



The Board of Education of School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Board of Education
FROM: Donna Kriger, Superintendent
RE: Salmon Arm School Configuration

DATE: 12 March 2024

Background

During the November 2023 Regular Board Meeting, a motion was passed directing administration to bring forth options for a Salmon Arm Reconfiguration. Since that time, a total of five meetings were held with Principals and Vice-Principals from across the district. Each of the options originally suggested within the 2019 Long Range Facility Plan were examined and feedback was provided for the Board's review.

In February of 2024, three information and feedback sessions were held for NOSTA members on February 21, 22, and 29. Two information and feedback sessions were also held for CUPE members on February 28 and March 3, 2024. Attendance has varied at each of the sessions, however, in total, approximately 85 to 90 individuals have taken part in the face-to-face opportunities. In addition to these meetings, Dale Culler, Secretary Treasurer, met with city planners from the City of Salmon Arm to discuss future housing developments within the community.

Each feedback session included information on the historical context of configuration within the district, connection to the Strategic Plan, what is currently going well, what some existing challenges are, some proposed configuration options, addressing questions and/or concerns, human resources considerations, and next steps.

Future meetings are or will be scheduled with PAC's/DPAC, students, district counselors, custodians, District Education Support Center staff, Public Stakeholders, bus drivers, Operations staff, Shuswap Immigrant Society, and Rightsholders.

Issue

Approximately 25% - 30% of the learners within School District 83 are Indigenous learners, learners with diverse learning abilities, and children/youth in care. The Ministry of Education and Child Care along with all school districts across the province consider these students to be "priority learners." As such, there is a responsibility to examine any systemic inequities that exist as barriers for these learners and their families.

There is a significant body of research and evidence around the impact that school transitions have on all learners but particularly priority learners. The research would suggest that school transitions can be more detrimental than student absenteeism.

Within the community of Salmon Arm, students are currently expected to transition after their kindergarten to grade five experiences, into a middle school with grades six through eight, then to a junior secondary for grades nine and ten and finally into a senior secondary school to complete grades eleven and twelve. School District No. 83 is the only district across the province that requires students to transition during their secondary experience. This practice results in students having to begin a graduation



The Board of Education of School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)

BRIEFING NOTE

program in one school and complete it in a different school. Data would indicate that priority learners are most impacted by this transition. Student completion rates, grade to grade transition rates, student sense of belonging, and connectedness to school seem to align with the timing of transitions. When data and research are considered in tandem, it is difficult to ignore the impact that school transitions have on students within the community of Salmon Arm.

Reducing school transitions within Salmon Arm has the overwhelming support of the senior leadership team as well as the Principal and Vice-Principal team. Through the staff survey which has gone out to both NOSTA and CUPE members, most staff also agree that school transitions are barriers to student success.

It is important to note, our schools and staff are not failing students, the opposite is the case. School staff are continuing to do outstanding work to support students and families. The barriers that exist for students are systemic changes which need to be examined.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Kriger
Superintendent of Schools