

Riverdale kindergarten wins reprieve ^[1]

Lobbying parents keep program open for 2010-11 school year

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Hard work by parents and community members paid off Tuesday when Edmonton Public Schools superintendent Edgar Schmidt announced the program would remain open for the 2010-11 school year. Schmidt said the decision was based on significant enrolment of 13 students, plus one pending, which occurred in the past couple of days.

"The community has done an outstanding job promoting the school," he said.

Lynette McKell was relieved to learn her daughter could attend kindergarten at Riverdale. Her son is in Grade 6 at the school, and she was worried they would be split up.

"It was pretty hard not knowing, especially so close to the start of school, which is a big deal," she said. "I really like Riverdale. The teachers really get to know the kids and there's enough space and resources."

Mike Evans, president of the Riverdale Parent Advisory Council, was happy with the decision.

"This is what we had hoped for," he said. "We were confident when they set the target back in June that we would be able to achieve it for this fall."

Two Edmonton schools weren't so lucky. Kindergarten programs at Donnan and Malmo elementary schools are being cut due to lack of interest. Only three students were enrolled at Donnan as of April. Despite a similar registration campaign to Riverdale, no additional students signed up over the summer.

Malmo's English program was cut after no students signed up, but the Arabic-bilingual kindergarten class continues with 47 registered students. Schmidt said decisions are based not simply on class sizes, but the school's total enrolment. He said schools can create split classes to deal with shortfalls.

Though Riverdale falls short of the 15 students required for the school to break even, Schmidt said the principal was confident he could make things work.

The future of Riverdale depends on continued enrolment.

Schmidt said there's been small growth in student numbers in recent years and the board anticipates enrolment to plateau for the next few years.

- reprinted from the Edmonton Journal

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