

Greater Victoria district adds kindergarten spaces ^[1]

Author: Bell, Jeff

Source: Times Colonist

Format: Article

Publication Date: 21 Feb 2017

AVAILABILITY

Read online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

A jump in enrolment has prompted the Greater Victoria school district to add more space for English and French immersion kindergarten students.

French immersion programs at George Jay Elementary and Sir James Douglas Elementary will each get another class, with enough English spaces created to accommodate all students in their school-catchment areas.

District superintendent Piet Langstraat said student enrolment is expected to grow by about 2,000 over the next decade. Population growth among kindergarten-age students is especially high.

He said the district is working quickly in an effort to get kindergarten students into their neighbourhood schools. The number of kindergarten registrants in Victoria is up by 37 heading into the 2017-18 school year, and accompanies increases over the past two years.

The November Supreme Court of Canada decision that could result in reduced class sizes is among the factors raising issues at the kindergarten level, in particular, said district secretary-treasurer Mark Walsh. The court decision restored 2002 levels for class size and composition in B.C.

"The impact for us means that if the old language comes back, the class size for kindergarten is actually two students per class smaller."

The size would go to 20 from 22, Walsh said, which adds up when all of the district's 27 elementary schools are considered. Up to four elementary schools could be getting a portable classroom — Quadra, Willows, Oaklands and Campus View.

"What we've committed is that any of the kindergarten students that registered in their catchment . . . are going to be able to access the regular program for that particular catchment school," Walsh said.

"We certainly have a number of schools that have to increase the number of kindergarten classes to accommodate that."

The situation is different in French immersion kindergarten, with some programs having wait lists despite there being enough room overall.

"As far as we're aware, everyone that wants the French program in kindergarten is able to have access to it," Walsh said. "It just might not be at the school they've chosen."

Since French immersion is a regional offering, some students might not get into the program in their catchment area, he said.

Shannon MacLeod, president of the George Jay Parent Advisory Council, said that French immersion has been at the school for three years and is a popular program. She said the school has extra space to allow for growth.

Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils president Audrey Smith said people are reacting favourably to the district's actions.

"I'm happy to see they're responding to the demands of the registration situation," she said. "I can't wait to hear more about what their plans are because adding two French classes means you have to add two French teachers and you have to add the resources for those French classes."

Walsh said the general need for more classrooms could put pressure on child-care providers who operate independent programs in schools. The district has issued a letter to those involved, Walsh said.

"It's more than likely we may need to share some additional space that we never had to in the past."

The district will try hard to ensure that child care is accessible at schools where it is needed, Walsh said.

Meanwhile, the B.C. government has announced funding of \$29.4 million to public and independent schools to purchase supplies and resources.

The B.C. Teachers' Federation welcomes the grant but president Glen Hansman said it's only half of what is required to address classroom needs.

B.C.'s 60 school districts will share a total of \$27.4 million based on student enrolment, while the province's independent schools will share \$2 million.

The Education Ministry said that the funding works out to about \$50 per student.

Districts can use it for everything from textbooks and computer programs, to athletic gear, art supplies and lab equipment.

-reprinted from Times Colonist

Region: British Columbia ^[3]

Tags: spaces ^[4]

access ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/17/02/greater-victoria-district-adds-kindergarten-spaces>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/17/02/greater-victoria-district-adds-kindergarten-spaces> [2]

<https://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/greater-victoria-district-adds-kindergarten-spaces-1.10161658> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7860> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/spaces> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/access>