

Fact Sheet – Proposed School Closures

MHPSD is exploring the closure of Webster Niblock School and Southview Community School to direct more resources into the classroom and enhance programming, by optimizing funds.

Important Links:

- [Public Consultation Invitation Letter to Southview Community School Families](#)
- [Public Consultation Invitation Letter to Webster Niblock School Families](#)
- [Policy 724: School and Program Closure and Relocation](#)
- [News Release | MHPSD Launches Consultation on Proposed School Closures](#)

Public consultation process

We will use a structured consultation process so stakeholders can participate in an important discussion about possible school closures. We want to hear from stakeholders about the key considerations that will help the Board make an informed decision.

Why is this happening now?

As part of our long-term planning, MHPSD is preparing to seek capital funding from the province to support future infrastructure needs. At the same time, we continue to face financial pressures associated with operating small schools. With rising demands across the system, it's important to make every dollar work for students. This process helps us to evaluate how and where our resources are being used, so we can identify inefficiencies and reinvest in classrooms where they have the greatest impact.

How the evaluation was done

In January 2025 - The Board, Alberta Education Managers, Architects and MHPSD leaders participated in an in-depth value scoping process funded by Alberta Education and Childcare. This process critically analyzed resources and spending to identify opportunities for cost savings. Value scoping focused on three city areas SE Elementary, North Elementary and the Hill. Various criteria were considered, including efficient use of resources, enrollment, schools in the area, and 21st century learning spaces.

This process highlighted the challenge of the growing number of small schools within the division and the complexities that arise in programming, class structures, resource allocation and operations.

Challenges with small schools

Small schools are costly to maintain.

- It's difficult to hire and keep subject specialists like intervention teachers, physical education teachers, and music teachers. With fewer staff available, it's also harder to cover supervision duties and provide consistent support across schools.
- Sometimes we lose flexibility when determining how to structure classes, which can make it harder to give students the support they need. It's also tough to provide help across the system

when staff have to travel between schools, which is time that could be better spent working directly with students.

- No matter the size of the school – there still needs to be clerical, custodial, principal/VP team, CST, etc.
- Collaboration and professional learning are more difficult as not as many teachers to work with at each grade level.
- Students have less opportunities with clubs, teams etc.
- The costs of maintaining an aging school, including higher utilities, aging infrastructure, and upgrade costs.

Cost benefits of closing schools

Cost savings come from reducing expenses for transportation, building upkeep, utilities, insurance, maintenance, renovations, deferred maintenance, and duplicated resources for libraries, gyms and specialized spaces.

Benefits of schools at optimal capacity

We have schools in the same area (within 5 kms) that have space to accommodate more students. Greater enrollment at receiving schools will result in more funding for supports and more than one class per grade level. While there will be system-level savings, these changes will allow us to direct more resources into classrooms to support staff and students.

Why these schools were considered

The Board considered all four small schools with fewer than 200 students. However, we were committed to having schools in every area of our city:

- Elm Street School is the only school in the Flats, so it was not an option.
- Herald School offers specialized programming with equipment and resources tailored to that program.

Possible scenarios

Students could be reallocated to nearby schools with support for transportation, programming continuity, and peer connections.

Possible scenarios under consideration:

- Webster Niblock School students could be reassigned to Vincent Massey School and/or Dr Ken Sauer Fine Arts School.
- Southview Community School students could be reassigned to Crestwood STEM School and/or Ross Glen School.

If the decision is made to change boundaries and close schools, we want to reassure our staff, students and families that our schools are prepared and excited to welcome your child and family. Our goal is to make this transition as smooth and positive as possible, reducing stress, ensuring a sense of belonging, and helping students and staff feel confident and supported in their new school community. We are here to walk alongside you every step of the way.

Class size concerns

We understand that families may be concerned about class sizes and individualized attention. If changes move forward, we will ensure that receiving schools remain within safe and effective capacity limits. Our planning includes reviewing classroom space, staffing levels, and programming needs so that students continue to receive quality instruction and support. The goal is not to

overcrowd schools, but to create balanced enrollment that strengthens programs and maximizes resources for all students.

Greater enrollment at receiving schools will result in more funding for supports. While there will be system-level savings, these changes will allow us to direct more resources into classrooms to support staff and students.

Impact on staff

We are evaluating the staffing needs, and we will share that information with staff as it becomes available.

Provide feedback

Public consultation meetings at Medicine Hat Public School Division Central Office, at 601 1st Ave SW, Medicine Hat. We invite the public to attend this consultation meeting to learn more about the proposal to close schools.

Format | In person facilitated feedback session

- **Southview Community**
Dec 3 from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
[Register](#)
- **Webster Niblock Community**
Dec 4 from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
[Register](#)

Feedback can also be submitted through the [Proposed School Closures – Stakeholder Survey](#) that is posted on the MHPSD and school websites. If you have questions that have not been answered on this fact sheet, please submit a comment or question through the online survey or email communications@sd76.ab.ca

Transition Plan

If the closure proceeds, we will share a transition plan to support staff, students and families.

Consultation Timeline

- **Analysis and evaluation:** Oct 2024 - November 2025
- **Announcement:** November 5 - Launch consultation announcement, internal and external stakeholders communication.
- **Engagement period:** Staff engagement Nov 10 & 13, public engagement meetings Dec 3 & 4, collect feedback through surveys and via email.
- **Analysis of feedback and decision:** Dec 5 - Jan 6 The Board reviews feedback and makes a decision. Jan 6, the decision is communicated.
- **Transition support** commences January 12, if the closure is approved.