition for your LGM students from division to division or school to school by involving students and their families, and considering some of these transition strategies:

- Partner with feeder schools for special projects, sports teams, presentations and so on.
- Ask the student and family about what they need to make the transition.
- Hold transition meetings with students and parents.
- Accompany students and their parents to the new school, allowing them to see where it is located, gain a sense of the school's environment and meet the students and staff. Discuss the logistics of students getting to the new school, even if it is close to your school.
- Attend events at other schools with the purpose of connecting with prospective students and their families—go to them to begin building trust and relationships.
- Host information events for prospective students and families at a location they are familiar with, possibly at their current school.
- Invite high school students and other members of the LGM community who have continued their education to speak to your students and families.
- Consider expanding your school's programming, reducing the number of school-to-school transitions.

of education and completing their schooling. This may cause a great deal of intergenerational stress.

Many of your LGM students want to be in school, which in and of itself is contradictory to their community's beliefs. In addition, non-Mennonite peers may act, dress and speak differently, participate in different activities, and so on, and this can add a great deal of stress to LGM youth who may feel pressure to blend in.

This can be an opportunity to

- build and nurture relationships with your students, helping them to make decisions that adhere to their cultural and religious beliefs;
- plan activities that provide an opportunity to learn about and celebrate the unique cultures of all your students;
- create safe, inclusive, culturally sensitive and culturally empowering classrooms and schools in which LGM students and their families can feel that their beliefs, thoughts and concerns are valued;
- enhance cultural identity by teaching LGM history (consider inviting a church elder to speak and/or involving him in the planning of lessons about history and the LGM story); and
- collaborate with staff at other schools in your jurisdiction.

Challenge: A Marginalized Religious Ethnic Minority

Dating to the Radical Reformation in the 1500s, the Anabaptists have been regarded as radicals, shunned and persecuted. Regrettably, LGMs living in Alberta experience prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination in the "English" world. This occurs at school, at work and in the greater community. It has been so impactful that some LGM youth abandon school due to ostracization.

Mexican Mennonite was once used to describe Old Colony Mennonites who migrated to Mexico. While some people use the terms *Mexican Mennonite* and *Low German-speaking Mennonite* interchangeably, there are good reasons not to do so:

- Many Low German-speaking Mennonites have had *Mexican Mennonite* used as a derogatory term against them; hence, it may be deeply offensive to some.
- Many Low German-speaking Mennonites have never lived in Mexico; some were born in Canada and some have come from other countries in Latin America.
- Even the Low German-speaking Mennonites in Mexico have only been there for a few generations; before that, they lived in Canada, and before that in Russia and in Prussia.
- They are far more likely to use terms like *German* or *Dietsch* to describe themselves than *Mexican*.

Rather than *Are you a Mexican Mennonite?* try

- *Are you Low German speaking?* or
- *Are you from the Mennonite community?*

This can be an opportunity to

- advocate for your students and their families outside of the school community, sharing the many strengths of the LGM culture and working to reduce misunderstandings about their community;
- teach about cultural identity, minorities, diversity, discrimination, tolerance and empathy;
- show your LGM students and families with words and actions that you value and respect them, that they belong and that it matters that they come to school;
- be explicit and reinforce that your intent is not to assimilate LGM students or make them more like the "English," but rather that you wish to work with students to provide opportunities to help them have a quality life in Canada;
- reinforce the value of a strong cultural identity in lessons and schoolwide activities;
- intentionally use inclusive language and expect your students to do the same;
- make it clear that discriminatory behaviour and language will not be tolerated; and
- learn to recognize the signs that your students are experiencing discrimination and take action.

Challenge: Challenges Parents May Encounter

Some LGM parents may lack a basic understanding of the public school system in Alberta, which may influence their involvement in and communication with the school. Our school system is complex and can be complicated to navigate.

Undoubtedly, you have noticed how much paperwork is involved in our school system. When school communications are sent home, students may have to read it to their parents. As a result, students gain the opportunity to influence parents' decisions, depending on how things are translated. Students may also sign for parents at times as "the act of writing their name [is] a performative act of great importance among LGMs and not to be taken lightly" (Kampen Robinson 2017).

This can be an opportunity to

- organize a welcome-back BBQ at the beginning of the school year (provide food at all events, if possible);
- host information events for parents and community members with visuals and interpreters;
- talk with parents directly; and
- arrange for home visits.

Challenge: Isolation

Many LGM sacrificed family networks and close-knit church communities when they moved to Alberta. This has led to intense isolation and loneliness in some cases, particularly for women whose English is limited and who may not know other Mennonite women.

This can be an opportunity to

- focus on relationship building with the community and creating opportunities at school for community fellowship; and
- demonstrate support for a Mom and Tots group at the school (talk to staff from a Parent Link Centre to organize emergent literacy activities).

Sensitive Topics

When working with LGM students, be mindful that some content may be objectionable. Consult your administration if you are in doubt, because each school may approach these topics in a different manner depending on the individual students and families in your community. Teaching materials should be viewed through religious and cultural lenses prior to their use. Communicate to parents early on that their children can be exempt from the human sexuality unit and other activities that may be objectionable, such as dance. Alternate activities should be provided to exempted students. The following topics are sensitive:

- **Sexuality and reproductive health, pregnancy and LGBTQ**
  Pregnancy is generally not acknowledged, although some children may share that their mother is expecting. Try to respond in a low-key manner if you experience this.
- **Biology**
  Conversations and lessons involving biology should be conducted in a highly sensitive manner. Carefully consider vocabulary and alternative ways of explaining terms (for example, *sexual* and *asexual reproduction*). Share resources with parents prior to teaching.
- **Divorce, common-law and same-sex relationships**
  At times there are clear separations of spouses, but divorce is not an option for the LGM community. Common-law and same-sex relationships are not recognized.
- **Other religions, alternative biblical interpretations, atheism and agnosticism**
  Consider prefacing these topics with a phrase such as *I know this is not what you believe, but some people believe …*

Sex and sexuality are extremely private and sensitive topics, even within the LGM community. There are no Low German words for the sexual organs, although some slang exists.

- **Snakes**
  Avoid anything related to snakes (for example, Snakes and Ladders, books and so on), because LGM believe they are associated with the devil.
- **Dinosaurs**
  At some schools, dinosaurs may be explored as a theme in the early years in a generic way; however, at other schools this topic should be avoided altogether.
- **Magic, witches, vampires, goblins, ghosts, monsters**
  These are believed to be associated with evil. Be mindful not only of Halloween and associated activities, but also of books that include these topics and/or illustrations of them (for example, *Harry Potter; The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*; and similar books).
- **Evolution**
  Faith and science are not blended in LGM communities, as they are in some progressive Mennonite denominations. The LGM faith accepts the theory of creationism, not evolution, and it is accepted that "God created and sustains the Cosmos" (Eastern Mennonite University 2016). However, the Biology 20 curriculum includes concepts related to evolutionary biology. If you teach Biology 20 or other curricular areas in which evolution is a topic, clearly present the concept to

LGM students as one theory or alternate view that some people hold. You may wish to use phrases like *Some people believe …* or *I know you do not believe in this but there are people who think that …*

- **Space**
  The LGM accept that the universe includes planets, moons and stars, but because of their strong belief that God created the earth and heaven, most have no reason to question and explore space. For example, when teaching sky science, try to present content in a general way, focusing on outcomes using a cultural lens. Refrain from discussing space travel, including humans landing on the moon.

The School Library

Schools with LGM students should be mindful of the contents of their library collections. Staff should work to examine existing collections, noting materials with unsuitable content or illustrations. This may include anything that may be perceived as scary, including but not limited to violence, war, guns, monsters and aliens.

In addition, comic books and graphic novels are often perceived to depict unsuitable content and/or illustrations, so carefully consider this genre. Materials related to holiday themes (Santa, reindeer, the Easter bunny and so forth) are also seen as inappropriate to the LGM community. Books such as *Alligator Baby*, by Robert Munsch, are also unsuitable (it alludes to pregnancy). Refer to the "Sensitive Topics" section on page 30.

Care should also be taken when acquiring new materials for the library; teachers, look through your personal collections as well!

Be aware that some parents do not want their children to bring home library books, because their belief is that school work should remain at school and that reading at home interferes with children attending to their chores.

ISTOCK

Drama/Pretending to be Something Else

You may find your LGM students to be very literal and factual, particularly when telling a story. As a result, many perceive acting and roleplaying activities as lying—"Why would anyone pretend to be someone they're not?" For example, at a field trip to the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, LGM students may believe that the costumed staff recreating early Ukrainian settler life are really Ukrainian settlers, and be puzzled upon learning they are just pretending, not understanding *why*.

Technology

Some conservative Mennonite parents are strongly opposed to technology, seeing it as incompatible with their religious principles. For others, the use of technology is strongly guarded but becoming more prevalent. Many schools have specific policies and practices in place regarding technology and its use with their LGM students. It is best to explain your use of technology with parents prior to its use in the classroom. When determining how to incorporate information and communication technology (ICT) outcomes into your program, plan to explicitly teach the safe use of technology and share with families how you will do so. Also, remember the principles of Universal Design for Learning: multiple means of *representation, expression and engagement*—there are many ways that outcomes can be taught in lessons if there are limits on the technology your LGM students may use.

ISTOCK

Many LGM families have technologies such as cell phones, televisions, radios and coffee makers.

Homework

Be flexible and understanding with homework. Know that outside of school hours, LGM students are often expected to complete chores and work at home. Because of this, some parents may discourage homework, and students may not have an opportunity to complete assignments. Some parents may also feel frustrated if they are unable to help their children with homework.

If you must send homework, try to explain the benefit of the work to both students and parents, and explain why it needs to be completed at home. Homework should be uncomplicated.

Before assigning homework, it may help to consider these questions:

- Is the homework meaningful?
- Is the homework necessary?
- Does the homework address specific curricular outcomes?

An alternative to homework is arranging for time within the school day for students to complete assignments with the support of school staff or peer tutors.

When students are absent for extended periods, do not assign homework and expect them to catch up. Continue to work with students where they are at, understanding that they may not finish the curriculum.

What Else Can I Do?

Celebrate what you are already doing to support your LGM students! Without question, you are incorporating many best teaching practices that support your LGM students in their learning journey.

Consider your own cultural biases. We all have a cultural lens through which we view the world. Work to avoid stereotypes and assumptions you may have about the LGM community and embrace differences. Encourage your students to do the same. Yes, you are a teacher, but what can you learn from your LGM students and their families?

Reflect on your own areas for growth. Perhaps you have limited experience interacting with those coming from different linguistic, cultural and/or religious backgrounds. Create a plan that addresses your needs and increases your capacity to help your LGM students succeed.

Collaborate with other classroom teachers to address the needs of your LGM students.

Find out what resources are available to you in your school and school jurisdiction. Together with your school staff, you may wish to build a school learning team. This team may include

- staff at your school and/or at neighbouring schools;
- Low German liaison workers in your school jurisdiction;
- parents, community members and church elders;
- interpreters from within the LGM community;
- district consultants;
- speech language pathologists (SLPs), occupational therapists (OTs) and/or physical therapists (PTs) from your school district; and/or
- other service providers, such as Alberta Health Services and the Mennonite Central Committee.

Schoolwide Approaches for Promoting Student Success

There are many things your school can do to facilitate the success of your LGM students:

- Establish a team of Low German-speaking student volunteers who take new students on a tour of the school (highlighting washrooms and other important locations).
- Create a visual welcome book for LGM students and their families. Include photos of the staff and of locations within the school, with simple labels and identifying sentences under each picture. Encourage your students to take this book home to share it with their families.
- Create a visual timetable with pictures representing subjects. Add visuals to lessons and include hands-on activities.
- Be flexible—engage in parallel programming when regular goals are unachievable. Adjust assessments so that the pressure of written curriculum is alleviated. Use resources such as speech-to-text software and websites like TumbleBooks, an interactive read-aloud site with a vast collection of e-books (www.tumblebooklibrary.com). Use real-life items and situations to explain concepts.
- Talk with parents and community representatives to determine how the expectations of your school can fit with community beliefs and expectations.
- Involve the broader LGM community by hosting regular meetings with your school administration, bishops and ministers. Minimize agenda items.
- Encourage members of the LGM community to be a part of your school council.
- Organize regular school-sponsored events, such as information evenings or community coffee meetings, to engage the community and provide parents with information about a range of topics. Provide childcare and food.
- Provide Low German interpreters and/or materials that have been translated.
- Consider offering English language classes for parents at your school.
- Schedule events after the farming season and ensure that childcare is available. Wednesdays may not be a suitable evening for events, because families often set these evenings aside for visiting.

Adapted from MCC Ontario 2014e

The following is an example of a schoolwide intervention plan.

Mennonite Alternative Program

Continuum of Supports and Services

Tier 1: Classroom Instruction	Tier 2: Classroom-Based Interventions and Supports	Tier 3: Targeted/School-Based Interventions and Supports	Tier 4: Specialized/Individualized Supports and Services
→ Increasing frequency and/or intensity of interventions and supports ←			
Differences in academic skills (literacy/numeracy)			
• Student diversity is expected and addressed through differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning • Additional literacy period scheduled for Grades 7–9 • Full complement of courses at senior high, including K&E, dash 1, 2, 3 • Build academic vocabulary, literacy and numeracy skills across all courses and emphasize relevance of those skills	• Review foundational skills and assess student readiness • Provide reteaching/additional practice to groups or individuals as needed • Check for understanding often, reword and provide additional examples or demonstrations • Use accommodations (for example, assistive technology, readers, scribes) and scaffolds (built-in supports) to help overcome learning barriers	• Individual support plans (ISPs) and/or ESL plans • Adapt programs and/or focus on essential outcomes • Daily F&P levelled literacy intervention in partner or individual sessions • More frequent checks for understanding and more frequent use of accommodations • Notification and involvement of parents (ISP meetings)	• ISP or IPP (individual program plan) with individualized goals and/or modified program • Frequent one-on-one support • Regular parental meetings and/or collaborative team meetings with parents and service providers from other agencies • Consider Certificate of School Completion path as needed • Access to specialized technology (for example, AAC devices)
Differences in student engagement (attendance, pace or location of school work, social engagement)			
• Use culturally responsive teaching/mutually adaptive learning paradigm • Promote career counselling and academic advisor programs • Provide clear timelines, especially for senior high courses • Build connections and relevance with project-based learning and off-site experiences (for example, work experience, RAP) • Focus on learning outcomes rather than assignment completion • Offer independent (online and paper) and blended instruction options, including gym and CALM	• Frequent progress check-ins and/or monitoring of attendance • Check-in phone calls for unexplained absences or absences of unexpected duration • Collaborate to ensure that at-risk students have sense of belonging and relationships with staff and peers • Individualized completion benchmarks and timelines • Use alternate materials or take course from alternate sources (for example, online, blended, ADLC, VHS) • Work with employers to try to eliminate scheduling conflicts	• More frequent scheduled progress check-ins and/or monitoring of attendance • Increased efforts at building and maintaining relationships • Self-directed learner plans • Consider lighter course load • Parent meeting to discuss plan • Significant parts of school work may be done outside of school hours or at alternate locations (for example, home, library, workplace) • Consider alternate graduation timelines and/or non-diploma options (for example, Certificate of Achievement)	• Self-directed learner plan focused on overcoming individual barriers to learning • Limited course load (usually 1 to 2) • Plan may be oriented toward goals other than graduation (for example, "trying out high school," building literacy or employability skills) • Meet with student and parents to discuss how school enrolment is meeting their learning needs and under what circumstances un-enrolment would occur • Seek additional means of building/maintain relationship (for example, mentorships, texts, calls)

Used with permission. Dan Vanden Dungen, Principal, Horizon Mennonite Alternative Program (MAP) School

Building Relationships

Teachers know that teaching is about building relationships. When we take the time to cultivate deeper connections with our students we simultaneously increase their capacity to connect more deeply with the formal curriculum. Get to know your students on different levels: their learning styles; where they are in terms of knowledge, gifts and potential; and their interests, personalities and backgrounds (Goodman 2015).

Positive teacher–parent relationships are a keystone of student success. Most LGM parents were not educated in the Canadian school system and may feel intimidated, so it is vital that you help them feel welcome and valued. How can you do this?

- Make yourself approachable. Introduce yourself and let parents know your role in the school.
- Take every opportunity to meet and greet parents, and have the courage to engage even if there is a sense of discomfort. Parents want to hear from you about their children!
- Smile. Be friendly and accepting.
- Learn the names of the parents, of your students' siblings, aunts and uncles.
- Try to give parents a voice whenever possible. When you initiate opportunities for meaningful involvement in their children's schooling, parents can begin to feel that their input is welcome and beneficial.
- Invite parents to school events, including parent–teacher meetings and school council meetings. Arrange for interpreters to be present.
- Involve parents as field trip supervisors and hot lunch providers.

SUPPLIED BY RMAP SCHOOL

Communicating with LGM Parents

Learn about your parents and their levels of literacy, including auditory comprehension, in English and Low German. This will lead how you interact with your students' parents. Consider the following when communicating with LGM parents:

- **Communicate regularly with parents in person, if possible, or by telephone.**
  Refrain from assuming that parents don't speak English. Rather than avoiding face-to-face or telephone communication or asking someone else to contact parents on your behalf, try it yourself. Use clear, simple English and avoid educational jargon. Speak slowly. Make interactions short and concise. Communicating across languages is tiring.
- **Consider "switching heads."**
  Imagine yourself in the parent's position. What would help you? Be sensitive to your position of authority.
- **Respect the resilience of the families.**
  Their resilience may be masked by limited English skills. Acknowledge and support the other person's efforts to communicate.
- **Ask staff, students or relatives to act as interpreters.**
  Always ask before assuming that a parent needs an interpreter and confirm that it is okay to have one present, especially if personal information is being shared. If there is no one available to interpret, consider another parent (friend of family) or one of the children. Sometimes there will be a health representative or someone in the community that can assist. Some school districts hire a liaison who speaks Low German to help with interpreting and translations.
- **Invite exchange of crosscultural information.**
  Say "I am interested to know more about …" Avoid making assumptions and resist stereotyping.

ISTOCK

- **Keep the written text simple and use visuals.**
  Pictures work well when placed beside the text. Without talking down to your parents, ensure that you are using simple, plain language. Always read newsletters and other information going home to the students so that the child may be able to share what the letter is about if the parent is unable to read it. You may want to consider holding onto some information until the parent is at the school where you can then address it.
- **Use a SynreVoice system.**
  This system is linked to the school's student database and is used to send home audio messages in both Low German and English. Your interpreter would then reword the news for you to send directly to whichever groups you choose.

—Portions adapted from Calgary Board of Education 2013, 50.

An interpreter converts oral messages and a translator converts written messages from one language to another.

Tips for Using an Interpreter

- Keep content to a minimum.
- Try to arrange a premeeting with the interpreter to share the message(s) you wish to communicate. Include specific terms, if possible, but remember that not all concepts and vocabulary will translate directly into Low German, so the interpreter may need time to explain your message.
- Arrange seating so that you are opposite the parent(s) with the interpreter beside you.
- Avoid using educational jargon—keep your message simple and clear.
- Speak directly to the parent(s), focusing on them, not to the interpreter.
- Use your regular volume and tone.
- Speak at a moderate pace and stop every 8 to 10 seconds to allow for accurate interpretation.

Adapted from Advanced Etiquette 2015.

Words of Wisdom from Teachers with Experience Teaching LGM Students

Addressing Myths and Misunderstandings

"Just give them a generation or two and they'll be like the rest of us."

There are many pressures on LGM youth to conform to the "English" way. This is not new—Mennonites have faced pressures to assimilate for hundreds of years. Each generation of Mennonites has had to work out how to relate to the culture around them and in what ways and to what extent they will adapt their way of life to that culture. They do not always agree with each other on this, and the differences have sometimes led to religious and physical separations (for example, new conferences, colonies and migrations).

Mennonite children who attend school in Alberta tend to start speaking English at home, patterns of dress tend to change, and many experience significant changes in cultural and religious values and practices over time. Nevertheless, their culture and religion have been very resilient due to their commitment to tradition and to separateness, even if there is significant variation in how these values are expressed. An ideal of Low German Mennonites, even today, is to remain separate from the world around them.

It is common for non-Mennonites to underestimate the impact of this value. Many teachers are children or grandchildren of immigrants who eventually left behind most of the culture and practices of the "Old Country." Non-Mennonites are at risk of viewing Low German Mennonites through this lens and/or projecting their own cultural trajectory onto them. We need to be careful about our intentions; the goal of today's education system is not to assimilate students, as it was in the past (which affected and still affects the relationship of Low German-speaking Mennonites to the public school system), but to ensure that all students are successful in their own unique circumstances.

"Low German-speaking Mennonites don't value education."

In traditional Mennonite colonies, the school is an important institution for perpetuating colony life and preparing children for the church life that they will experience as adults. It may be hard for Mennonites who leave this setting and come to Alberta to see how the public school system relates to their needs or prepares them for their future.

> Coming to [Alberta] from a largely self-sufficient agrarian context where an important value continues to be that families work together on the farm for family sustainability, one of the first major challenges for these families is understanding the different values in Canadian culture. These differences are most evident regarding education, paid employment outside of the family context, and the role of children in/for families. This clash of cultural values may be expressed in responses such as: "Why would I go to school when I can help my family have a better life?" or "If you live under my roof, you will help the family." (MCC Ontario 2014c)

> Overall, there seems to be a growing recognition that school is necessary, but there is still resistance to it as part of the culture/world that should not be engaged with … Low German families that have been settled in Canada for many years are more apt to see education as important, but those just arriving from Latin American countries are still in the process of understanding the culture and way of life in Canada and how education impacts opportunities. Those who are no longer part of more conservative traditions may also have a greater understanding of the importance of education and encourage their children remain in school. (MCC Ontario 2014b)

It is also possible for families who do value education to appear not to. Often, they value education for the opportunities it promises but value other things even more, and these values may conflict. For example, because family and work are so important to them, normally well-attending LGM children may miss school due to family commitments. They may go to Mexico for extended periods of time to visit relatives or attend funerals. They may support their family by helping to care for siblings, doing household chores, helping with harvest or butchering, or working outside the home to contribute to family income. Because our society tends to value individual autonomy above family and community connection, we can easily interpret these actions as disregard for education. This may not accurately reflect how these families perceive their own values or decisions.

"What are they so afraid of that they won't send their kids to public school?"

Some LGM parents may perceive it necessary to keep distance from the public education system in order to realize the ideal of maintaining their distinct cultural religious identity and avoid "worldly" influences. Many parents have concerns about some of the content taught in public schools (for example, evolution, cosmology and sexuality). Some families opt for alternative educational contexts, such as homeschooling or church-run schools.

"Some families seem to 'take advantage' of their Low German-speaking Mennonite identity (for example, take the three-day Mennonite holidays or refuse to work on Sundays) even though they don't seem very religious and/or traditional."

Faith, culture, family and church community are deeply intertwined for most LGM families. The proportion and relationship of these factors to each other in the personal identities of individual LGM vary greatly. Be careful not to make assumptions about the piety of an individual or the importance of specific cultural or religious practices on the basis of stereotypes of what religious people should be or how traditional Mennonites should look or act.

Traditions like three-day religious holidays have historical roots that no longer apply (for example, travelling time needed to visit family or church in the horse-and-buggy days), but that doesn't mean that those practices have not taken on new and important meanings and significance.

Participation in shared holidays and practices helps to hold minority communities together and helps individuals maintain their identity as part of the group, even under the influence of outside pressures.

"Low German-speaking Mennonite men boss women around."

Traditional LGM communities are very patriarchal, and husbands often speak on behalf of their wives around non-Mennonites. Try to view this through a lens of protection rather than power. Historically, women on the colony have been protected from local cultures and men were the only ones to interact with locals, and then only as needed. As a result, LGM men are typically better English speakers than LGM women. Conventionally, the structure of authority is God and the church in the context of the community, and adults, particularly men, within the family.

"But don't they cheat a lot?"

Low German Mennonite values of pragmatism and collectivism (as opposed to emphasis on abstract knowledge and individualism), combined with possible gaps in their background knowledge and/or literacy skills, means that many LGM students may emphasize work completion (even to the point of copying others' work) rather than learning of new concepts. This may be perceived as cheating by teachers, even when there is no evidence that the student intended to deceive the teacher.

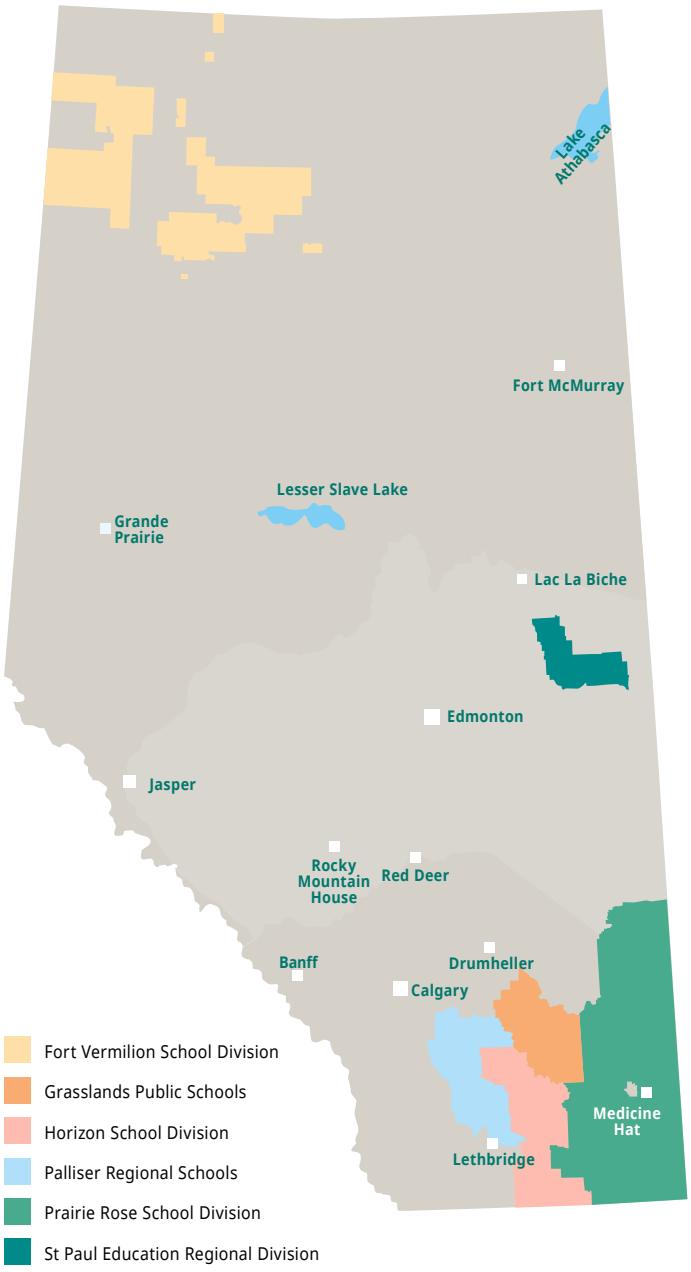
Alberta Schools and Programs For LGM Students

Alberta school jurisdictions and schools work hard to create a culture of inclusiveness. There are a number of schools across the province that offer programming and learning opportunities that address the unique circumstances and needs of LGM students, particularly in these regions:

- Fort Vermilion School Division
- Grasslands Public Schools
- Horizon School Division
- Palliser Regional Schools
- Prairie Rose School Division
- St Paul Education Regional Division

Some provide a blend of direct instruction and self-directed programming to allow flexibility in the timing, pace and location of learning; some offer alternative faith-based programs; others are outreach schools; and some offer High German instruction, culture and Bible classes.

Contact individual school jurisdictions for details about each location and program.



Resources

Information About Low German Mennonites

Out of Place: Social Exclusion and Mennonite Migrants in Canada. Luann Good Gingrich 2016. University of Toronto Press. 336 pages.

Low German Mennonite 101
www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZa69aWxdP0&feature=youtu.be

Anne Wall, a Low German-speaking Mennonite who was born in Mexico and now works for Family and Children's Services in Southern Ontario, gave this presentation addressing sensitivities to be aware of when working or interacting with this population at the Aylmer, Ontario, Low German Networking Conference on May 8, 2017.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada Videos

Low German Mennonite Newcomers
www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TaUh2K-P3E

Ann Wall narrates this glimpse into the life of Low German-speaking newcomers and describes some of the challenges they face in Canada.

Consent
www.vimeo.com/218064878/a9883cc8f8

This video in Low German provides information about consent to Low German-speaking Mennonites. It explains the definition of consent and outlines examples of when consent is necessary in Canada.

Confidentiality Part 1
www.vimeo.com/217902082/b2611a3a66

This video in Low German is the first of a two-part video that explains confidentiality to Low German-speaking Mennonites.

Confidentiality Part 2
www.vimeo.com/217852508/d05e1f511a

This video in Low German is the second of a two-part video that provides information to Low German-speaking Mennonites about how to keep one's information safe and with whom and when one should share information.

Important Cards Part 1
www.vimeo.com/217907714

This video in Low German is the first of a two-part video that explains the importance of identity cards such as the Social Insurance Number card, health card, driver's licence, permanent resident card, Canadian Citizenship Card or Certificate, and library card to Low German-speaking Mennonites.

Important Cards Part 2
www.vimeo.com/217916886/0462a4ba82

This video in Low German is the second of a two-part video that explains the importance of bank, debit, credit, gift and reward cards to Low German-speaking Mennonites.

Opening Doors
www.openingdoors.co

This site was created by the Mennonite Central Committee of Ontario to provide information and resources for service providers working with Low German-speaking Mennonites from Latin America. It gives an excellent overview of their history, religion and culture, informative sections on health and education, and suggestions for service providers in relating to Low German-speaking Mennonites. The Education section is invaluable to teachers. The Additional Resources section is comprehensive and includes many useful links.

A PDF version of this website can be found at www.mcccanada.ca/sites/mcccanada.ca/files/media/ontario/documents/opening_doors.pdf or https://tinyurl.com/y9w6mw3b.

Mennonites
www.mennoniteeducation.weebly.com

This website was designed as an informational resource for educators by Sue Wiebe while she was a student teacher in Southern Alberta. Her goal was to provide insight into the Mennonite culture, values, history and language in a manner that may allow educators to better understand their Mennonite students.

***Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* (GAMEO)**

GAMEO has an abundance of information about Mennonites, including Low German-speaking Mennonites. Visit www.gameo.org.

Teaching English Language Learners and Developing Cultural Capacity

Characteristics of English Language Learners, Alberta Education
www.learnalberta.ca/content/eslapb/documents/characteristics_of_english_language_learners.pdf

Lists characteristics of ELL students in an easy-to-use chart format.

Understanding ESL Learners: Moving Toward Cultural Responsiveness—A Guide for Teachers
www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Specialist-Councils/ESL-3-6%20Moving%20Toward%20Cultural%20Responsiveness.pdf

Published by the ATA's English as a Second Language Council (2010), this resource contains helpful information about culture and how it relates to student behaviour, classroom and school-wide strategies, and developing cultural competence.

Supporting English Language Learners
www.learnalberta.ca/content/eslapb/index.html

Visit this Alberta Education site to search the Alberta K–12 ESL proficiency benchmarks, access student writing samples with benchmark analysis, assessment support, programming information, and research and resources on ESL topics. The site also has videos with information about language proficiency, showing teachers using the benchmarks with students, and learning activities.

Teaching Refugees with Limited Formal Schooling
www.teachingrefugees.com

While the target audience of this site is educators of refugee students, this Calgary Board of Education website has a wealth of relevant information about teaching students who have experienced gaps in their education, English language learners and those who are new to Canada.

Complex English Language Learners (CELLs)
www.teachingrefugees.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CELLS-February-2015.pdf

This Calgary Board of Education document is an excellent resource for teachers working with LGM students, who are often complex English language learners. It contains background information, classroom intervention strategies, recording forms, suggestions for working with parents and interpreters, and useful links.

"Reframing the Conversation About Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education: From Achievement Gap to Cultural Dissonance"
www.academia.edu/19667360/Reframing_the_Conversation_About_Students_With_Limited_or_Interrupted_Formal_Education_From_Achievement_Gap_to_Cultural_Dissonance?scrlybrkr=49661903 or https://tinyurl.com/yaqgzt5b.

This article, by Andrea DeCapua of New York University, describes a culturally responsive instructional model for students with limited or interrupted formal education. Although written in an American educational context, it is relevant for those teaching LGM students.

Services for Newcomers

Mennonite Central Committee
www.mcccanada.ca/learn/more/services-newcomers

Mennonite Central Committee Alberta

210, 2946 32 St NE
Calgary, AB T1Y 6J7
403-275-6935
Toll Free: 888-622-6337
officeab@mccab.ca

Services for Newcomers Office

5329 47 Avenue
Taber, AB T1G 1R4
403-223-4144

Services for Newcomers (previously known as Low German Mennonite Services) has been in operation in southern Alberta for over a decade working with Low German Mennonites. The office in Taber assists with settlement issues as well as issues related to better employment, education and mental health. More recently, the program has expanded to work with newcomers of all kinds in the Taber area.

Supports for the School and Parents

Parent Link Centres (Government of Alberta)
www.humanservices.alberta.ca/family-community/15576.html

Provides support and resources to caregivers about early childhood development.

Common Word Bookstore and Resource Centre
www.commonword.ca/Home

A collaboration of the Mennonite Church of Canada and the Canadian Mennonite University, this Anabaptist resource library–store allows visitors to consult, buy, borrow or download items.

Low German Language

Koehler, L, and E Zacharias. *Plautdietsch Lexicon (Low German Dictionary)*. 2013. www.plautdietsch.22web.org/index-english/index.htm

Rempel, H. 1995. *Kjenn jie noch Plautdietsch? A Mennonite Low German Dictionary* www.plautdietsch.ca/HR-Eng-PLAUT-a-l.htm

An online dictionary of Plautdietsch (Low German) with video and audio clips and information about the language and culture.

Thiessen, J. 2003. *Mennonite Low German Dictionary/ Mennonitisch-Plattdeutsches Wörterbuch*. Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin, Max Kade Institute.

Zacharias, E H. 2009. *Ons Ieeschtet Wieedabuak: Met äwa 17,000 Wieed (Low German Dictionary: Over 17,000 Words).* Winkler, Man: CommonWord.

Helpful Low German Phrases

Did you know?

There are some English words that are not used by the LGM on a regular basis. They are *please, thank you, excuse me* and *sorry*. Students may need to be taught when and how to use these words and phrases because the LGM population generally does not expect children to use them.

It is uncommon for your LGM students to greet each other with *hello*, *good morning* and other salutations. You may wish to teach them these greetings as well as to reciprocate when asked, "How are you?"

Low German Educational Words and Phrases	**Plautdietsche Unjarejchts Weada enn Satsa**
Good morning	Gooden Morjen
Good afternoon	Gooden Dach
Good evening	Gooden Uwent
See you tomorrow	See wie die morjen
Today is gym day … music day … library day	Findeag es Gym Dach … Musik Dach … Bibliotek Dach
It is lunch time	Daut es Tiet fi Meddach
It is recess time	Daut es Tiet fi Pause

Days of the Week	**Deag fon dee Weajk**
Monday and Tuesday	Mundach in Dingsdach
Wednesday and Thursday	Meddweajk in Donnadach
Friday and Saturday	Friedach in Sinnuwent
Sunday	Sindach

Months of the Year	**Monaten fom Joa**
January and February	Jaunuwoa in Febawoa
March and April	Moatz in Auprell
May and June	Mei in Juni
July and August	Juli in August
September and October	Septamba in Oktoba
November and December	Novamba in Dezamba

Colours	**Kalieren**
Red, orange and yellow	Rot, rotjael in jael
Green, blue and purple	Jreen, bleiw in rotbleiw
White, gray and black	Witt, greiw in schwoat

Social Interactions	**Jisallschaftliche Fitall**
Please	Tum Jifaulen – Bitte
Thank you	Dankscheen
Sorry	Daut deit mie Leed
Are you alright?	Best du aureit?
Are you feeling sick?	Feelst due die schlajch?

Instructions/Directions	
Come to the carpet	Kummt nu dee Fluadajk (pl)
It's circle time	Daut es Tiet fi den Kraunz
Go back to your desks	Goht trigj nu juene Deschen (pl)
Put it in your bag	Stop daut en diene Tausch (s)
Put it in the locker	Laj daut en dienen Locka (s)
Stand (for O Canada)	Stoht opp fi Oh Kanada (pl)
Sit down on the carpet	Saat juent opp dee Fluadajk dohl (pl)
Sit down at your desk	Saat juent bi juene Deschen dohl (pl)
Attention here, please	Horcht mohl hea, bitte (pl)
Listen please	Bitte, horjcht (pl)
Repeat after me	Sajcht mie daut hinjaraun (pl)
Your turn	Daut es bet die (s)
Open your books	Meajkt juene Baejka up (pl)
Homework tonight is_____	Dee Schooloabeit findeag siuwes es _____
Return your materials	Brinjt juene Sachen trigj (pl)
Tidy up please	Bitte riemt opp (pl)
Push in your chairs	Schueft juene Steehla nen (pl)
Get dressed ... for recess ... for home ... for gym	Trajkt juent aun fi dee Pause … (pl) Tum ni Hues ... fi dee Gym
It's time ... to go home	Daut es Tiet nu Hues ti gohn (foarn)
...for lunch, to the library,	Meddach ti eaten, nu dee Bibliotek ti gohn
...to gym, to music	...nu dee Gym ti gohn, nu dee Musik ti gohn

Adapted from www.openingdoors.co/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Low-German-Educational-phrases.pdf

Glossary

Ackermaun
Low German term for farmer

Blended learning
An instructional approach that combines face-to-face and online learning

Catechism, The
A statement of beliefs

Dietsch
Low German term referring to a person of Low German-speaking Mennonite or Old Colony culture

No other Mennonite group refers to themselves as Dietsch

English
Term used by Low German-speaking Mennonites to refer to a non-Low German-speaking Mennonite

Fibel
A primary reader

Jemeenschoft
(*Gemeinschaft* in High German)
Low German term for a state of living as a community in harmony separate from "the world"

Gesangbuch
A hymnbook

Kanadier Mennonites/Kanadiers
Mennonites who migrated from Russia to Canada in the early 1900s, then to Mexico and subsequently returned to Canada

Low German Mennonite (LGM)
A term that refers to the culture

Low German-speaking Mennonite (LSGM)
A term that refers to a Low German Mennonite individual

Plautdietsch (also ***Plattditsch***)
A Low German dialect spoken in homes, churches and within cultural communities

Plaut means flat, in reference to the plains of northern Germany

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