

## The Calgary Board of Education

Minutes of the Public Input Meeting Regarding Consideration of Closure for the Purpose of Relocation of Westbrook Outreach, held virtually through Microsoft Teams on Monday, May 30, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

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### ATTENDANCE (Virtual)

#### Board of Trustees:

Trustee L. Hack, Board Chair, Trustee - Wards 3 & 4  
Trustee D. Downey, Trustee - Wards 1 & 2  
Trustee M. Dennis, Trustee - Wards 5 & 10  
Trustee P. Bolger, Trustee – Wards 6 and 7  
Trustee S. Vukadinovic, Board Vice-Chair, Trustee - Wards 8 & 9  
Trustee N. Close, Trustee - Wards 11 & 13  
Trustee C. May, Trustee - Wards 12 & 14

#### Administration:

C. Usih, Chief Superintendent of Schools  
D. Breton, Superintendent, Facilities and Environmental Services  
A. Holowka, Superintendent, School Improvement  
J. Pitman, Superintendent, School Improvement  
K. Fenney, General Counsel and Procedural Advisor to the Board  
M. Howell, Education Director, Area 6  
K. Howell, Education Director, Area 1  
P. Randhawa, Education Director, Area 1  
D. Barbor, Principal, Discovering Choices and Alternative High School  
K. Derbyshire, Principal, Robert Thirsk High School  
K. Johnson, Acting Director, Planning  
C. McGreish, Acting Manager, Planning  
P. Minor, Corporate Secretary  
J. Anderson, Communications Advisor  
D. Perrier, Board Administrator

### WELCOME, ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND INTRODUCTIONS

Board Chair L. Hack called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and noted she would Chair the Meeting. Chair Hack acknowledged the traditional territories and oral practices of the Blackfoot Nations, which includes the Siksika, the Piikani and the Kainai. Also acknowledged were the Tsuut'ina and Stoney Nakoda First Nations, the Métis Nation (Region 3), and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.

Introductions were made of The Calgary Board of Education (CBE) Trustees and Administration in attendance. The Chair also welcomed CBE teachers, staff and members of the public.



Chair Hack stated that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of maintaining an accurate internal record of the proceedings, and that minutes of the meeting will be available on the CBE website at [www.cbe.ab.ca](http://www.cbe.ab.ca) prior to the Board of Trustees making a decision on this matter.

Chair Hack reviewed the agenda for the meeting, as follows:

1. Opening Remarks
2. Meeting Purpose and Outline
3. Meeting Guidelines
4. CBE Administration Presentation
5. Questions and Comments
6. Closing Remarks

### OPENING REMARKS

Chair Hack spoke to the role of the Board of Trustees in the closure consideration process. It was clarified that the Board of Trustees has the sole responsibility and authority to make closure decisions and that no decision on this matter has been made at this time.

In accordance with Alberta legislation and the Board's Closure of Schools Procedure, the consideration of closure process has many steps to it.

As part of the process, at the regular Board of Trustees' meeting held Tuesday, April 26, 2022, the Board passed a motion to commence the public input process to consider the closure of Westbrook Outreach for the purpose of relocation. This was a decision to initiate the consideration of closure process, not a decision to proceed with the closure.

The rationale, pertinent facts, and information about the proposed closure is available on CBE's public website and Westbrook Outreach website. This information is one part of the information that has been, and will be reviewed and considered by Trustees. Before making any final decision on the closure of a school, the Board follows a process to secure additional input from parents and the general public, which includes:

- convening this public input meeting to provide important and relevant information; and
- providing an opportunity for the public to share their perspectives with the Board.

Additional public comments or concerns may be provided in writing by Tuesday, June 14, 2022. The details for written submissions were set out in the parent and student letter sent through School Messenger on April 27, 2022 and the details are available on the CBE public website. Trustees were present to listen to comments and questions as the public's input will inform the Board's decision-making on this matter.

All of the information collected during the consideration of closure process will be weighed very carefully by Trustees before any final decision is made.

The Board of Trustees tentatively anticipates debating the merits of this matter and making a decision regarding the proposed closure for the purpose of relocation on Tuesday, June 21, 2022 at a public meeting of the Board of Trustees.

The Board's ongoing commitment is to provide educational programs and services in suitable facilities throughout Calgary. To honour that commitment, the Board needs to take into consideration many factors including student enrolment levels, the ability to resource instructional programming, the health and safety of students, and accessibility. The Board also considers financial factors to ensure the CBE is using resources effectively. The Board takes the information received and makes decisions on a system-wide basis, serving the overall interests of public education within the CBE.

Consideration of closure of a school is a serious matter to the Board of Trustees. The Board also appreciates that it is very significant to the students, parents and other members of the community.

The attendance of CBE administration was to assist the Board with the presentation, to respond to the public's questions and to help Trustees manage the process for this meeting.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Chair Hack thanked everybody for attending the meeting.

#### MEETING PURPOSE AND OUTLINE

Chair Hack noted the purpose of the meeting is two-fold. Firstly, it is for Administration to outline the rationale for the proposed closure and relocation, and to share information about the timing of the proposed closure and the accommodation plan for students affected. Secondly, it is to provide the public an opportunity to share their perspectives about the proposed closure for relocation with the Board.

The agenda was arranged to ensure that everyone had plenty of opportunity to ask questions and make any comments. The public's comments and questions form part of the formal material that the Board of Trustees will consider as they review this matter and ultimately reach a decision.

#### MEETING GUIDELINES

Chair Hack asked everyone to observe the meeting guidelines, which included:

- muting microphones except when called on to speak;
- comments and questions to be addressed following the presentation portion of the meeting;
- limiting questions or comments to five minutes; and
- being respectful of differing opinions and everyone's right to speak.

## ADMINISTRATION PRESENTATION

Administration's presentation was provided with the aid of a PowerPoint slide show, and covered the following details:

### *What is Discovering Choices*

Discovering Choices offers outreach programming to students who require additional supports to be successful in completing courses and making progress toward high school graduation. This program may be offered to students who have experienced interrupted schooling, severe attendance issues or other challenges affecting their high school experiences. With a focus on outreach programming, Discovering Choices allows for individualized and flexible programming in recognition of individual student needs.

### *Rationale for the Proposed Relocation*

This is a vision for creating a continuum of learning and support opportunities for Outreach programming within the CBE. Outreach students' needs are unique and range from needing separate facilities to requiring sheltered programming that allows for engagement in optional programs and other individualized opportunities that exist within a larger high school setting, while still maintaining the core of services and supports that are essential to all students within the Outreach program.

The CBE currently offers outreach programming, known as Discovering Choices, at four leased sites. The leases at the Bowness and Westbrook outreach sites will expire in 2023. This fact, combined with recent changes to government funding for outreach programs, and the elimination of the government requirement to house outreach programs outside of school buildings, means it is now possible to support outreach students in different ways.

Two alternate school locations in close proximity to the current Bowness and Westbrook locations are proposed. These locations would allow Discovering Choices students to participate in enhanced learning opportunities while also continuing to provide the individualized programming and supports available at the current sites through a sheltered approach.

With the proposed location moves, student access is maintained at four Discovering Choices sites, one location still in each quadrant of the city. There is also the opportunity to provide flexibility and choice for students to choose the location that best meets their needs.

A consideration of the proposal for relocating these two outreach sites is that students continue to have access to good transportation to these programs. For Westbrook Outreach, students enrolled are from across the city. To access the program from Alternative High School, students can use various means, including public transit, biking, walking, and car. Of note, current students who attend Alternative High School also come from all over the city and many successfully use Calgary Transit to get to and from school.

### Proposed Student Accommodation Plan

With Start Outreach and Westbrook Outreach having less than 40 per cent of the students enrolled in the program and considerable flexibility in attendance, it is estimated that approximately 50-60 students will be at each school location (Robert Thirsk High School and Alternative High School) on any given day. As a result, the impact on students at Robert Thirsk and Alternative High schools will be minimal.

The Nexus Program that currently operates out of Bowness will relocate to the Northgate location and this process will be aligned with the specialized placement process led by the CBE's Inclusive Education team.

Students will still have the flexibility to choose the location that is right for them. Discovering Choices staff will work with students in a highly individualized way on this.

### Education and Program Impacts for Discovering Choices Students

Many components of outreach supports for Discovering Choices students would remain the same and this includes: individual and flexible programming, psychology and well-being supports. Discovering Choices teachers would continue to teach core subjects to Discovering Choices students only. In this way, the programming would be provided in a manner that is consistent with what is currently offered at the Bowness and Westbrook leased sites even though the program would be delivered within a high school building.

Additional opportunities would also be available for outreach students relocating to Robert Thirsk and Alternative high schools for greater learning and support beyond what they currently receive. This includes: access to Career and Technology Studies (CTS) and optional courses, opportunity to engage in extra-curricular offerings and access to larger guidance and student support staff. Discovering Choices students would participate in CTS/option courses and extra-curricular activities along with other students at Alternative High School and Robert Thirsk High School. Alternative High School students take some option classes at their school and also take CTS and other option courses at the Career and Technology Centre or Central Memorial High School, which is across the street.

### The Proposed Student Transition Plan

Student transitions will be coordinated, purposeful and outcomes-oriented. Transitions will be carefully and deliberately planned as they require a holistic approach which is multi-faceted, timely, on-going and responsive. If the proposed relocation is approved, a detailed implementation plan will be created in October 2022 that will include feedback and perspectives gathered from students, parents, staff and school administrators. It is important that transitions are student-focused and are inclusive of the social-emotional needs of each student.

The transition plan will include, but will not be limited to:

- Discovering Choices school administration team and staff working with each student in a personalized approach to support programming, flexible schedules and well-being supports. This will include determining which location would be most appropriate for them, ranging from the discrete sites that would remain to the sheltered programs within the two high schools.
- Discovering Choices staff, students and parents being provided an opportunity to tour both Robert Thirsk High School and Alternative High School during the 2022-23 school year.
- Creating warm, welcoming and conducive learning spaces for Discovering Choices students that include separate classroom spaces, break-out spaces for quiet learning, entrances and exits that are accessible, flexible entry and exit times.
- Current and future Discovering Choices students continuing to have choice as to which outreach location they would like to attend: Robert Thirsk High School, Downtown, Northgate or Alternative High School. By offering the programming in both leased spaces and high school buildings, there is the opportunity to be more responsive to the various needs and interests of different Discovering Choices students. Students can be placed into sites based on their programming and support needs, ranging from sites that have isolated building sites to those housed in larger schools with sheltered programming with access to engage in optional courses, as per individual student need and interest.

#### CBE Planning Principles

The principles considered when planning for student accommodation are outlined in the CBE Administrative Regulation 1090, and include providing equitable access for all students to quality learning environments and choice of programs; using space and resources effectively and providing long term sustainability.

It should be noted that all planning principles are important but they are not mutually exclusive. This means addressing one principle on the list may affect our ability to satisfy another. For example, allowing students to attend school as close to home as possible may present challenges with keeping cohort groups of students together.

#### Existing Leased Sites and Capital Plan Impact

If approved, the leases at the existing leased sites will be allowed to expire. Accordingly, these sites will not be repurposed for other school jurisdiction purposes, thereby allowing the lease savings to be reinvested within the system in support of student learning.

Additionally, the proposal to relocate outreach sites into Robert Thirsk High School and Alternative High School is anticipated to favourably impact CBE long-term capital. The primary reason for this is due to how increased system utilization rates are viewed favourably by the government in deciding upon new high school construction requests from school jurisdictions.



### Outreach Program Enrolment

Students enrolled in regular high school programming may transition into Discovering Choices through conversations led by the student's current high school administrative team. The staff at Discovering Choices engage in an intake process to fully understand the profile of a student and how support and services of outreach can meet their needs. Students and parents/guardians are part of this intake process and must agree to the transition to Discovering Choices. During the school year, ongoing registrations are processed with a focus on continuum of programming for high school students.

A graph was shown of the change in student enrolment at all four sites from 2012 to 2021.

### Enrolment and Impacts

A diagram depicted the current enrolment at all four outreach locations. It also indicated the percentage of the total enrolment that each of the four sites comprises. As of Sept. 29/21, 1,108 students were enrolled in outreach programs across all four sites. Over 60 per cent of the students are enrolled at the downtown (41 per cent) and the Northgate (25 per cent) locations. The downtown location had 457 students enrolled, while Northgate had 277 students. These locations will continue to operate from the existing leased sites.

With Start Outreach and Westbrook Outreach having less than 40 per cent of the students enrolled in the program and considerable flexibility in attendance, it is estimated that approximately 50-60 students will be at each school location (Robert Thirsk High School and Alternative High School) on any given day. As a result, the impact on students at Robert Thirsk and Alternative High schools will be minimal.

Student enrolment and utilization at Alternative High School is projected to remain stable. Without a change, the school's enrolment and utilization rate is projected to be at its highest in 2023.

With Westbrook Outreach Program added, there will be a reduction in the provincial capacity from 271 to approximately 226. As a result, the school will be above capacity in 2023 with a utilization rate of 114 per cent but will decline in 2024 and stabilize slightly over 100 per cent. This higher utilization at Alternative High School can be managed through the flexible nature of student schedules, and by the fact that not all students are present at any given time in a high school.

### Financial Impacts

A table in the slideshow highlighted the annual lease costs and the cost per student at each outreach location.

There will be a cost savings to relocating outreach programs to Robert Thirsk High School and Alternative High School. In addition to the lease costs, there are other associated costs to running these programs that could be reinvested to benefit students throughout the system.

The financial impact remains limited and is not a driving factor in the short term.

### Proposed Timeline for Implementation

The proposed timeline for implementation, should the Board of Trustee decide to proceed with the closure and relocation of START Outreach Bowness and Westbrook Outreach, was depicted in the slideshow. The Board of Trustees will make their decision on the potential closure for the purpose of relocation at a public Board meeting scheduled for June 21, 2022.

Should the Board decide to proceed with the closures for the purpose of relocation, there will be time for a full year of transition planning with students, staff and families, before full implementation in the 2023-2024 school year. This will allow opportunities for Discovering Choices staff to explore ways to offer outreach programming in new and innovative ways with two leased sites and two school locations. These discussions will be ongoing throughout the 2022-23 school year.

There will also be opportunities for Discovering Choices staff to come together with staff at Alternative High School and Robert Thirsk High School to collaborate and share ideas on how to operate the outreach programs alongside the existing school programs in ways that best support all students.

A personal and individualized approach will be taken to transitioning students from the current Bowness and Westbrook locations to the location that best meets their needs. An implementation plan will be communicated by October 2022, which will provide flexibility to adapt to individual student needs.

### OPEN DISCUSSION, QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM PARENTS AND PUBLIC

Chair Hack reiterated the Trustees were present to hear public input and that they will ultimately be the sole decision makers regarding the status of Westbrook Outreach. It would not be appropriate in the middle of the process for Trustees to respond directly to questions or to engage in debate. Questions or comments should be indicated in the chat box, and the meeting Chair would direct the question to an appropriate CBE staff member for response. The public were asked to state their first and last name, spell it for the record, and identify their interest or relationship to Westbrook Outreach.

Chair Hack opened the meeting to questions or comments from the public.

**Heather Thompson**, 2013 graduate of Westbrook Outreach, noted the environment was very unique and it was a safe place that they could function in. Personal details of physical capacities and difficulties in the home life were shared. The CBE being fiscally responsible is understood, but it could come at a cost to the students if the program were to relocate to a high school. Moving the program to a location that is not as accessible to the LRT station could be detrimental for some students. Supports were provided well into post-secondary by the staff of Westbrook Outreach. Access to the CT Centre has always been available to students attending Westbrook Outreach. In



terms of increasing utilization, these students require an effective learning space and the learning supports they currently receive to be successful.

**Janet Pagnotta**, 2009 graduate of Westbrook Outreach, shared personal experience as a CBE high school student, who failed to thrive in that environment. Difficulties in the home life were shared, which led to moving out and dropping out of school. Encouragement was given to Janet to continue an education through the Discovering Choices program. Janet shared that access to Westbrook Outreach was ideal through public transit. It is important that the learning environment for these students remain separate from a regular high school environment. The program and its teachers are highly regarded; they treat students as adults, and they were very helpful with getting Janet into post-secondary with scholarships, and gaining status as an independent youth allowing and receiving funding from the government. Learning time was scheduled around work time. Janet's success in work life was attributed to learning at Westbrook Outreach. The amount of time that high school staff are able to give to student well-being and to counsel them about their learning needs is questionable today. Janet requested that more attention be given to maintaining student attendance and to keeping the program in close proximity to the LRT station.

**Susan Welch**, parent, noted their child now attends the Westbrook Outreach after struggling with learning through a number of years. Susan remarked that the CBE should better advertise the Discovering Choices program, as for many years it was unknown to them. The closure of the program for the purpose of relocation, and the potential effects a move could have on their son is concerning. The path forward for their son is just starting with the teachers at Westbrook Outreach indicating that they are able to help their son through assessment of their son's learning abilities.

**Janet Pennington Zoller** noted in the chat that S. Welch's story is similar to their family's and that they were referred to the program by a CBE vice principal during their son's third suspension from a traditional high school.

#### CLOSING REMARKS

Chair Hack reiterated that following this public input meeting the public has until Tuesday, June 14, 2022 to provide further written submissions for the Trustees regarding this closure consideration for the purpose of relocation, to the following:

Attention: Prem Randhawa  
Calgary Board of Education  
3445 37 Street SW  
Calgary AB T3E 3C2  
t | 403-777-8750  
e | [Area1@cbe.ab.ca](mailto:Area1@cbe.ab.ca)

Email directly to [BoardofTrustees@cbe.ab.ca](mailto:BoardofTrustees@cbe.ab.ca)



With respect to further written submissions, information is available to the public on the CBE website and the school website. This presentation will also be available on the websites on May 31, 2022. If the public requires any support regarding this information, they may contact Don Barbor, Principal, Discovering Choices.

Chair Hack thanked everybody for attending the meeting and for providing respectful comments and input. The Board of Trustees tentatively anticipates debating the merits of this matter and making a decision regarding this closure consideration for the purpose of relocation on or about Tuesday, June 21, 2022 at a public meeting of the Board. The observations, comments and questions by the public are valued and will form part of the material that Trustees will consider as they review the matter and ultimately reach a decision. The public's input at this meeting has been an important contribution to the Board of Trustees' decision-making process.

Chair Hack declared the meeting closed at 7:55 p.m.

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Note to Reader:

*The Minutes of the Public Input Meeting Regarding Consideration of Closure for the Purpose of Relocation – Westbrook Outreach, held virtually through Microsoft Teams on Monday, May 30, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. include the major points of discussion - they are not a verbatim transcript of the meeting.*