

Board of Trustees Battle River School Division

BRSD Board Approves Tight Budget

The Battle River School Division Board of Trustees met on May 14 and approved a budget for the 2020-2021 school year. The budget reflects many difficult decisions about how to reduce spending, in light of the school division's current financial realities.

As a school division located in an area of declining population and school enrollment, but still facing increasing costs, BRSD has struggled with balancing its budget in recent years.

Along with making numerous reductions in division-wide service and staffing, BRSD has used reserve funds to offset Instruction funding deficits and avoid making significant cuts to schools and classrooms. Now those reserves have been depleted. There are also changes to the funding of Inclusive Education and PUF programs that will impact services next year.

As a result of the existing shortfall and the funding changes coming for next year, BRSD would require approximately \$6 million more in order to completely cover costs for 2020-2021. The Division is fortunate to have received \$4 million in 'bridge funding' from the government for next year, to help slow down the pace of change.

The bridge funding offsets about two-thirds of the \$6 million shortfall, lowering the number of reductions that must take place. Here are some of the changes BRSD is making for the 2020-2021 school year:

- A reduction in the spending / staffing allocation for every school, department and program. This reduction will result in fewer staff for BRSD next year.
- Reductions in spending on PD, equipment / resources, conferences, etc.
- Permanent closure of Allan Johnstone School in Hardisty.
- Consolidation of Holden / Ryley Schools into one K-9 school site, with the closure of Holden School and the re-allocation of Ryley high school students.
- Consolidation of Battle River Online School and Camrose Outreach School.
- Introduction of a Technology Fee that will be charged to parents.

According to Board Chair Norm Erickson, these changes are difficult and not made easily. "We know change is necessary, but it's a lot. We've been talking about this reality for quite a while and trying to find solutions that would reduce the impact on students in classrooms as much as possible."

"We're grateful for funding flexibility that allows us to make decisions we think work best for us. We're grateful for the bridge funding that allows us to protect services to students in classrooms, and to slow down the pace of change. But we also know that bridge funding is temporary. We will experience another \$4 million in reductions by the 2022-2023 school year. That means we've still got many difficult decisions ahead."



Every Student, Every Day, A Success

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Natasha Wilm

Assistant Supt, Business:

Imogene Walsh

For more information contact:

Diane Hutchinson

Director of Communications



June Board Meeting

The BRSD Board of Trustees agreed to move the scheduled date of their June Board meeting from Thursday, June 25 to earlier in the month, on June 11.

They will wait until closer to the date of the meeting to determine whether the Board members and staff will gather in one location or continue to meet virtually.

School Re-entry Planning

Superintendent of Schools Rita Marler reported that many conversations have taken place with Alberta Education and other education stakeholder groups in recent days, as a variety of plans are considered for re-entry to school next fall.

The province has asked school divisions to consider how they would manage a range of scenarios, including conditions being totally back to normal; a blend of in-school and at-home learning being offered; and a totally at-home learning plan.

It is expected that, based on how re-entry plans go for other services and businesses over the next couple of months, decisions will likely be made by the beginning of August for how the return to school will roll out in September.



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- All information based on the May 14, 2020 Board of Trustees meeting

