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Guide to the Northwest and North Central French Immersion Program In-Person Sessions

Introduction

The high level of interest in the French Immersion Program in northwest and north central Calgary has resulted in some schools being at or over-capacity, which may limit continued growth at these locations. The CBE is committed to providing strong learning opportunities to all our French Immersion students and working with families to explore possibilities for the future.

The schools identified to participate in the northwest and north central French Immersion Program engagement process include: Banff Trail, Branton, Georges P. Vanier, Hidden Valley, King George, Valley Creek and Varsity Acres.

March & April Sessions

At these in-person sessions, you will learn more about the factors that need to be considered in making decisions and have opportunities to share your thoughts on possibilities for the future of the northwest and north central French Immersion Program. These sessions will be the first opportunities provided to parents to share their perspectives on this topic. We plan to provide additional opportunities (online and in-person) over the next several months before making any decisions.

Decision to be Made

By December 2018 the CBE will communicate plans for the longer-term strategy for the northwest and north central French Immersion Program. Plans may be implemented for the 2019-20 school year or later.

Stakeholder input and feedback, CBE values and CBE planning principles will guide us in decision-making. Other factors will also be considered including available space in schools, financial sustainability and government legislation.

CBE Values

- Students come first.
- Learning is our central purpose.
- Public education serves the common good.

CBE Planning Principles

- a) minimize disruptions for students;
- b) provide program continuity from kindergarten to Grade 12;
- c) keep cohort groups of students together;
- d) allow students to attend school as close to home as possible;
- e) provide long term sustainability;



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- f) use space and resources effectively; and
- g) provide equitable access for all students to quality learning environments and choice of programs.

Four Options to Consider

The session will begin with a presentation followed by table discussions about the four identified options:

- Boundary changes.
- Grade configuration changes.
- Location expansion.
- Long term cap on enrolment.

The final decision could be a combination of the options.

Option 1: Boundary Changes

This option involves changing boundaries/designated communities of a school attendance area.

Guided by the CBE values and planning principles, the CBE establishes and reviews boundaries for schools and programs on a regular basis. The CBE planning principles (noted above) are not a checklist. In some cases meeting one principle could mean it is not possible to meet another.

If boundary changes are required, CBE Planning works collaboratively with schools and area directors to re-adjust boundaries based on enrolment growth and data trends. Sometimes this may mean adjustments to existing boundaries or it means re-designating an entire community to a different school.

Option 2: Grade Configuration Changes

This option involves expanding or reducing the grades that are offered for a specific program at a school(s).

Grade configurations in schools relate to the way in which schools are organized to support learning. The CBE aims to provide a continuum of learning across kindergarten to Grade 9 such that cohorts of students remain together for as long as possible and to minimize the number of transitions students have to make throughout these schooling years.

At the elementary level, the CBE has schools which include grade configurations of K-2, K-3, K-4, K-5 and K-6. At the middle school level, the CBE has schools with configurations including Grades 4-9, Grades 5-9 and Grades 6-9. We also have junior high schools where the grade configuration is Grades 7-9. All CBE high schools offer Grades 10-12.



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Factors considered when determining the grade configuration of a school include:

- The capacity of the school (number of students the school can accommodate).
- The feeder schools (schools students will attend before or after).
- School design.
- A new school might not open with a full grade configuration the first year (i.e. school is designed as K-4 but opens in first year as K-3).
- Program expansion (i.e. school might open Grades 5-7 in year one and expand a grade a year until the program reaches the full grade configuration of Grades 5-9).

Once the school's grade configuration is determined, the school establishes the organization of the grades. Some schools are multi-aged, meaning the grades are intentionally combined while other schools do not combine multiple grades in the same classroom. School organization of grades is determined by the principal in consultation with school staff.

Option 3: Location Expansion

This option involves increasing the number of school sites that offer a specific program. Program expansion may involve boundary changes and/or grade configuration changes to balance enrolment between the schools.

Over the past two years, the CBE has opened new schools and many students can now or will soon attend school in their own communities. This has resulted in space becoming available in the schools these students previously attended. When space becomes available, options open up for the use of that space. As not all schools have space available, the CBE must be strategic about where programs expand based on demand and the space available for options.

In previous CBE engagements on the use of learning space, stakeholders suggested there could be opportunities to expand alternative programs. For the expansion of a program into a new location, an alternative program requires a minimum number of students to ensure sustainability over time. An expression of interest is often conducted to determine if there will be a sufficient number of students registered in the program.

Space is one part of the equation. In addition to space, there must be the resources required to begin and subsequently grow the program. For example, for a language program, does the CBE have qualified staff to teach the language? Is there funding for learning resources?



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Option 4: Enrolment Cap

This option involves setting an enrolment limit per grade for a specific program at a school that is at or over capacity.

From time to time in any given program or school demand may exceed space available. In these situations, principals work with their area directors and the CBE Planning department to consider enrolment options. One of the ways to reduce enrolment pressures is to set a cap on enrolment. The CBE Planning department develops projections of student enrolment numbers for each school and program over one-year, three-year and five-year periods. Based on current data and historical trends, a recommendation is made regarding the number of students that can attend a school or program for the current year and into the future. In this manner, CBE is able to make effective use of learning space in schools and communicate enrolment caps to parents and the community prior to registration.

Additional CBE Planning Terms

See below for additional information about school and program planning.

School Capacity

Prior to 2014, the provincial capacity for a school was determined using a formula that took a measurement of the footprint of a school. School capacity was then determined using a look-up table that assigned a capacity based on the footprint (total square metres) and the grade configuration of the school. This method did not always accurately reflect the instructional space available in a building based on the number of classrooms within the building. For example, some schools have larger areas such as corridors/gyms/library/administrative office space and therefore less classroom space than a school with a similar square footage with smaller corridors/gyms/library/administrative offices.

In an effort to more accurately reflect the number of teaching spaces in a school when determining provincial capacity, the province introduced a new formula effective September 2014 which measures each instructional space in the building separately rather than on a total footprint basis. Although discrepancies may still exist, this new provincial method has resulted in a more accurate reflection of the number of instructional spaces available within a school.

Provincial Capacity

The method introduced in September 2014 focuses on the “instructional” area of a school. Instructional space that has an exempted space is deducted from the total capacity. Exempted space includes:

- areas leased to the public sector and non-profit groups
- areas leased by private schools



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- areas leased by charter schools
- decentralized administration space in schools

Area exemptions are not granted for space leased to the private sector for non-private school use.

In the new formula, provincial capacity (net capacity) is determined by dividing the total instructional area by an area per student grid based on their grade configuration, plus Career and Technology Studies (CTS) spaces, gym and library spaces.

Provincial Net Capacity = $\frac{\text{Instructional Area} + \text{Rated Capacities}}{\text{Area per student}}$

Instructional Area = total area (m²) of all instructional space

Rated Capacities = CTS + Gyms + Physical Activity Room (PAR) + Libraries

CBE Rated Room Capacity (Instructional Space Available)

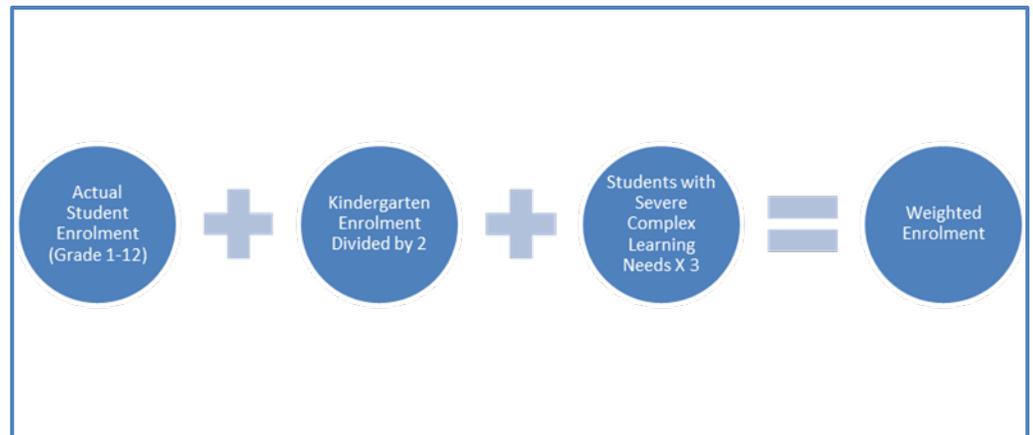
The CBE also calculates a rated room capacity to determine the instructional space available in a school. This approach multiplies the number of actual instructional spaces by 25 students per instructional space. Spaces used for Career and Technology Foundations (CTF) and Career and Technology Studies (CTS) are multiplied by a factor of 20 students per space. The rated room capacity may be used in addressing accommodation challenges at individual schools when a large discrepancy between the provincial capacity and the instructional space available exists.



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Calculating School Utilization

The calculation of utilization is based on a provincial formula which “weighs” students based on whether they are kindergarten students or they have severe complex learning needs. The graphic below illustrates how actual weighted enrolment is calculated based on Sept. 30 student enrolment each year:



Once the weighted enrolment is determined, utilization is calculated by dividing the weighted enrolment by the provincial capacity.

Modular Classroom

Modular classrooms are prototypical portable classroom units built at a central location and transported to schools across Alberta. These units are based on specifications that ensure significantly improved heating and ventilation, soundproofing, resistance to mould, ease of serviceability and several other factors that differentiate them from the older portables that are also part of schools across the province. The Government of Alberta’s goal is to eventually replace all the older portables with the prototypical modular classrooms.

Modular classrooms are intended as a short term solution to enrolment pressures. Many factors are included in the determination of whether a school site can accommodate modular classrooms. Each year, the CBE submits a modular classroom request to the province based on a set of established criteria. The province determines which modular classroom units are approved based on the plan submitted each year by school boards across Alberta.