

PROPOSED BOUNDARY CHANGES- WEST LETHBRIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Recommendations to the Board of Trustees
from the School Boundary Alignment Committee

September 24th, 2024



SCHOOL BOUNDARY ALIGNMENT COMMITTEE

The School Boundary Alignment Committee was formed beginning the 2023-2024 school year. Members of the Committee include:

Trustee's: Craig Whitehead (chair), Allison Purcell, Christine Light

Administration: Mike Nightingale, Superintendent, Associate Superintendents -Morag Asquith, Robbie Charlebois and Christine Lee, Director of Facility Services, Daniel Heaton, and Transportation Coordinator, Cheryl Shimbashi

The first order of business of the Committee:

- review and create new boundaries for west Lethbridge elementary schools due to the opening West Coulee Station Elementary in Sept 2025, and
- address growth and capacity concerns at the other elementary schools in west Lethbridge.

To inform the recommendations:

- Guiding principles for the review were created
- Past and future enrolment, City of Lethbridge census, Canada census, and housing development data was reviewed
- 4 in-person engagement opportunities along with online survey's were held to gather community perspective.
- Three options were created and presented for feedback.

ABOUT THE BOUNDARY REVIEW

The "Why"



Attendance area for new school - West Coulee Station



Capacity concerns at Coalbanks and Mike Mountain Horse



Future residential growth in fastest growing area of the City



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Committee used the following guiding principles when analyzing all information gathered that informed the recommended changes to boundaries:

- To support the **successful opening** of the new elementary school in Garry Station, West Coulee Station Elementary.
- To address **capacity concerns** at Mike Mountain Horse and Coalbanks elementary schools.
- To **balance** out enrolment at westside elementary schools with the goal of ensuring that enrolment at schools is neither too low or too full.
- Try to **limit disruptions** to students, families, staff and school communities created by boundary changes.
- To minimize the short-term need for additional boundary changes for westside elementary schools.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

(PRE-OPTIONS)

The Division held two engagement evenings in November 2023 to present “**Why**” west Lethbridge elementary school boundaries needed to change. A video presentation was posted on the Division’s website and a survey was conducted as follow-up to these sessions.

To address growth and capacity concerns:

- Relocate the Spanish Bilingual Program and involve the community
- Address overcrowding and equalize school areas
- Proactive planning and use of modular classrooms
- Transparent communication and long-term planning
- Transportation solutions need to be provided

Neighbourhood factors to consider:

- Program and community cohesion
- Proximity to school (walking distance)
- Community and friendship continuity
- Diversity of school community

To Minimize disruption to students and families:

- Phased implementation
- Siblings' enrolment
- Early transparent communication
- Community involvement
- Transportation solutions
- Long-term solutions



What We Heard

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

(PRE-OPTIONS)

Based on information received from the November 2023 engagement, there was a need to further engage with families of students enrolled in the Spanish Bilingual Program at Coalbanks Elementary School.

An engagement session was held in January 2024, followed by a survey to all families in the program.

Students are enrolled in the Spanish bilingual program because:

- Language and cultural enrichment
- Benefits of bilingual education
- Alignment of program values and aspirations
- Cognitive benefits
- Community and peer interactions
- Family background

Factors that would influence continued enrolment in Spanish bilingual program if relocated:

- Location, proximity and convenience
- Westside location preference
- Transportation solution provided
- Program integrity
- Commitment to Spanish bilingual program
- Family schedules and complexity

What We Heard



April 30th, 2024

4:30 - 8:00 PM

At

G.S. Lakie Middle School
50 Blackfoot Blvd W

This is a drop-in opportunity to view preliminary options to realign elementary school boundaries in west Lethbridge

OPTIONS FOR BOUNDARY CHANGES PRESENTED

An Open House was held on April 30th to present three potential boundary realignment options for elementary schools in west Lethbridge starting in the 2025-2026 school year.



1

Split community of Copperwood and redesignate part of community to Nicholas Sheran boundary. Adjustments to Nicholas Sheran and Mike Mountain Horse boundaries. No change to Dr. Probe boundary

2

Relocate Spanish Bilingual Program from Coalbanks to Nicholas Sheran Elementary School. Changes to Nicholas Sheran and Mike Mountain Horse boundaries. No change to Coalbanks or Dr. Probe boundaries.

3

Relocate Spanish Bilingual Program from Coalbanks to West Coulee Station Elementary School. Changes to Nicholas Sheran and Mike Mountain Horse boundaries. No change to Coalbanks or Dr. Probe boundaries.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (AFTER OPTIONS)

What We Heard

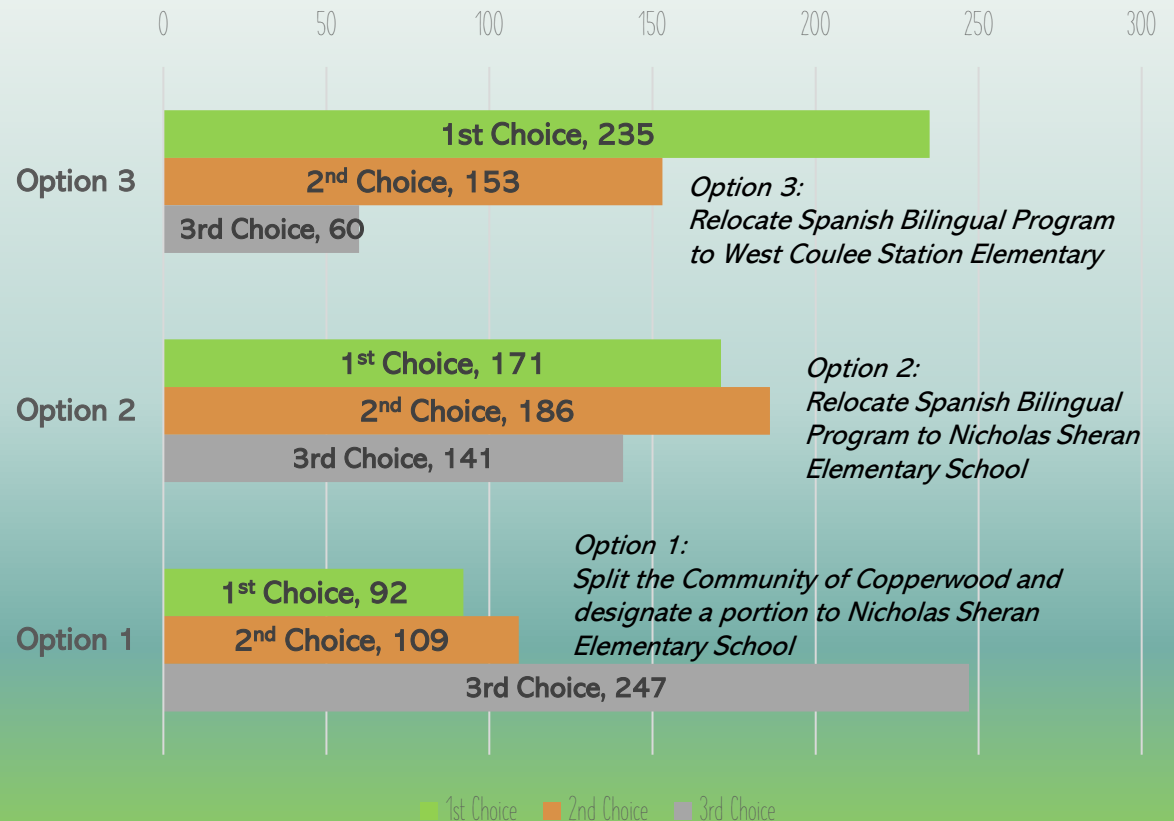
Following the Open House, a survey was conducted to gather community feedback on the three options presented. Detailed survey responses are at the end of the report.

448 Responses Received

Overall Results:

- **Option 3** - 1st choice
- **Option 2** - 2nd choice
- **Option 1** - 3rd choice

Option 3 was the preferred option for Spanish Bilingual Program respondents.



COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The School Boundary Alignment Committee recommends the following changes based on community feedback and the outlined principles:

1. Approval of the new boundaries under **Option 3**, which includes relocating the Spanish Bilingual Program to West Coulee Station Elementary School for the 2025-2026 school year.
2. Provide a **transportation solution** for eligible students in the Spanish Bilingual Program.
3. **Exemption Option:** Allowing grade 4 students from Mike Mountain Horse and Nicholas Sheran Elementary Schools in the 2024-2025 school year to choose to remain at their current school for the 2025-2026 academic year for grade 5.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

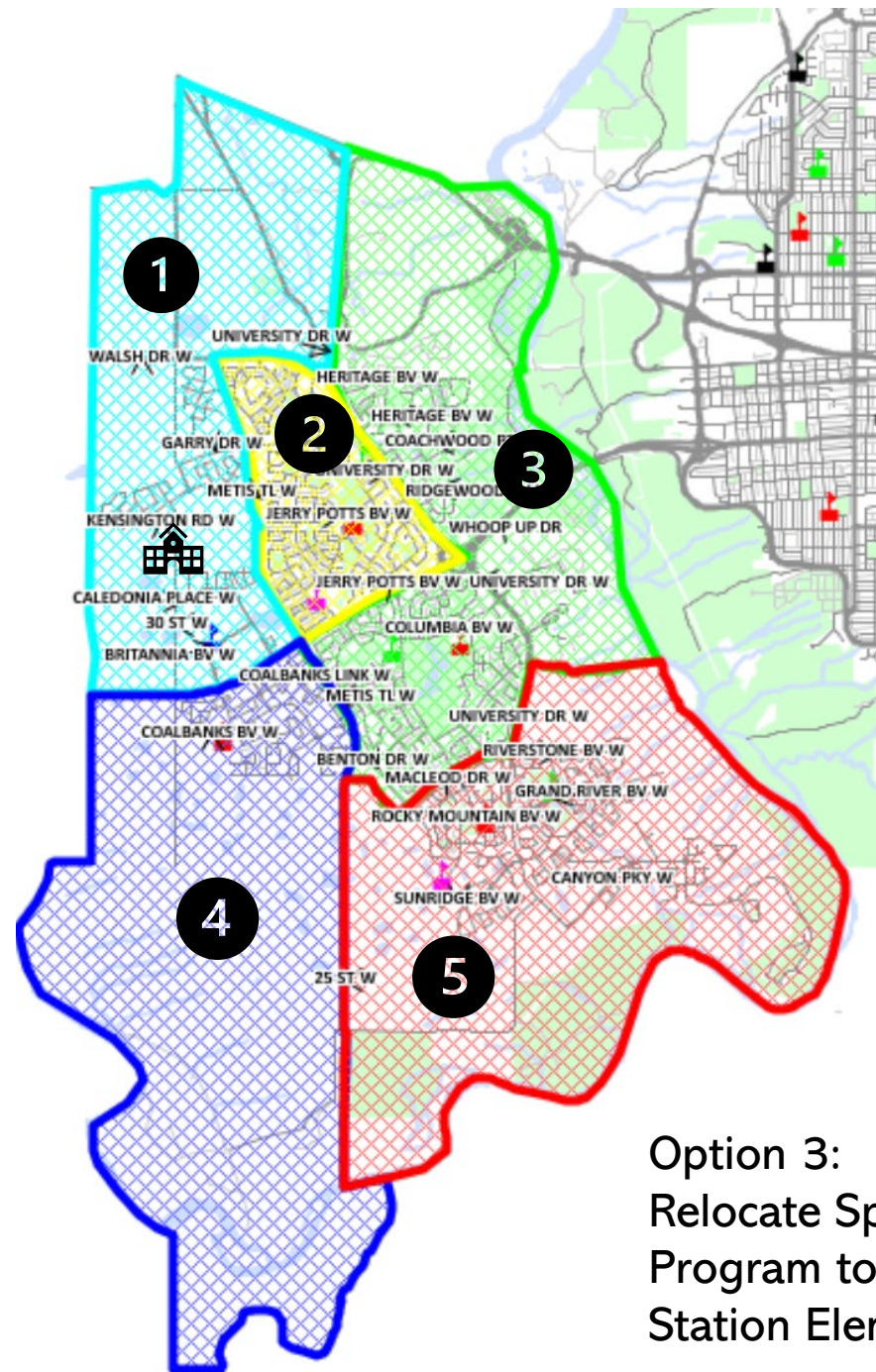
1 West Coulee Station: Spanish Bilingual Program, Country Meadows, Garry Station, Crossings

2 Mike Mountain Horse: West Highlands, Indian Battle Heights, Willow Brook

3 Nicholas Sheran: Heritage Heights, Ridgewood, Varsity Village

4 Coalbanks: Copperwood

5 Dr. Gerald B. Probe: Mountain Heights, Sunridge, Riverstone, Canyons

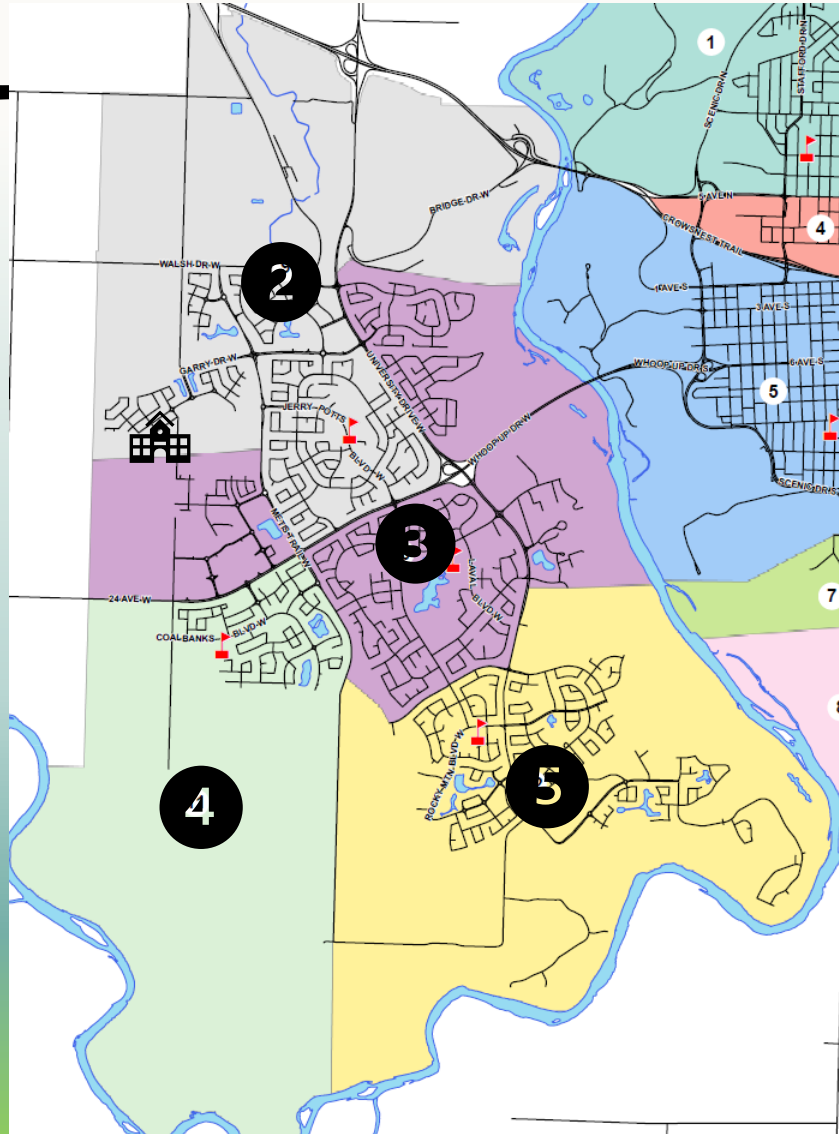


Option 3:
Relocate Spanish Bilingual
Program to West Coulee
Station Elementary School

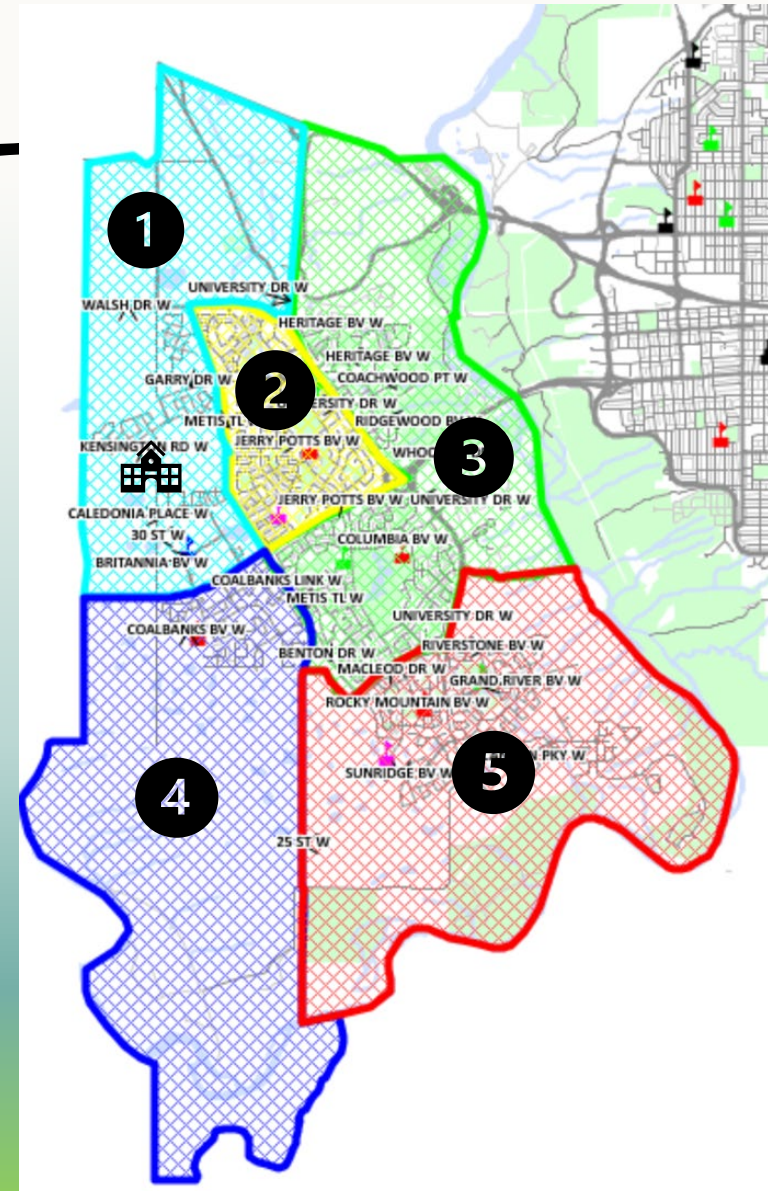
COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Boundary Comparison

Current Boundaries



Proposed Boundaries



- 1 West Coulee Station Elementary
- 2 Mike Mountain Horse Elementary
- 3 Nicholas Sheran Elementary
- 4 Coalbanks Elementary
- 5 Dr. Gerald Probe Elementary

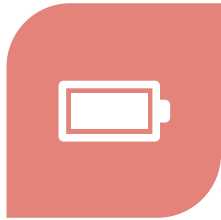
COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

How does Option 3 address the guiding principles?



OPENING OF WEST COULEE STATION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

New boundary plus Spanish Bilingual Program should designate sufficient enrolment for the school's opening.



ADDRESS CAPACITY CONCERNS

The new boundary for Mike Mountain Horse will draw down enrolment. With the relocation of the Spanish Bilingual Program, Coalbanks will have some breathing room for a few years until a new elementary school can be funded by Alberta Education and built in the south end of west Lethbridge.



BALANCE ENROLMENT

Option 3 provides the best balance of enrolment



LIMIT DISRUPTION

Although all boundary changes will cause some disruption, option 3 is the least disruptive by designating communities, where possible, closest to the boundary school and by moving a specialized program that attracts enrolment from all areas of the city. Transportation is also a key consideration in easing disruption. An exemption option for Mike Mountain Horse and Nicholas Sheran students going into grade 5 is considered to limit disruption.



MINIMIZE ADDITIONAL BOUNDARY CHANGES IN THE SHORT-TERM

It is anticipated that option 3, provides for the greatest flexibility to address growth until a new school is funded and built in the south end of west Lethbridge. There are developing and proposed new communities for west Lethbridge. The pace of this development is influenced by a variety of factors such as migration, immigration, and economic conditions.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION

BENEFITS

- Balances enrolment amongst the elementary schools
- Reduces Coalbanks utilization to allow for future growth
- Does not impact regular program at Coalbanks
- Alleviates capacity concern at Mike Mountain Horse
- Transportation solution will be offered for those attending the Spanish Bilingual Program at West Coulee Station and G.S. Lakie if meet transportation eligibility.

CONSEQUENCES

- Disruption to Spanish Bilingual Program families by having to move to a new school.
- West Coulee Station will open with significant enrolment, however there is the ability to add 12 more modular classrooms and not impact core services.
- Potential for current Spanish Bilingual Program families living in Copperwood switching to Coalbanks regular program rather than choosing to continue in Spanish Bilingual Program at West Coulee Station Elementary School.

A FEW FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Transportation and Access: Will transportation be provided for students who are attending the Spanish Bilingual Program at West Coulee Station Elementary School in West Lethbridge as well as from the south or north side if there is interest in the Spanish Bilingual program?

A transportation solution will be provided for all students attending the Spanish Bilingual Program at West Coulee Station Elementary School and G.S. Lakie Middle School beginning in 2025-2026, who meet the distance requirements to be eligible for transportation, which is 1 Km or greater at kindergarten to grade 6 and 2 km for grades 7 - 8.

Where feasible a yellow school bus will be provided as the transportation solution. Where there may not be enough ridership for a yellow school bus, such as North or South Lethbridge, another solution may be available such as a City of Lethbridge Transitpass or a parent provided transportation arrangement.

A FEW FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Exemption Option: What is the exemption option in the proposal and how does that impact my child?

An exemption option considers providing the option for a student that is impacted by the boundary changes to complete a grade(s) at their current school rather than changing to the new boundary school.

In the case of the proposed boundary changes, students who will be going into grade 5 at either Nicholas Sheran or Mike Mountain Horse, and impacted by the boundary changes, will have the **option** to remain at their current school.

If a parent wishes to keep their child in the school for grade 5 and not move to the new designated boundary school, they do this with the understanding that **transportation will not be provided**. Parents will be notified of the process to register students in their new designated boundary school or to request to enroll under the exemption option with their current school.

There will be **no exemption option** for the Spanish Bilingual Program as the program is relocating to West Coulee Station Elementary School.

A FEW FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Spanish Bilingual Program Viability: Will the Spanish Bilingual Program remain a viable program if families living in Copperwood choose to switch to the English program?

Approximately 61% of the students in the Spanish Bilingual Program reside in the Coalbanks Boundary which is the community of Copperwood.

There will be families that may choose to switch to the English Program and not move to West Coulee Station Elementary School for the Spanish Bilingual Program.

It is possible that there may be a dip in enrolment in the program in 2025-2026. The Spanish Bilingual Program has been a program that has attracted students from west, north, and south Lethbridge.

It is our belief that even with some families choosing to remain at Coalbanks, due to the quality teaching and cultural programs provided in the program, the Spanish Bilingual Program will continue to be viable into the future.

A FEW FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Middle School Zoning Impact: How will changes to elementary school boundaries affect middle school zoning and student transitions?

Middle School Boundaries will not change. The change in boundaries has minimal impact on transition to middle school. Spanish Bilingual students regardless of residence will attend G.S. Lakie Middle School for the middle school Spanish Bilingual Program. See the chart below to see how elementary schools feed to middle school.

Elementary School Boundary	Middle School	Notes
Coalbanks	Senator Joyce Fairbairn	
Dr. Probe	Senator Joyce Fairbairn	
Nicholas Sheran	Senator Joyce Fairbairn	*Varsity Village south of Columbia Blvd
	G.S. Lakie	*Varsity Village north of Columbia Blvd, Heritage Heights and Ridgewood
Mike Mountain Horse	G. S. Lakie	
West Coulee Station	G. S. Lakie	Spanish Bilingual will also attend G.S. Lakie

*refer to middle school boundary map for exact street transition

A FEW FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

School Choice: What if I would like to enroll my child in a school that is not considered our boundary school?

Requests being made to attend a school outside of the designated attendance area is referred to as school choice.

Factors that will be considered in allowing a student to enroll in an out of boundary school, which include:

- ability to provide resources and programming, and
- enrolment in the school.

It is important to note that **transportation may not be provided** if a child is enrolled in a school outside their attendance area (except for specialized programs such as the Spanish Bilingual Program). Please refer to *Policy 501.3.1 School Choice*.

See the Report for more FAQs

NEXT STEPS



September 25th, 2024:

- Presentation slides, and report will be posted to the Division Website.
- Online survey for the community to provide feedback on the Committee's recommendations until Oct 18th, 2024.

October 29th, 2024

- A Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7pm to review the feedback and potentially approve or amend the recommendations by the Committee.

If The Recommendations Are Approved

From November 2024 until August 2025:

- Communication about the new boundaries will go out to school families in west Lethbridge.
- New boundary maps will be created.
- Posting of new boundary maps on Division website.
- Engagement with Spanish Bilingual Program families about the move to West Coulee Station for 2025-2026.
- Boundary changes to be made in the Division's student information system for 2025-2026 registration.
- Staffing process for the 2025-2026 school year will proceed as normal with the addition of staffing for West Coulee Station Elementary School.
- Transportation routing changed for the 2025-2026 school year.