

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 27, 2003

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Horse Hill Junior High Program Closure

ORIGINATOR: A. Habinski, Executive Director School and District Services

RESOURCE

STAFF: Jenise Bidulock, Bob Boruszcak, Robert Craig, Seth Crook, Kathy McCabe, Pat Niven, Cathy Pasternak, Gerri Porter, Bonnie Zack

RECOMMENDATION

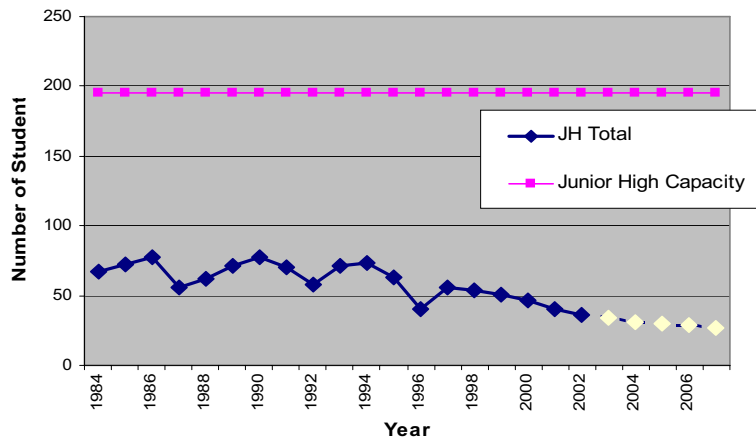
That the closure of the Horse Hill Junior High Program at the end of the 2002-2003 school year be approved.

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Rationale for Recommending Closure

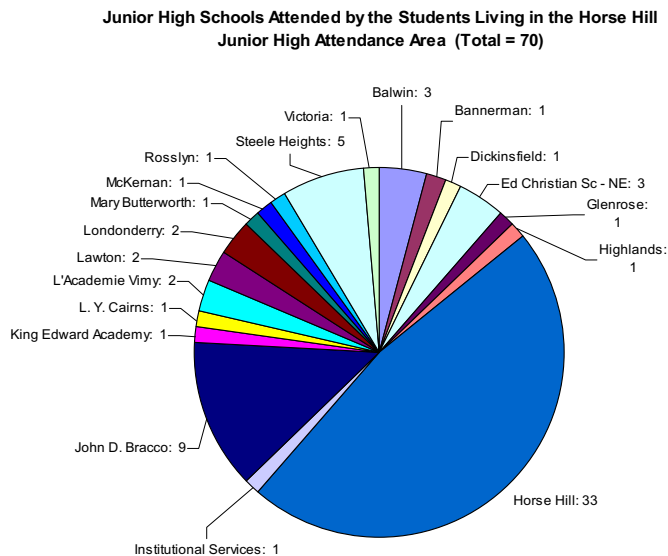
Enrolment in the junior high program at Horse Hill School has been declining for a number of years. Junior high enrolment as of September 30, 2002 was 36 students. The estimated capacity of the school's junior high wing is 190 students. Enrolment is projected to continue to decrease over the next five years as enrolment data indicates that students from the area are choosing to access other district schools with more program choices.

Horse Hill Junior High Program Capacity and Enrolment

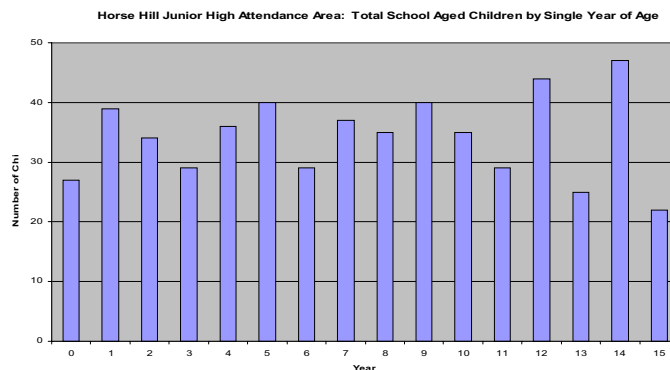


With a projected enrolment of 34 students in the junior high program next year, it would be extremely difficult for the school to offer the usual range of program choices available to junior high students in the district. Re-location of the program will ensure that students receive a wider range of options and opportunities for extra-curricular activities. Students would be in straight grade classes rather than the combined classes that would result from a junior high program with 34 students. Re-location will also ensure that Horse Hill will be able to continue to offer a strong elementary program without having to divert resources to the junior high program.

On September 30, 2002 there were 70 junior high students living in the Horse Hill junior high attendance area of which 33 are currently attending Horse Hill. The second largest group of students attends John D. Bracco School, with the remainder of the students choosing 17 other district junior high schools.



Alberta Government population data indicates that the number of school aged students living within the Horse Hill junior high attendance area will remain around an average of 34 per grade for the foreseeable future. Based on the district's expected share of the total population in the area, and the district average where 50% of the students in the area would attend other schools, the population could be expected to generate roughly 11 junior high students per grade into the foreseeable future.



The junior high program at Horse Hill School is eligible for closure according to board policy FL.BP. The junior high enrolment of 12 students per grade meets the board's criteria for closure of a junior high program with enrolment below an average of 30 students per grade.

Closure of the junior high program would result in the closure and demolition of the junior high wing of the school, reducing operation and maintenance costs and increasing the school's utilization rate. More information about cost savings is included within Appendix I.

Accommodation and Transportation of Horse Hill Junior High Students

If the junior high program is closed, the students would be designated to John D. Bracco School. The principal of John D. Bracco has been consulted and has indicated that there is space in the school to accommodate the students from Horse Hill if they were to all choose to attend John D. Bracco. Closure of the Horse Hill program and re-location of the students will give the students access to many more resources and program options available at the larger junior high school.

The Horse Hill junior high attendance area is mainly rural with the exception of some acreage subdivisions and the Evergreen community. Bussing has been available throughout the attendance area to Horse Hill for junior high. Bussing will be available for students living within the attendance area to John D. Bracco School. Student Transportation has committed to the development of a number of bus route scenarios and to consulting with the community to determine the best transportation arrangements for the area.

Consultation

In accordance with the School Act, a public meeting was held at Horse Hill School on April 14, 2003. The meeting was attended by five trustees, district staff, and 48 members of the community. Information about Horse Hill School, programs, transportation, and demographics was shared at the meeting. Attendees were also provided with information about the implications of the closure for the students, the community, and the district, the implications of keeping the school open, and information about the implementation of closure (Appendix I). Opportunity was given to ask questions and raise issues and concerns. Questions were answered by the administration at the meeting. A follow-up summary of questions and answers from the meeting and notification of the May 27th public board meeting were subsequently mailed to those in attendance (Appendix II).

Input from the City of Edmonton

The City of Edmonton was invited to comment on potential community impacts of the proposed closure. The following is a summary of their impact statement.

"There would be no impact to existing community programs, sportsfields, parkland or park amenities if the junior high program at Horse Hill were closed, given that community programs could continue to be booked through Horse Hill School. If there were an increase in unused space in the school, there might be some potential for the addition of an out-of-school care and/or day-care program as has been requested by residents. Closure of the whole school would have a major impact on the community. Horse Hill School is the only community facility focal point in an area that encompasses approximately 7,000 acres of land."

AH:cp

APPENDIX I – Notice of Meeting

APPENDIX II – Questions and Answers from the April 14, 2003 Public Meeting

APPENDIX III – Alberta Regulation 238/97 – Closure of Schools Regulation

APPENDIX IV – Board Policy FL.BP School Closure

NOTICE OF MEETING

MEETING TO CONSIDER RE-LOCATION OF THE JUNIOR HIGH PROGRAM AT HORSE HILL SCHOOL

Date: Monday, April 14, 2003

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: Horse Hill School

1. **How will school closure affect the junior high attendance area defined for Horse Hill School?** Horse Hill junior high attendance area would remain unchanged. Students residing in the area would be accommodated at John D. Bracco School. Transportation from the area to the school would be provided.
2. **How will the closure affect the attendance at other schools?** The re-location of the Horse Hill junior high program would have a nominal affect on other schools. According to September 2002 enrolment numbers, there are 70 public junior high students living in the Horse Hill School junior high attendance area, of which 33 attend Horse Hill School. The second and third largest groups of students from the area currently attend John D. Bracco School (9 students) and Steele Heights School (5 students). The remaining students are spread out among 17 other junior high schools. The 33 students attending the Horse Hill junior high program would be accommodated at John D. Bracco where they would be guaranteed admission, or at other district schools of their choice provided space is available. The number of public school students living in the Horse Hill junior high attendance area is projected to remain stable.
3. **How many students need to be relocated as a result of the closure of the Horse Hill junior high program?** The projected enrolment at Horse Hill for next year is 34 junior high students in grades seven to nine. These students would be accommodated at John D. Bracco School or other district schools of their choice in September, 2003.
4. **What is the need for, and extent of bussing?** The Horse Hill junior high attendance area is mainly rural with the exception of some acreage subdivisions and the Evergreen community. Bussing has been available throughout the attendance area to Horse Hill for junior high. Bussing would be available to students living within the attendance area to John D. Bracco School.
5. **What are the program implications for other schools and for the students when they are attending other schools?** The re-location of students to John D. Bracco would increase enrolment and allow school staff to provide more effective programming. Students would receive a wider range of options and opportunities for extra-curricular activities. There would be increased availability of high quality equipment, computers, and materials for all students. The junior high libraries of both schools would be pooled to extend the available library collection and a wide range of science and music equipment would be available. There would also be more opportunities for students with special needs to have access to small group programming.
6. **What are the educational impacts of closing the school?** Students from the Horse Hill attendance area would be accommodated at nearby John D. Bracco School. The number

of combined grade classes would be reduced so a greater percentage of students are in straight grade classes. At John D. Bracco there are a greater number of teachers working effectively in a cooperative setting which facilitates the sharing of ideas and increased effectiveness in teaching. Combined resources will be used more efficiently to meet the learning needs of students. Because there is more than one class per grade in John D. Bracco School, students would be afforded more options of settings that suit their own individual learning styles.

7. **What are the educational impacts of the school staying open?** If the junior high program at Horse Hill School were to remain operational it would be operating with a projected student population of 34 students spread among grades seven to nine. The school would have combined grade classes, limited programming options for all students, and limited funding to provide instructional materials and equipment.
8. **What are the financial impacts including the effects on operational costs and capital implications of closing the school?** The relocation of students to John D. Bracco School would result in a reduction in staff costs at Horse Hill that will be offset by the reduction in the funds allocated to the school for each student in the junior high program. The principal estimates that the closure of the junior high wing will result in an annual savings in custodial costs of approximately \$20,000. Edmonton Public Schools Facilities department estimates that the average annual total cost per square metre for operation, maintenance and the cost for expected future upgrades to a school is \$73.82 per square metre. If the junior high program is closed, the district will explore opportunities to reduce the size of the existing Horse Hill School building, which would result in a reduction in the costs for utilities, operation and maintenance. This would result in an increase in resources available to apply toward the school's elementary program. As the majority of students attending the junior high program at Horse Hill arrive by bus, the relocation to John D. Bracco is not expected to result in a significant increase in transportation costs to the district.
9. **What are the financial impacts including the effects on operational costs and capital implications if the school were not closed?** If Horse Hill were to continue to provide junior high programming, the low student enrolment would continue to strain resources for teaching and learning. Building upgrades, and continued operation and maintenance costs for the junior high wing would also result in considerable cost to the district.
10. **Would there be a need to upgrade existing space or build new school space as a result of increased enrolment other schools?** John D. Bracco School was opened in 1992 and as one of the district's newest schools, does not require modernization. There is sufficient space in the building to accommodate the students from the Horse Hill junior high attendance area.

What is the proposed use of the school building if it is closed? The district will continue to operate the elementary program in the school. Enrolment projections support the viability of elementary programming in Horse Hill School. Closure of the junior high program may present opportunities for right-sizing the school to accommodate the continued provision of elementary programming.

PUBLIC MEETING AT HORSE HILL SCHOOL

The following questions and answers are provided as an overview of the key issues raised by parents and community members at the April 14 public meeting.

- 1. Is there not a chance to finish at Horse Hill for the grades 7, 8 and 9?**
Low student enrolment is the reason why the junior high program is being recommended for closure. Phasing out the program over a number of years would result in even lower enrolment and increased difficulty to provide adequate programming for the students remaining in junior high. A phase-out of the program would also be a challenge for the school's overall budget, which would require that resources be diverted from the elementary program to support the junior high program. Phase out would reduce the enrolment even further and would not provide for programming opportunities available in the receiving school.
- 2. What if the deadline for applying to other schools has passed, before a decision if school closure is appropriate has been made?** If the junior high program is closed, John D. Bracco will be designated to accommodate all students living within the Horse Hill junior high attendance area. Edmonton Public Schools provides parents with a choice in where they enrol their children, however, if the student wishes to apply to a school with an enrolment guideline please contact Edmonton Public Schools, Planning Department to determine if they can be accommodated.
- 3. What will the transportation arrangements be?** Student Transportation will run simulations of different routes and will share possible routes with parents for feedback. The same fee structure will be applied as currently exists. Transportation will only be provided to the designated receiving school, John D. Bracco.
- 4. What will happen to the teachers? Where will they go?** Teachers on permanent contract to the district are encouraged to apply to available positions at other schools. Teachers on temporary or probationary contracts may apply to available positions after all permanent staff have been placed.
- 5. What will we do with all the extra space?** The district will continue to operate the elementary program in the school. Closure of the junior high program may present opportunities for right-sizing the school to accommodate the continued provision of elementary programming.
- 6. Have you spent much time looking at ways to keep it open?** The junior high program has been declining for several years. The district has examined alternative programs including horsemanship. The school's enrolment has continued to decline to the point where the junior high program is no longer viable.
- 7. There are a lot of houses going up, if junior high is closed down, how often is a junior high reopened, or do you turn around and build another one?** If the Evergreen community were to double in size, it is projected that this would generate another 15 to 20 students for the junior high program. Due to the condition of the junior high wing, the district would likely consider new construction if necessary rather than re-opening the program at Horse Hill.