

## update

## West Springs/Cougar Ridge Middle School

Principal Update

Mar. 1, 2016



Hello Parents. My name is Ryan O'Shaughnessy and I am the Principal for the new school in West Springs / Cougar Ridge. This update is to inform you of the latest information regarding our new school. I will also try and answer many of the questions you posed on the survey. I hope to post Principal updates on an ongoing basis to keep you informed. (Once the new school has its permanent website we will have a blog feature which will allow me to update you on a daily basis as needed.)

**Who are you?**

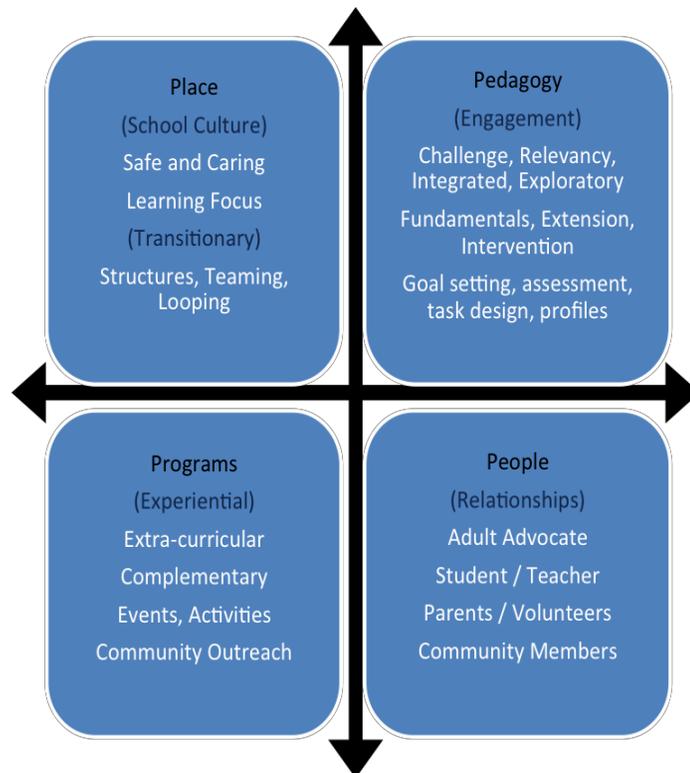
I have been an educator for 24 years with the Calgary Board of Education. I have taught Math, Science, Phys. Ed., and Environmental and Outdoor Education. I have taught in five different middle schools in the CBE. I began my career as a teacher at Senator Patrick Burns School in 1992 and then moved to help open Tom Baines School in 1997. I moved to Colonel Irvine School as Assistant Principal in 2004 and then opened Arbour Lake School as Assistant Principal in 2007. I am currently Principal of Thomas B. Riley School and have been here since 2012.

**What have you been doing since you were hired?**

I was hired to open one of the new middle schools last spring. I found out at the end of January that it would be the West Springs / Cougar Ridge School. I have had a chance to visit West Springs, Wildwood, and Vincent Massey schools and to meet the Principal of each and many of the students that will attend the new school. I will be visiting Rosscarrock School in March. I was also able to attend the West Springs School Council meeting in February and will attend the Wildwood and Rosscarrock council meetings in March and April respectively. I have had a chance to meet with the group responsible for organizing the new school fundraising society as well. I "officially" begin working for the new school as of April 4th.

Last week I interviewed many great candidates for the position of Assistant Principal. This person should be named within the next week or two. This week I am interviewing candidates for Administrative Secretary and preliminary postings for five teaching positions at the new school go up March 2nd.

### What is your vision for our middle school?



The model above shows what I value in a middle school and is what was (and will be) presented at School Council meetings. I will briefly discuss the model above:

- The school will provide a **school culture** that is safe and caring and where all decisions are focussed on learning
- The school is **transitional** which means it provides a bridge between the one-teacher classroom a student may experience in elementary school and the one-teacher-for-every-subject that students will experience in high school
- Teaching and learning (pedagogy) will be **engaging** for our students. Students will be challenged with relevant tasks, make

- connections across subject areas and explore areas of interest. We will ensure fundamental knowledge is learned while extending students learning and ensuring we are able to intervene when students struggle
- We will have a wide variety of complementary programs where students can **discover** their passions. Students will have a full menu of extra-curricular activities and clubs to **explore**.
- **Relationships** are key. All students will develop strong relationships with their teachers. Teachers, parents, and students will form a strong team to support the child. Volunteers and community input will be valued.

### **How is construction coming? Do we have a confirmed opening date?**

As far as I know we are looking at a January 2017 opening. There is to be a construction update released March 15th which will give us more accurate information.

### **Are there things we should be fundraising for?**

There has already been a fundraising society established so we are well positioned to apply for a casino as soon as the school opens. The board is supplying the school with packages of equipment for all the main areas (art, science, math, band, learning commons, technology). We will also have a healthy discretionary fund to purchase other items.

### **What will the new school be called?**

The naming committee has chosen four names for you to have input on. They are Ron and Marg Southern, Paskapoo, West Ridge, and Ralph Klein. You can give input into your preference at the following website until March 9th : <http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/calgaryboard/west-springs-cougar-ridge-school-naming-survey/>

### **What grades and how many students will attend the new school?**

The school has the capacity for 900 students. It is slated to be a grade 5 through 9 school housing all students from West Springs and Cougar Ridge.

What grades will be there for the opening is a more difficult question. It will definitely house the close to 300 students in grades five through seven. Whether grade eight students will attend the school in the opening year depends on a number of factors that are not yet determined

(opening capacity and transportation for grade eight students after June 2017 if they do not attend the new school).

### **How will you engage the community?**

I have met with students of all community schools and have (or will be soon) attending school council meetings. I plan to have an open house where parents can meet the new staff once they have been hired. I will also be looking to keep our website as up to date as possible to provide you with the latest news. As the school nears completion there will be a chance for parents to tour the school.

### **Where will the teachers come from? How will the transition work?**

Positions are currently being posted. I will have the opportunity to hire five staff of the eleven that will be working at the school. Six more will come from the excellent teachers who may be surplussed from their current school due to decreased enrolment.

Teachers from feeder schools can apply for the open positions. These teachers will likely work at the feeder schools in the fall. For example: six teachers will work at West Springs School, two will work at Wildwood School, and two will work at Vincent Massey. These teachers would then move to the new school with the students when it is ready.

### **What will be the start and end times?**

I will be attending a meeting March 9th to discuss this. Start and end times are tied to busing and so typically middle schools must run from 8 to 2:30 while the elementary school runs from 9 to 3:30. Parents have voiced concern about the traffic at the school and so have asked that the times be different. Other parents have asked that the times be close enough so that siblings attending the two schools could walk together. It should also be mentioned that middle schools often have an early dismissal or late entry on Fridays.

### **What about traffic concerns and walk zones?**

The published walk zone changes for grade 5/6 students as they move from elementary school to middle school. Grade 5/6 students would maintain the busing that they begin the year with and this would only change the following school year.

There has been a busing review that will be released this month that parents can provide feedback on.

I have discussed the issue of the busy 85th Street and 9th Avenue intersection with Transportation to let them know of the community concern regarding this intersection.

### **Partnership with West Springs Elementary?**

I have had the opportunity to meet with the Principal of West Springs Elementary, Mrs. Morrison, and we plan to work closely together. The pillars of caring (for self, other, and this place) are the same pillars that I have always used in my schools.

### **Security of Students, Lockdowns?**

Safety procedures are mandatory for all schools and the new school will have these in place.

### **Unifying the New School**

My vision is that our school will be a thriving learning environment for all students from the communities of West Springs and Cougar Ridge. With a capacity of 900, it is my belief that both communities will have a stable school designation. I know that parents and students from both communities will work together to make our school great.

### **Approachable, Visible**

You have said you want a principal that is approachable and visible. I believe I am that person and I look forward to proving that to you in the months and years ahead.

### **What is the last date before a September 2017 opening is considered?**

I don't have a definitive answer to this but I do have some thoughts. If the school is not ready for January we would look at a start following Family Day as the next reasonable date. After that we would be looking at Spring Break. If things are pushed this far back the number of grades transitioning would likely be reconsidered. I would assume anything after spring break would lead to a September 2017 opening.

### **What about a grade 6 "grad" / farewell for next year's WSS 6's?**

This was brought up at the West Springs School Council. Mrs. Morrison and I will ensure there is some farewell celebration in place.

## **Contact Information**

As stated previously, I am still Principal of Thomas B. Riley School and need to spend my time working on setting this school up for next year, transitioning a new Principal, and managing the daily running of the school. Having said that, I value your feedback and would welcome any comments you have. You can leave these on my school e-mail address which is [rgoshaughnes@cbe.ab.ca](mailto:rgoshaughnes@cbe.ab.ca). I will try and respond to any questions or comments with ongoing Principal updates.

Thanks for reading this update!

Ryan