

School Configuration Report

Factors Precipitating the Proposed Reconfiguration

2023 - 2024 Facility Name	Grades	Instructional Area m ²	Instructional Area per Student	Net Capacity	ECS (.5 towards Total Enrol.	Gr.1-12	ECS Sp. Ed. Severe	Gr.1-12 Sp. Ed. Severe	* Adj Total Enrol	Utiliz. %	Target @ 80%	Utiliz. %
Big Rock School	K-6	1708.9	3.47	492	50	270	9	7	327	66%	394	80%
Dr. Morris Gibson School (- 6 mods FDS)	K-6	1756	3.47	495	38	291	4	14	346	70%	396	80%
Meadow Ridge School *	K-9	2754	3.61	806	36	646	3	21	712	88%	645	80%
Okotoks Jr. High School	7-9	2304.54	3.69	820	0	474	0	12	498	61%	656	80%
Percy Pegler School *	K-6	2175.8	3.47	600	66	383	9	9	452	75%	480	80%
Westmount School	K-9	2494.1	3.61	711	38	474	5	19	541	76%	569	80%
				3924	228	2538			2876	73%	3139	

* 1 Modular from PP to MR Nov 2023

The impetus to review attendance boundaries within the Town of Okotoks is due to the current variances in utilization rates in Okotoks schools. As outlined in the table above, the Meadow Ridge School is currently at 88% capacity (following a recent modular classroom relocation from École Percy Pegler School). Big Rock, Dr. Morris Gibson, and École Okotoks Jr. High schools all have additional capacity. It is important to note that the school division funding for its Operations and Maintenance budgets are optimized when utilization rates are maximized.

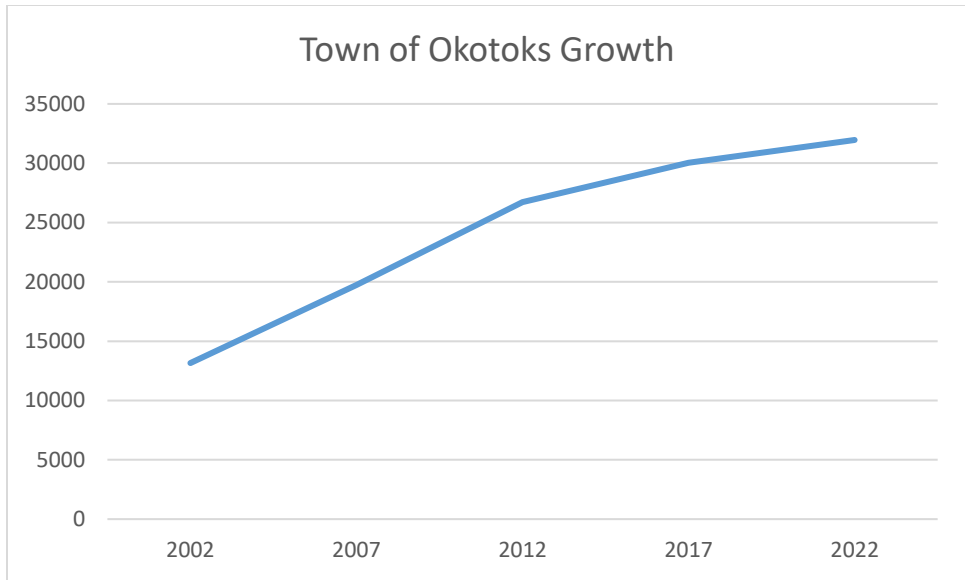
Schools are located based on available land from developers and the individual municipality. It's great to have the current number of schools within the Town of Okotoks, however the locations are often not equally distributed and in an area that is optimal for balancing walk distances and bussing.

Currently the Foothills Digital School is housed in Dr. Morris Gibson School and is using 6 modular classrooms. This has increased the utilization numbers to 70%, if the FDS is moved to an alternate location then utilization numbers would decrease to 54%.

École Percy Pegler School and École Okotoks Jr. High School each have French Immersion embedded within their school. École Percy Pegler School also has a Nature Based Learning Program which focuses K-6 learning with outdoor nature-based experiences.

Consideration of Future Growth or Decline in Student Enrolment

The Town of Okotoks has experienced significant growth over the last 20 years, increasing in population from just over 12,000 residents in 2001 to approximately 32,000 in 2022 (GoA).



This growth could have been higher if not for the Town determining to cap the growth at 30,000 (removed in 2012) residents due to the issue of having adequate water licenses to accommodate additional growth. The Town has recently been granted access to the Bow River system through the City of Calgary which should see a water pipeline completed in 2025. The Town believes that future growth could be as high as 10% annually, dependent on the economy and the ability of the Town to accommodate appropriate services.

There have been four areas within the Town of Okotoks that have been identified for current and immediate growth. These are outlined below:

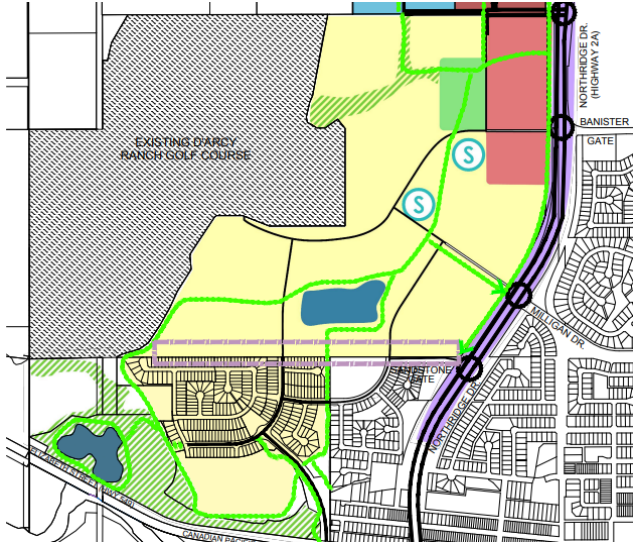
	Total dwellings at full build Out	Approx % built to date	Future Growth	Est. Completion Date	# Units/year
D'Arcy Ranch	2200	35%	1430	2030	204
Wedderburn	2500	5%	2375	2040	140
Ridgemont (2026)	1400	0%	1400	2042	88
Tillotson (2025)	1250	0%	1250	2038	96


[D'Arcy Ranch](#), [Wedderburn](#) and [Ridgemont](#) Areas Structure Plans (ASPs) are all in the North and Northwest Okotoks and are currently within the Meadow Ridge School boundaries. [Tillotson](#) is encompassed within the Big Rock attendance area and isn't slated to start having significant build out until at least 2025.

The table above shows what the current planning timelines represent. Statistics Canada's 2021 census information is used to look at population distribution within the Town of Okotoks. Currently, there are 2.9 residents per dwelling with 22% of those at school age (5 years of age to 18 years). We have estimated that 60% of these students attend Foothills School Division,

which translates to approximately .38 students per household. While these numbers apply to the current residents of Okotoks, it must be noted that these new developments may not translate into a similar number of school students.

There is a K-9 (900 capacity) school site identified within the D’Arcy Ranch development that shares its location with a Catholic K-9 school (currently being constructed).



 SCHOOL SITE K-9

Meadow Ridge growth has been between 35 & 80 new students a year, except for this year, for the last 3 years with new developments (Wedderburn & Ridgemont) having the potential to increase that number to 60 – 100 students per year.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	3 Yr Grwth	Avg Grwth
Big Rock School	284	309	306	295	11	4
Dr. Morris Gibson School	268	297	311	310	42	14
Meadow Ridge School	546.5	625	662	664	117.5	39
Okotoks Jr. High School	496	518	494	474	-22	(7)
Percy Pegler School	329	397	411	416	87	29
Westmount School	523	536	493	516	-7	(2)

In a review of the table above it’s worth noting that the big increase in Percy Pegler occurred with the introduction of the Nature Based Learning Alternative Program, in the fall of 2021. Meadow Ridge growth has fallen off in 2023, but numbers are expected to rebound due to new developments.

Gr	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total K@5
Meadow Ridge	36	59	67	76	73	60	72	90	74	75	664

When determining boundary changes the Board has outlined in [Policy 12](#) the criteria that need to be taken into consideration:

Key Values – Criteria in Determining Boundary Changes

Impact on Neighbourhoods

- ✓ Maintain neighborhoods to the extent possible.
- ✓ Minimize impact on existing school families.
- ✓ Keep families together where possible.

Walkability and Transportation

- ✓ Maximize “walkability” and modes of active transportation to minimize motorized transportation impacts.

Enrolment + School Programs + Student Experience

- ✓ Impact of a phased approach - start with K – 7 then move to K-8, then K-9?
- ✓ Impact on regional programs.
- ✓ Balance of overall enrolment ensures student access to programs, resources and extracurricular opportunities.
- ✓ Student Experience - options should demonstrate an effort to reduce the number of school moves students have experienced.

Boundary Realignment

- ✓ Stable, long-term boundaries -- Projections should show long term stability and result in avoiding the need for additional boundary changes in the short term.
- ✓ Fiscally Responsible - ensure that options strive to reduce unnecessary costs.
- ✓ Redistribute enrolment to match school capacity and accommodate growth - over and underutilization of buildings avoided to the extent possible.
- ✓ Use natural boundaries to the extent possible.
- ✓ Grandfathering not recommended.

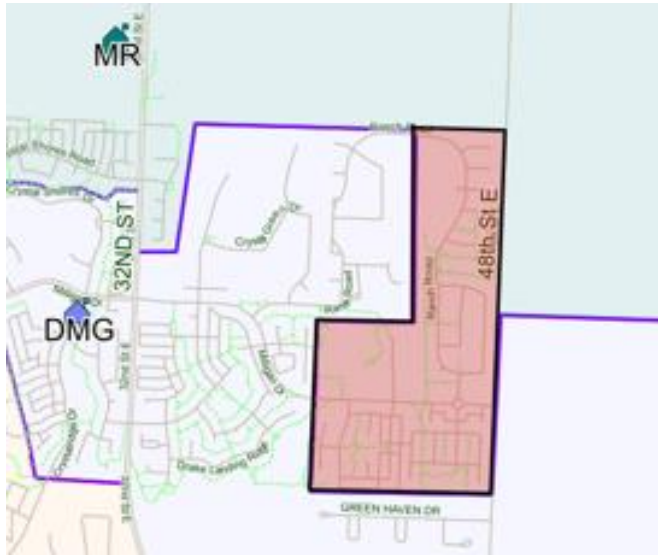
Transition Plan

- ✓ A welcoming and caring transition plan will be developed to support students and families relocating schools.

Potential Scenarios

Several potential scenarios have been identified and are listed below. They are meant to be looked at individually with the potential for a combination of scenarios being possible.

Scenario 1

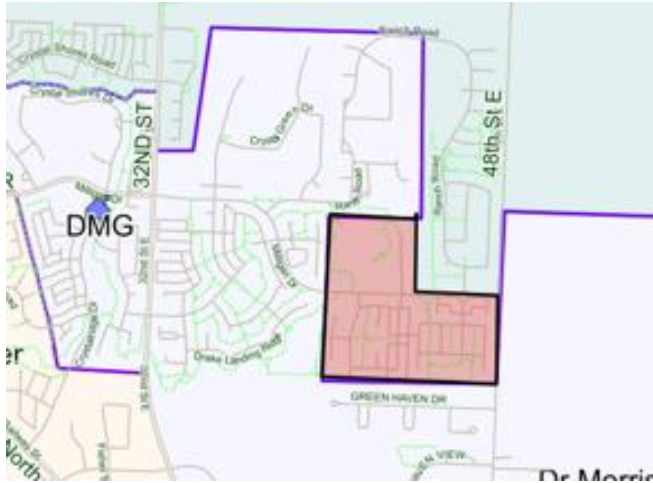


Move the area immediately east and south of the Air Ranch that is currently in Meadow Ridge (MR) School Division to Dr. Morris Gibson (DMG) and to École Okotoks Jr. High School (OJ). This would provide MR the ability to accommodate new students from the growth areas of D'Arcy Ranch, Wedderburn and Ridgemont, as the numbers increase FSD will continue to advocate for a new school in D'Arcy Ranch. This would also make bussing more efficient as the adjacent in-town neighbourhoods are currently within the DMG boundary.

Current numbers in this area (shaded in red) attending Meadow Ridge (MR) are 124 (118.5 FTE – Kindergarten students count as .5 FTE for utilization purposes) in grades K-6 and 77 students in grades 7-9. Changes would result in:

- DMG utilization increases from 54% to 72% if Foothills Digital School (FDS) is relocated
- DMG utilization increases from 70% to 94% if FDS remains at DMG.
- OJ utilization increases from 61% to 70%
- MR utilization decreases from 88% to 64%.

Scenario 2.

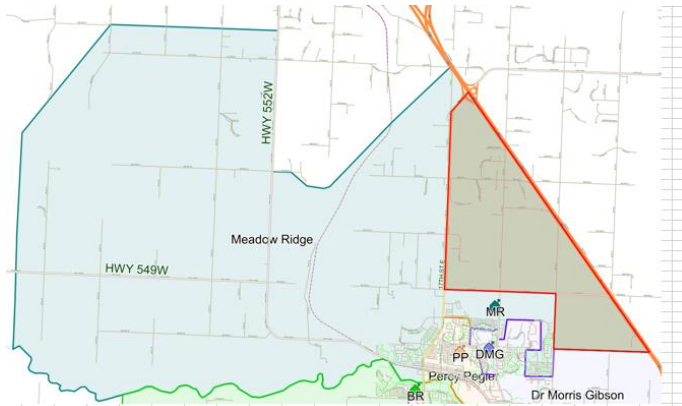


A modification of Scenario 1 would be to move just the south portion of the area in red (below) to DMG from MR.

This new scenario would move 82 students (78 FTE) from MR to DMG and 38 to OJ.

- DMG's utilization increases from 70% to 86% if FDS remains
- DMG's utilization drops from 70% to 66% if FDS is relocated
- OJ utilization increases from 61% to 65%
- MR utilization drops from 88% to 74%.

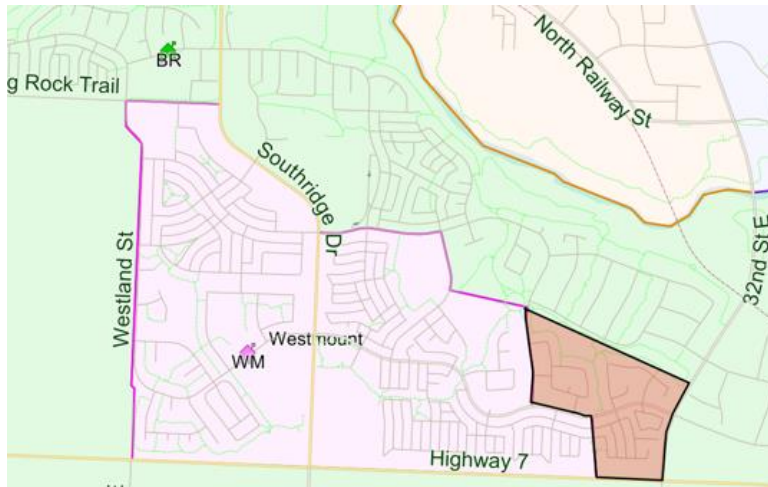
Scenario 3.



In this scenario the rural area, blue and grey/green, which currently are both in the Meadow Ridge boundary would be split and the blue area (western portion) would move to PP and the east boundary would remain at MR. This would move 45 students (43.5 FTE) to PP and 21 students to OJ.

- PP utilization would increase from 75% to 83%
- OJ would increase from 61% to 63%
- MR utilization would decrease from 88% to 80%.

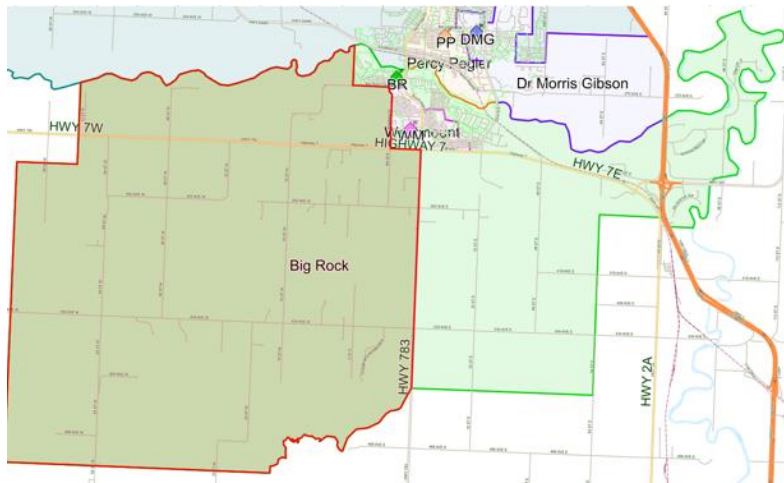
Scenario 4



This scenario is meant to provide Big Rock (BR) with additional capacity to enable it to accommodate students coming from the new Tillitson development. The Westmount area is almost completely built out and the utilization numbers have been decreasing over the last few years. We anticipate that this will continue to be the case so there will be the opportunity to add students to their attendance boundary. There are currently 40 (38.5 FTE) students attending BR and 21 attending OJ. Changes below:

- Big Rock drops from 66% to 60%
- OJ drops from 61% to 58%
- Westmount utilization increases from 76% to 84%.

Scenario 5



This scenario is also one that is aimed at providing additional space in BR and OJ for growth from Tillitson. Currently all rural areas south of the River in Okotoks (as shown above) are within the BR and OJ attendance areas. If this was split into two separate areas with the area to the east of Hwy 783 being moved to MR for K-9 and the remainder of the area to the west staying at BR, the changes would be as follows:

- BR utilization drops from 66% to 63%
- OJ utilization drops from 61% to 49%
- Westmount increases from 76% to 80%

Recommendations:

The boundary review report reflects the stated values and criteria outlined in Policy 12 – School Configurations. Initially our expectations were that we would be recommending immediate changes and consultation to take place for the 2024/2025 school year. After reviewing the data, we believe that the most expedient way forward is to defer the consultation to the 2024/2025 or 2025/2026 school year with attendance boundary changes coming into effect either the 2025/26 or 2026/27 school year. The main reason for this delay is as follows:

- The real growth at Meadow Ridge School was low this year due to a large Grade 9 class moving to High School and a small Kindergarten class coming in.
- The addition of two new classrooms constructed in the Learning Commons.
- The addition of a modular classroom
- Current Gr. 9's moving on is projected to be 76 with only 36 in Kindergarten (Grade 1 is 61) which will provide some room for new move ins.
- This will give parents and community sufficient time to plan accordingly, and the completion of this report can be updated and consultation move forward quickly.

The recommendations below should/can be modified based on real growth over the next year and subsequent years.

There is a myriad of possibilities that are available and a number of unknowns. We have worked with the Town to try to understand where the growth will come from and potential timelines but there are many variables that will undoubtedly change over time. There is no “one” scenario that meets every criterion. Parents and students have made choices based on many factors in choosing schools and any time you disrupt or change boundaries it can be difficult. We believe all our FSD schools provide great opportunities for children and no matter where students attend, they will have the ability to flourish.

It is important to note that The Foothills School Division must meet the provincial government's criteria for new schools. The following are some of the criteria that must be met by boards prior to new school approvals (Capital Manual 2022):

Evidence that alternative strategies have been explored and deemed not feasible and/or not effective, including but not limited to the following:

- *grade reconfiguration*
- *boundary adjustments*
- *transportation*
- *use of other facilities in the community*
- *enhancing technology in schools (e.g. videoconferencing and distance learning)*
- *identifying possible partnerships in the community and/or sector*
- *program changes/relocation (e.g., for programs of choice)*
- *modular classrooms or permanent additions on existing schools*

These criteria must be explored in order to warrant a new school approval. Meadow Ridge has recently received 1 new modular classroom in 2023 and has been designed to accommodate an additional 7. In the past number of years schools have had to be over 90% of capacity to qualify for additional modulars.

While we have endeavored to take into account current and future enrolment/growth trends we know that actual growth will come in starts and stops and not in a linear fashion. As a result of these vagaries of growth these recommendations could be “mixed and matched” to meet actual results.

The Board's policy on School Configuration (Policy 12) states that:

3. A School Reconfiguration Report prepared by the Superintendent shall include a plan of proposed reconfiguration(s) and/or attendance boundary(ies) as well as the following:

- 3.1. Factors precipitating the proposed school configuration;
- 3.2. Consideration of future growth or decline in student enrolment;
 - 3.2.1. Effect on enrolment and attendance area of other impacted schools;
 - 3.2.2. Number of students to be relocated to another school or schools;
- 3.3. Program implications for each impacted school;
- 3.4. Effect on the Board's long-range capital plan;
- 3.5. Transportation factors including ride times;
- 3.6. Effect on system operations;
- 3.7. Possible alternative educational or community uses for all or part of the school building;
- 3.8. A community engagement and consultation process and timeline.

Recommendation 1.

Consider the relocation of the Foothills Digital School. This would provide the additional space (6 modulars) within Dr. Morris Gibson School to accommodate a significant amount of enrolment growth; increases DMG capacity from 495 to 645. This could happen as soon as the changes to Meadow Ridge boundaries are adjusted; looking at 2025-2026 or 2026-27.

Recommendation 2.

Implement Scenario 3. This would move 64.5 (FTE) students out of Meadow Ridge and place 43.5 in Percy Pegler and 21 in Okotoks Jr. High. This would decrease Meadow Ridge to 80% (this reduction is based on current numbers) with the expectation that growth in D'Arcy Ranch and Wedderburn developments for 2025-2026 would:

- Meadow Ridge would move to approximately 85% (new growth)
- Percy Pegler utilization would move to 83%
- Okotoks Jr. High would increase to 63% utilization for 2024-2025.

Meadow Ridge would continue to grow due to net migration into D'Arcy/Wedderburn and eventually Ridgmont. Meadow Ridge can add an additional 7 modulars which will

accommodate several years of growth. Subsequent changes to attendance boundaries would have to be made to provide MR additional space to accommodate growth or the new growth areas would have to be redesignated to other schools.

Recommendation 3.

Implement scenario 1. Timing on the implementation of this scenario is dependent upon how quickly the D'Arcy and Wedderburn developments build out. The anticipated timeline is for the start of the 2025-2026 school year, which could be delayed until the 2026-2027 school year based on how quickly growth continues. Based on current numbers this would move 201 students out of Meadow Ridge with 124 (118.5 FTE) to Dr Morris Gibson and 77 students to Okotoks Jr. High. These numbers (based on current enrolments) would reflect changes to utilization as follows:

- Meadow Ridge from 88% currently to 64% (growth from D'Arcy/Wedderburn and Ridgemont + installing additional modulars will increase the utilization significantly. From a low of 70% to a high of 80% (based on 60 – 100 new students a year) in two years.
- DMG from 54% to 72%
- OJ from 61% to 70% (additional growth through French Immersion from D'Arcy/Wedderburn/Ridgemont)

Meadow Ridge would continue to grow due to net migration into D'Arcy/Wedderburn and eventually Ridgemont. Meadow Ridge can add an additional 7 modulars which will accommodate several years of growth. Subsequent changes to attendance boundaries would have to be made to provide MR additional space to accommodate growth or the new growth areas would have to be redesignated to other schools.

Recommendation 4

Implement Scenario 4. – Timeline unknown. As Tillitson development moves forward and puts pressure on Big Rock School. Currently Big Rock has significant additional capacity and is the area where new developments are planned. Westmount School population has been in a slow decline in the last few years as its boundaries are fully built out and the population ages.

Projections show that Big Rock could grow at a rate of approximately 20 students per year from Tillitson. Big Rock could accommodate several years' growth before changes are necessary.

Program Implications for Each Impacted School

Programs would not be impacted as they would remain in their current schools. The Foothills Digital School move would not impact programs as the format is digital and not dependent on where the physical location of the school resides.

Effect on the Boards Long Range Capital Plan

We do not anticipate any significant impact. The only caveat is that the timelines for approval of the new school in D'Arcy Ranch may change based on how quickly the new neighbourhoods are developed. The Boards current [Capital Plan](#) lists the new school K-9 school in D'Arcy as our second highest priority. Based upon current projections we would anticipate the new K-9 school needing to be announced in 4 – 6 years.

Transportation Factors Including Ride Times

We do not anticipate any substantive changes to bussing. Ride times should be relatively constant. It must be noted that these continue to change each year based on growth and upcoming new Provincial guidelines.

Effect on System Operations

Moving the Foothills Digital School would necessitate finding adequate space elsewhere in the system. The operational impact would be to increase the utilization of the school where it is moving to.

It's difficult to predict the operational impact of moving students from one school to another outside of changes in operational capacity and utilization rates (as noted above). There will undoubtedly be a need for teacher and school-based support staff transfers as they are based on the number of students. As outlined in [AP 504](#), which is reviewed yearly, classroom allocations are based on the number of students. Applying these ratios to the number leaving or entering a school will move staff proportionately but should not affect the total number of staff required.

Possible Alternative Educational Board or Community Uses For All or Part of School Building

Outside of the potential Foothills Digital School move this does not apply.

Community Engagement Process and Timeline

Intent: To receive feedback from our community regarding the School Reconfiguration Report for Okotoks and Area Boundary Review. Consultation will be based on the following local configurations:

- K to 9 in Okotoks and area
- Kindergarten to grade 6 in Okotoks and area
- Junior High School (7 to 9) in Okotoks and area

Target School Communities:

The schools potentially and primarily impacted by this consultation are the following:

- Big Rock School
- École Okotoks Junior High School
- École Percy Pegler School
- Meadow Ridge School
- Westmount School
- Doctor Morris Gibson School

Key Messages:

- Foothills School Division will be moving ahead with a school boundary review.
- Public understanding of the process, rationale, and potential outcomes is important.

- Public feedback on ideas and insight into the impact of the review is paramount to the success of the project.
- The boundary review will affect the schools listed above and families within their current attendance boundaries.
- The result of the boundary review is to promote equity amongst the schools by balancing school populations to ensure effective use of facilities.

Gathering Feedback:

Public input will be collected from September to March, with a minimum 12-week consultation period during the 2024-2025 or 2025-2026 school year.

The consultation and decision must be completed by the end of March of either school year.

Once the timelines have been finalized, a page will be set up on our fsdconnect website outlining the progress of the project and gathering public feedback on the School Reconfiguration Report and recommendations.

A final decision will be made at a board meeting before the end of March in the year prior to the proposed implementation.



Consultation will be available to all FSD Communities; however, additional efforts will be made to capture data from the above school communities.

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

Target Audience	Key Messages	Communication Methods	Responsible	Deadline
Trustees	To move forward with a school reconfiguration To best serve our students and schools.	- Board Meeting	E Team	September to December 2024-2025 or 2025-2026
FSD Staff	The Board has moved to proceed with an Okotoks and area school boundary review and reconfiguration.	- Weekly Digest	Communications/ E Team	September to March 2024-2025 or 2025-2026
FSD Families	The plan is to best serve our students and to allow for equity across schools in Okotoks and area, as well as across the division. <i>What does a boundary review mean?</i> <i>What is a school reconfiguration?</i> <i>How can they affect school communities?</i>	- Direct email - Social media - School newsletters - FSD Website & affected school sites. - fsdconnect.com	Communications School Admin	September to March 2024-2025 or 2025-2026
Surr. Communities	The plan is to best serve our students and to allow for equity across schools in Okotoks and area, as well as across the division. <i>What does a boundary review mean?</i> <i>What is a school reconfiguration?</i> <i>How can if affect communities?</i>	- Social media - Media Release - FSD Website & Affected school sites. - fsdconnect.com	Communications	September to March 2024-2025 or 2025-2026



RESULT OF ENGAGEMENT AND FINAL DECISION

Target Audience	Key Messages	Communication Methods	Responsible	Deadline
Trustees	Provide a report on public consultation feedback, including trends and themes.	- Board Meeting	E Team	March 2025 or 2026
FSD Staff	Share the decision of the Trustees	- Weekly Digest	Communications/ E Team	March/April 2025 or 2026
FSD Families & Communities	The decision of the Trustees	- Direct email (schools only) - Media Release - Social media - School newsletters - FSD Website & affected school sites. - fsdconnect.com	Communications School Admin	March 2025 or 2026