

Board Proposes Exploration of Hinton Elementary Schools' Grade Reconfigurations for the 2023/2024 School Year

Immediate Release: April 13, 2022 - [Grande Yellowhead Public School Division](#) (GYPSD)'s Board of Trustees approved a motion to move forward with a proposal for the reconfiguration of grades at Crescent Valley and École Mountain View elementary schools in Hinton for the 2023/2024 school year. Families with children at the elementary schools and current staff will be receiving a survey for their input. No decision will be made until the next school year and only after a comprehensive assessment of the Hinton situation is completed.

School boards identify attendance boundaries to provide for the operation of the Division by maintaining class sizes, balancing student enrolments and staffing, supporting program equity across schools within a community, and encouraging the efficient and effective use of school buildings, resources, and services.

In the proposed grade reconfiguration context, École Mountain View will provide programming for Junior Kindergarten through to Grade Three, and Crescent Valley will provide programming for students in Grade 4 through Grade Seven. Harry Collinge High School will continue to offer programs for Grades 8 - 12. In reviewing the proposal, the Board took into consideration that

- School budgets are calculated on student enrolment numbers. Currently, there is a significant discrepancy between the two sites' enrolment numbers (Crescent Valley is at 322 students and École Mountain View at 426).
- The school budget informs principals' decisions regarding the number of staff and range of programs the schools can offer. School funding is determined by enrolment.
- A review of attendance areas in Hinton has not been done in over 15 years. Most of the boundary markers noted in AP 305 -School Attendance Areas, no longer exist, and the Board has received concerns from parents noting that these boundary markers do not align with families' designated school boundaries in a fair and equitable manner.
- The town of Hinton has a complex physical layout with sub-divisions and residential neighbourhoods on both sides of the Trans-Canada Highway, the railroad, industrial/business areas, and bodies of water. This is also challenging to align the boundary markers for the two elementary school attendance areas for student transportation purposes.
- The proposal will balance out the elementary populations more evenly and efficiently in relation to physical space utilization rates.
- The physical locations of the two elementary schools, and looking at future growth areas in Hinton, brought to light that the Board may be addressing the same issue every few years.

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NEW: Proposed Reconfiguration for 2023/2024:

- Harry Collinge High School: Located in the 'valley' area of Hinton and 750 metres from Crescent Valley Elementary School – is currently the designated school for all Grades 8-12 students. This will not change.
- École Mountain View: K - Grade 3 site – offering FRIM and Indigenous Language Culture programs. All students living 2.4 kms or more from the site would be eligible for funded busing service.
- Crescent Valley: Grade 4 - Grade 7 site – offering FRIM and Indigenous Language Culture programs. All students living 2.4 kms or more from the site would be eligible for funded busing service. The proximity of Crescent Valley to Harry Collinge High School supports a transition into junior high and allows for the Grade 7 students to access Career and Technology Foundations (CTF) courses and project opportunities with the Grade 8 students.

The new grade reconfiguration also aligns with the Board's three priorities of *Student Learning*, *Teaching and Leadership Excellence*, and *Community Engagement*.

In support of *Student Learning*, the grade reconfiguration notes that:

1. The Board currently funds full-day kindergarten (ECS) programming. Alberta Education only funds half-day ECS programs and registration in kindergarten is optional.
2. The Board encourages registration in ECS programming – crucial to literacy and numeracy foundations, socialization, and early screening for learning challenges – thus the Board waives the service fees for ineligible kindergarten bus riders.
3. Having all of the early learners at one site allows for a better balancing of class size, purchasing of, access to, and sharing of resources, guest speakers, and early screening with specialists.
4. All the students within the Hinton community will have access to the same educational opportunities – for example, second and third language learning, Indigenous cultural learning, enrichment experiences, exciting options, and CTF courses.

In support of *Teaching and Leadership Excellence*, the grade reconfiguration notes that:

1. It supports an economy of scale as well for specialized professional development and resource use.
2. It provides staff opportunities for more grade-level collaborations, resource building - such as aligned year plans, unit plans - common assessment development and analysis, peer-coaching, and team-teaching opportunities.

In support of *Community Engagement*, the grade reconfiguration notes that:

1. Staff and stakeholders have proposed this reconfiguration in the past.
2. Community leaders see the challenges of the Hinton geographical layout for the two elementary schools, and the implications of possible growth areas in the west and south-east neighbourhoods in Hinton.
3. It brings the entire community of Hinton together and removes competition between the two elementary schools – and by extension, the stakeholder groups who align with one site or the other.
4. The process to inform and engage the stakeholders, as per Policy 15 - Appendix B, will take place over the next 10 months including face-to-face meetings and feedback surveys.
5. Transportation Services will align their 2023/2024 registration timelines with the pre-enrollment schedule.

The Board is aware that parents of students and staff within the French Immersion program are worried that the expansion of the program to all of Hinton's families will dilute the program. The question remains to be answered: if FRIM is not offered only in one school site, will more families register their children in FRIM? The same question is posed for families who want to register their children in the Indigenous Language and Culture program that is currently only offered at Crescent Valley.

Assistant Superintendent Harding poses a question about equity: "Right now, half the kids in Hinton have one or the other. Why not offer them both? How might our community benefit if all our children have access to the best programming opportunities we have? This is an important question of equity."

The Board looks forward to the community discussions and will be asking the many different stakeholders in Hinton for input on the proposed grade configuration for the 2023/2024 school year. It is hoped that this update to the grade configurations will improve the utilization rates in the two elementary schools – important criteria the Government of Alberta assesses when determining renovation or modernization requests – and help better balance the student enrollment numbers. This balance will greatly assist in addressing the funding framework for the two schools and better support programming equity for all students in the Hinton area.

In addition, families who have clearly asked for an update to the boundary markers will have clear school designations from junior kindergarten through to Grade 12, and they know exactly where their children will be attending school in Hinton. This will support their planning and decision-making and will remove any confusion about transportation eligibility and designated school sites.