

frequently asked questions

From the Focus Group
Meeting
January 27, 2014

Area IV Accommodation Challenges West Springs and Wildwood Schools

The following questions were received from parents prior to the January 27, 2014 Focus Group meeting and during the question and answer portion of the meeting.

1. **Where can I find information about September 30th enrolment and capacity and enrolment projections for the schools in this project?**
Project page: http://www.cbe.ab.ca/Schools/ceop/pp13-14/area_iv_accommodation_challenges.asp 2013-2014 School Enrolment Report <http://www.cbe.ab.ca/aboutus/documents.asp>
2. **What resources would follow the Grade 5&6 if they relocated?** *Instructional resources would move with the students. Teachers would move according to spring staffing processes and may or may not move depending on personal choice.*
3. **Have you taken into account the number of siblings that would have to relocate?** *Our numbers come from the pre-school census. Of those numbers approximately 60% choose public school. From that group 65% choose their community school and 35% choose an alternative program. Parents choose different programs for their children, making it difficult to determine how many siblings might be affected. In the scenario offered there is space in the overflow for siblings to both attend the overflow school.*
4. **How will a decision to change the lottery process change the number of children that will need to be overflowed?** *There will be no change to the number of students that will need to be overflowed.*
5. **Is there a lottery process currently in place? Has it run its course?** *We have a plan in place that was developed by senior administration. <http://www.cbe.ab.ca/new/news2013-14/20130827-process-for-accepting-students.asp> The lottery process will run through a full cycle over the next 6 months and will be assessed during the 2014-2015 school year.*
6. **Why was West Springs built as a K-4 not a K-3?** *New schools are built as elementary schools and can accommodate any number of grades. That way there is flexibility to the number of children that may be in a community at a given point in time.*
7. **How can you say you minimize disruptions for students when you are going to move my child?** *It is always our intent to minimize transitions for students and whenever possible we look to providing a smooth transition points. Regardless of the planning there is always a group of children that may be disrupted by change. It is not possible to find a solution for this accommodation issue that does not involve a change of school designation, be they current students attending West Springs School or new students that would like to attend West Springs School. There must be a school for all students of West Springs to attend – it is just not possible for every child living in West Springs to attend the local school.*

- 8. Why are siblings given a priority in the options for Wildwood School, but not for West Springs?** *All students from Cougar Ridge and Aspen Woods (West) are outside of the walk zone of Wildwood School. Prioritizing siblings from those communities for future enrolment at Wildwood School does not limit access for students living in the walk zone for Wildwood School. The lottery process category 2 is designed to address the need to provide access for both students in the walk zone without older siblings and students with older siblings who live outside the walk zone. Placing a priority on one of these groups over the other would result in limited access for one of those 2 groups over the other.*
- 9. Research indicated and letters that parents have provided indicate that moves:**
- **Damage academic achievement**
 - **Ruin school climate at both schools**
 - **Destroy the sense of community**
 - **Lower parent involvement**
 - **Destroy public confidence and the culture of respect.**
- Research comes up on both sides of this issue. Certainly all of these things above could happen, but they don't always happen. With proper transition plans in place and the work of school administrations and parents, transitions for students can be very positive. In all areas of the city we have all kinds of grade configurations i.e. K-1/2-6, K-2/3-6, K-3/4-9, K-4/5-9, K-3/4-6.*
- 10. Have you considered Westgate program students that may need a school if they decide not to choose Spanish or French? How many kids are in the Spanish program?** *The decision about Westgate Spanish program is currently under an appeal process. We hope that this issue will be resolved prior to spring break. There are approximately 330 students in Spanish at Westgate.*
- 11. Will the options presented here tonight influence options available for Westgate?** *No these solutions are not part of a solution for Westgate.*
- 12. How many spaces would open up at Westgate if the Spanish were to move?** *Currently Westgate School has both French and Spanish K-4. The current proposal (pending the appeal process) is to have French Immersion at Westgate become a K-6 program.*
- 13. Why are Elbow Park students getting special treatment from the CBE and the province and West Springs students are being asked to move?** *The Elbow Park issue is very different from the challenges in West Springs. The CBE has been assured by the province that plans for temporarily accommodating Elbow Park students and ultimately rebuilding Elbow Park School are outside of the normal Capital Planning process and will not affect the number of new school construction projects approved for the CBE. Elbow Park School will be rebuilt with insurance money that can only be used to repair or rebuild a school of the same size on that same site.*
- 14. Why are parents being asked to solve complicated budgeting and infrastructure problems?** *Parents are not being asked to solve this issue. The role of parents is to provide input on possible options so that administration is able to make an informed decision.*
- 15. Why isn't the CBE putting pressure on the province to build a middle school?** *School Capital Plan 2014-2017 http://www.cbe.ab.ca/aboutus/documents/2014-2017_School_Capital_Plan.pdf A new middle school for West Springs is currently 10th on the new school construction priority list in the 2014-2017 School Capital Plan.*

- 16. Why can we not combine communities to get our middle school moved up the list on the capital plan?** *We have currently combined West Springs and Cougar Ridge for a new middle school. To add an additional community (Aspen Woods) would make the total number of residents, when all three communities are fully built out, approximately 32,000. The current CBE population threshold for combining communities for ranking of middle school priority is approximately 24,000 residents.*
- 17. It feels like there are more parents fighting for kindergarten students to stay and those numbers are larger than the grade 5&6. How can we be fairly represented in the Thoughtstream process when there are fewer of us?** *Decisions regarding this and any accommodation issue are not based on volume of mail received or the loudest voices. Decisions are made based on provincial, CBE and planning values taking into consideration the needs of the community.*
- 18. Is there really enough space at Jennie Elliott School to accommodate students from another community?** *There are currently 4 classrooms spaces available at Jennie Elliott, this equates to space for 100 students.*



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November-December,
2013

Area IV Accommodation Challenges West Springs and Wildwood Schools

The following questions were received from parents during the engagement process.

Please note: Questions specific to Wildwood, Olympic Heights and Glendale Schools were not received and therefore not included in this document at this time.

West Springs School

- 1. When the West Springs School was first built as a K-4 school, what was the original plan for grade 5 & 6 kids?** Where would the first round of kids have gone after grade 4 was finished after the first year? *West Springs K to 6 students were designated to Wildwood School in 2003. If West Springs School opened in 2010 as a K-4 then Grades 5 and 6 students would have continued at Wildwood School then on to Vincent Massey for Grades 7-9. Having West Springs School as a K-6 meant fewer transitions for West Springs students.*
- 2. When the discussion and decision was made to open the school as a K-5 school and then to add on grade 6, who was in charge of making that decision, was it the area office and planning department?** *In February 2010, prior to West Springs School opening in September 2010 school projections indicated that if the school opened as K-4 as planned, it would be underutilized. Personnel from the Area office and the planning department worked with parents through an engagement process to gather feedback from the parents about the grade configuration at West Springs School. Based on feedback from parents West Springs School opened as K- 5 in 2010 and expand to K-6 in 2011. The final decision was then sent to parent in a letter dated March 17th, 2010.*
- 3. Was there ever a statement or letter of intent written to state that the school would revert back to a K-4 school?** So as the community grew parents and the community were to be reminded that the school would eventually go back to being a k-4 school. And that they should make their school choice decision based on that fact? *No, there wasn't a statement or letter intent stating that the school would revert back to a K – 4 as the community grew. When the school opened three years ago, while there was the potential that space may at some point become a challenge, no automatic solution was chosen. When accommodation issues arise, we work with parents through an engagement process to create the best possible solutions for students, families and communities. This is the process you are participating in now.*
- 4. This seems like very poor planning, did the CBE and Province not notice the growth happening in this area? Why has the middle school not been built yet?** *Funding for new school construction is approved by the provincial government. All new and developing municipal communities are ranked by the CBE for new school construction as part of the annual Three-Year School Capital Plan submission. The CBE has developed a standardized process to evaluate new school construction for elementary and middle schools in the 23 developing communities. This approach is*

designed to be transparent, equitable, and fair to all communities. The current School Capital Plan 2014-2017 and ranking process is on our web site at the following link.

http://www.cbe.ab.ca/aboutus/documents/2014-2017_School_Capital_Plan.pdf

Until the recent six new school were approved on May 1, 2013, the CBE had not received approvals for the past five school capital plans and the prior approval for new school construction was on January 30, 2008. During this period the CBE estimates an additional shortfall of 10 new school approvals from the Province based on CBE enrolments and growth in the developing communities. As a result, there is a large backlog of new school construction projects.

- 5. Why can't we fundraise for modular classrooms or an addition to the school?** The addition of modular classrooms to a school must be approved by the provincial government. The number of modular classrooms a school can accommodate is limited due to the limitations at a particular school site as well as some features in the core school such as the number of washroom stalls for students. Each fall the CBE submits a request to province for modular classrooms in the coming year. In the case of West Springs School, the possibility exists to add a maximum of 2 more modular classrooms. Each classroom is rated to accommodate 25 students. The CBE submitted a request on November 30, 2013 for 2 new modular classrooms at each of West Springs and Saddle Ridge schools. We have also requested approval to demolish and replace a total of 8 modular classrooms at 2 other CBE schools. In order for these units to be in place for September 2014 the CBE requires funding approval from the province by the end of February, 2014. Last year, the CBE requested 10 new modular classrooms and received funding approval from the province for only 2 of the 10.

Rosscarrock School

- 1. Are they going to be able to cope with doubling their school size over a summer, changing their entire school calendar and dealing with a student population that will be heavy in the older grades?** Rosscarrock School is in the process of changing their school calendar to a regular configuration for September 2014. Staffing and site preparations will commence once a decision has been finalized.
- 2. Would siblings of grade 5 and 6 students relocated to Rosscarrock be able to move schools as well? Is this considered in the population calculations and will resources be available?** Siblings are not considered in the current projections, but there is space for siblings wishing to attend Rosscarrock. Schools are funded on a per pupil basis and resources will be available for these children.
- 3. What kind of class sizes can we expect in this brave new world?** Principals staff their schools based on a per pupil funding model and staff accordingly. Class sizes would likely be in the range of 17-22 for Kindergarten to grade 3 and 23-28 for grades 4-6.
- 4. Are we able to visit the school and see the facilities and calculate the loss of resources that are to be anticipated as a result of this move?** Once a decision has been made there will be opportunities for parents and students to visit the new location. CBE administration will determine what additional resources will be needed to accommodate these new students.

5. **What kind of programs, extra curricular, phys ed wise, and leadership wise are currently offered? Do they have a phys ed specialist and a French course like the current school?** *At Rosscarrock, there is a music specialist who provides the students with many opportunities for choral singing, as well as instruments such as ukulele, recorder, Orff instruments and African drums. In terms of extra-curricular opportunities, current programs are reflective of the student population's interests and the number of available staff. The school also provides handbells, choir, ukulele and peace club. Additional supports include a YMCA afterschool program, mentorship through Big Brothers and Sisters as well as early literacy support with Calgary Reads. As the population increases, with the availability of more staff there will be opportunities to offer a larger variety of extra-curricular activities.*
6. **How do the families at that school feel about having to take us all in and modify their school calendar to accommodate us. Are we building friendships or animosities by doing this?** *Parents from Rosscarrock School are excited about the possibility of a new community joining them in September 2014 and they are willing to work with school administration to change to a modified calendar to make their school more accessible for other communities.*

Jennie Elliott School

1. **Is there really enough space at Jennie Elliott School for a long term solution?** *Jennie Elliott School has space to accommodate 200-250 students from another community into the future.*

Busing Information

Current busing fees for charter transportation are \$295/year. For more information on Transportation please check the website at:

<http://cbe.ab.ca/transportation/registration.asp>