

DIVISION COUNCIL OF SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Date and Time: Thursday, May 8, 2025 @ 7:00 p.m.

Location: Central Office – Learning Centre

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order Vice-Chair, Gicela Cardona, called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. Treaty Land Acknowledgement

Gicela Cardona, Division Council Vice-Chair, shared the Treaty Land Acknowledgement recorded by the students at Vincent Massey School.

3. Roll Call for Attendance

Alexandra Middle School Chair	Heidi	Mack
Crescent Heights High School Chair	Karen	Saffran
upcoming Chair	Sandy	Wilde
Medicine Hat Christian School, Chair	Jenna	Brost
River Heights School, Co-Chair	Heather	O'Reilly
Division Council Vice-Chair and George Davison School, Chair	Gicela	Cardona
Medicine Hat High School, Chair	Tanya	Schaffer
Trustee Representative	Pat	Grissonich
Associate Superintendent, Student Services	Cody	Edwards
President of ATA Local 1	Michael	Jerred
Principal Representative	Katrina	Corbett
Presenter: Secretary Treasurer	Leanne	Dulle
Health and Wellness Manager	Sarah	Scahill
AHS, Health Promotion Facilitator	Sonja	Brown
Presenters: Closer to Home		
*Recording Secretary: Recording in TEAMS		

4. Adoption of Minutes

Gicela Cardona, Division Council Vice-Chair, presented the minutes of the Division Council of School Councils' meeting held on [March 13, 2025](#) for adoption. A motion was made by to adopt the minutes, all in favor.

5. Close to Home Presentation

Cody Edwards, Associate Superintendent introduced presenters from 'Closer to Home'. The service provider is newly operating in Medicine Hat but established in Calgary and other regions.

The organization is recruiting foster families in Southern Alberta and aims to provide 50 beds for children and families.

Closer to Home supports foster children from diverse backgrounds, ages 0–18, and highlighted the importance of cultural diversity and individualized care.

The presentation included personal testimony about fostering over 35 children in 15 years, emphasizing the impact on both children and foster families.

Information packets (fact sheets, posters, business cards, supervisor contact details) are available and those in attendance are encouraged to share information with their schools to support foster family recruitment.

6. Draft Budget 2025-2026 Spring Budget Release

Leanne Dulle, Secretary Treasurer, presented an overview of the draft budget for the 2025-2026 school year. The three key items are enrollment, revenues and expenses.

Enrollment

Projected enrollment for 2025-2026 is 6,881 students (a decrease of 156 students from last year), attributed to lower birth rates and a larger outgoing Grade 12 class compared to incoming kindergarten numbers. The division has seen a steady decline in enrollment over the past five years, with most of the reduction occurring in the upcoming year. Enrollment numbers are monitored closely throughout the summer, but final figures are not confirmed until September.

Revenues

91% of our budget comes from Alberta Education grants. Base grants constitute about 49% of the total grant profile (approximately \$87 million)

- Base grants did not increase (0% change), despite rising operational costs
- The mental health grant, previously over \$600,000 annually, was reduced by \$347,000 as the provincial pilot program ended and was replaced by a broader but smaller allocation.
- The province changed the funding formula from a 50-30-20 weighted moving average to a 70-30 model. This adjustment is less favorable for divisions with declining enrollment, as it reduces the funding buffer for departing students.
- Other grants saw minor increases (e.g., 2.32%), but these did not offset the lack of increase in base grants.
- The division anticipates a net reduction in instruction grants of about \$1 million, primarily due to fewer students.
- Local revenues (investment income, fundraising, fees) account for \$5.4 million (5.7%), and school-generated funds and fundraising contribute \$2.8 million (3%).

- Declining enrollment directly reduces funding, as grants are tied to student enrollment.

Expenses

- Instruction block: 79% of expenditures, matching the proportion of revenue allocated to instruction.
- Operations and maintenance: Approximately 12% of expenses, with recent relief from the elimination of the carbon tax helped to offset rising utility costs.
- Transportation, system administration, and external services comprise the remainder.
- Staffing Costs: salaries and benefits make up about 75% of the budget.
 - Despite a reduction of 7.7 certificated staff (teachers), overall staffing costs are increasing by \$1.4 million due to grid movement, benefit increases, and other factors.
 - Non-certificated staffing: While education assistant (EA) numbers at schools are not being reduced, the exact composition will be finalized after staffing meetings.
 - The Play and Learn program, now licensed, requires eight additional staff to meet regulatory ratios, offsetting some reductions elsewhere.
 - Net staffing change is a reduction of approximately 3.6 full-time equivalents when combining certificated and non-certificated adjustments.
 - Additional expense pressures include increased group benefit costs, sub pay, and specialized staffing for mental health and complexity classroom initiatives.
 - The division is implementing contingency plans due to ongoing negotiations (e.g., ATA settlement and complexity classroom fund), with estimated allocations included in the budget.

The division is focused on achieving a balanced budget for 2025-26, following three years of planned deficits and reserve reductions, however, the lack of increase in base grants, combined with rising costs and declining enrollment, creates significant fiscal pressure.

[Draft Budget Spring Release 2025-26](#)

Nutrition Policy

Cody Edwards, Associate Superintendent of Student Services, introduced Sonja from Alberta Health Services and Sarah, the Division's Health and Wellness Manager. Cody shared an overview of ongoing efforts to enhance nutrition in schools.

As part of this initiative, a survey will be distributed to school council chairs to gather feedback on current food vendors, hot lunch programs, and fundraising practices. The survey aims to collect information on both the challenges and successes related to

offering nutritious food, as well as details about menu offerings and practices such as breakfast programs and special event meals.

The insights gathered will help develop an approved vendor list that aligns with the updated nutrition policy. School councils are encouraged to complete the survey by mid-June.

7. Items for Information

Appreciation Dinner

School council chairs have been invited to the annual appreciation dinner on Thursday, June 12, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. Please RSVP.

Reminder: Parent Engagement Grant

This grant is available to all schools. There are specific guidelines for the use of the funds that can be found on the ASCA website.

- If your school makes use of the \$500 grant you will have to report it.
- If your school does not make use of the grant, it is sent back to the government.

School Council Annual Reporting

This report is due on September 30 annually. If you are not planning to continue as Chair in the next school year, please work with your principal to complete this form.

All School Councils are to submit an Annual Report by September 30. A [Template](#) is on the MHPSD website.

Trustee School Allocations 2024-2025

Yvonne Sissons	Connaught School, Elm Street School, Crestwood School
Pat Grisonich	Crescent Heights High School, Dr. Ken Sauer School, Vincent Massey School, Webster Niblock School
Rick Massini	River Heights School, Herald School, Medicine Hat High School, Medicine Hat Christian School
Deborah Forbes	Dr. Roy Wilson Learning Centre, Ross Glen School, Southview School
Catherine Wilson	Alexandra Middle School, George Davison School, The Hub/Pathways, Coulee Collegiate, Central Office, Warehouse

Future Meeting Date: October 2025

ADJOURNMENT

School Council Parking Lot Conversations

Division Council Chairs would like to create an opportunity for sharing ideas, processes and build relationships.