

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

May 26, 2020

For Immediate Release

School playgrounds will re-open following municipalities

NGPS school playgrounds and fields will re-open in conjunction with local municipalities, one day following the opening of municipal playgrounds.

Re-opening Schedule:

- Alberta Beach: May 25 - Grasmere School playground and field open May 26.
- Onoway: June 2 - Onoway Elementary and Onoway Jr/Sr High school playgrounds and fields open June 3.
- Lac Ste Anne County: June 1 - Rich Valley, Sangudo and Darwell school playgrounds and fields open June 2.
- Mayerthorpe: May 26 - Elmer Elson and Mayerthorpe Jr/Sr High school playgrounds and fields open May 27.
- Whitecourt: June 1 - Pat Hardy, Whitecourt Central, Percy Baxter and Hilltop Jr/Sr High school playgrounds and fields open June 2.
- Fox Creek: May 27 - Fox Creek School playground and fields open May 28.
- Valleyview: May 22 - Oscar Adolphson, Harry Gray and Hillside Jr/Sr High school playgrounds and fields open May 23.

In accordance with Alberta Health and Government requirements, visitors must follow public health guidelines including maintaining two metres of physical distance from others, gathering in groups of 50 or fewer and only sharing common equipment with members of the same family or cohort.

Board approves spending of Capital Maintenance Renewal Stimulus package

On May 20, 2020, the Alberta Government announced they would be advancing infrastructure and maintenance funds to school divisions to keep Albertans working and to take advantage of empty schools to complete facility upgrades <https://bit.ly/3cmWwRw>.

Northern Gateway Public Schools will receive \$2.5 million dollars from the stimulus funding to accelerate long-term maintenance and renewal projects. The NGPS Board approved the spending of the fund as follows:

Capital Maintenance Renewal Stimulus package, continued:

- Rich Valley School – new gymnasium
- Elmer Elson Elementary School – upgrade exterior doors, new roofing, upgrades to heating/ventilation system
- Pat Hardy Primary School – upgrade heating/ventilation system
- Hilltop Jr/Sr High School – phase two of exterior upgrades – insulation and finishing details
- Hillside Jr/Sr High School – structural/washroom renovation

Budget 2020-21

The 2020-21 Budget Report for Northern Gateway Public Schools was presented to the Board for approval. Every Spring, the Division prepares a budget for the upcoming school year based on funding from the province and projected student enrollment numbers.

NGPS' total operating budget for the 2020-21 school year is \$69,884,754-million - a \$478,625 million increase over last year. The new funding framework from the Government of Alberta presents a significantly different methodology in allocating funding throughout the education system.

The 2020-21 NGPS budget is based on the 2020 provincial budget announced on Feb. 27, 2020. However, because of the recent cancellation of in-school classes; related funding cuts for the 2019-20 school year; Bill 5, which places new restrictions on how school divisions use operating reserves; and anticipated impacts from COVID-19, there are still a lot of unknowns related to the 2020-21 budget. Overall, the NGPS 2020-21 Budget supports the mission, values and priorities of Northern Gateway Public Schools.

Three Year Education Plan

Each year, school divisions prepare a Three Year Education Plan and an Annual Education Results Report. In the Fall, we take our results from Alberta Education's Accountability Pillar and show our progress in our Annual Education Results Report. These results are also used to develop the Three Year Education Plan that outlines priorities and actions for improvement. The Government has requirements for school authority planning and reporting, reviews all school divisions' Annual Education Results Reports and Three Year Education Plans and works with school divisions to help find ways to keep improving student outcomes.

NGPS Assistant Superintendent Leslee Jodry presented the draft Three Year Education Plan 2020-23 and reviewed NGPS' priorities and strategies for supporting student success over the next three years.

Hilltop Jr/Sr High School International Field Trip – Behind the Iron Curtain Tour

Hilltop Jr/Sr High School is planning an experiential learning experience abroad next school year. The Board gave preliminary approval for the request which would see students travel to Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary in the Spring of 2021.

Division preparedness Fall 2020

Administration continues to plan for the Fall of 2020 with a focus on Alberta's Scenario 1 - Full Return to Operations.

Scenario 3 - Maintaining At-Home/Online learning is also being developed with steps being taken to provide more comprehensive online program offerings.

Scenario 2 - Partial re-opening preparedness presents more complexity. Plans are underway to address student and staff safety in a partial re-opening scenario. Detailed plans around school scheduling, transportation services and staffing requirements await clarification from the Government of Alberta, which is currently targeting a mid-June decision related to Stage 2 re-opening and an August forecast for Stage 3 re-entry directives.

Ongoing Emergency Remote Teaching versus Online Learning

Since March 15, Alberta students and teachers have engaged in emergency remote teaching. This time period has required schools and teachers to access quick solutions, utilize creative problem solving, determine key essential learnings, be flexible with assignments, and engage in a variety of assessments. Emergency remote teaching can be stressful for both students and teachers and it is meant to provide temporary access to instruction.

As we move forward with the possibility of continued online learning in September 2020, there will be adjusted expectations from the Government of Alberta. A move toward online learning will require careful planning. Online learning, just like face-to-face classroom instruction will need to recognize and support both social and cognitive processes. Teachers will need time for preparation and development.

Student Attendance during COVID-19

Attendance during this time represents many complexities for schools and tracking of attendance. Students are engaging in learning in a variety of forms and teachers are using many methods of connection and instruction. Engagement could be in a Google Meet with the class, a Google Meet individually or with a small group, completion of assignments as posted in the Google Classroom, instruction through Google Classroom, by telephone and via email.

Schools are providing attendance information on a monthly basis.

Division office and school personnel are working together to support students and families who are struggling to engage in learning within this environment.

Personal circumstances may be especially challenging for families and students during this time. Support is available through division office and school staff.

Student Report Cards

As indicated by the Minister of Education in March, all students on track to progress will and learning continues. Remote learning requires a variety of instructional methods and flexibility with formative assessment. NGPS teachers are working diligently to support continued learning for our students.

- Report cards were generated and placed in student record files on March 15, 2020. A June report card will also be generated and will include comments regarding essential learning that has taken place for the students. Teachers will also comment on the student's engagement in the learning opportunities.
- For Grades K-9, a grade level of achievement will be included in the comment section indicating Meets or Does Not Meet grade level expectations.
- For high school students, teachers will provide a final percentage grade based on both the work completed up to March 15, 2020, as well as consideration of the learning completed over the last three months. Reports will be placed in the student record files as well mailed out to students and parents.

Pre-School Program Unit (PUF) Funding for 3 year olds will continue for 2020-21

Changes to Program Unit Funding and a cap on pre-kindergarten funding support for PUF students necessitated a review of current 3-year old program offerings across the division. We can confirm that current 3-year old PUF programs operating within NGPS will be maintained. Cost impacts based on projected PUF enrolments and the pre-Kindergarten PUF funding cap will be reviewed again in the Fall of 2020.

Dual Credit Programming 2020-21

Dual credit program offerings will be scaled back in 2020-21 due to changes to the funding model and the elimination of Continuing Education Units in favour of set funding rates. The division continues to actively seek third party sponsorship on an ongoing basis to offset tuition costs for Dual Credit program students. Given that some tuition costs are in excess of \$8,000 per year, program viability is of significant concern. Recommendations for the Fall of 2020 will be based on the possibility of combining third party resources with school support and individual student fees for each Dual Credit course.

Public Members of the Board's Audit Committee

The Audit Committee of the NGPS Board welcomes two new public members this month:

- Dave Arcand, Manager, Whitcourt Servus Credit Union
- **Kathleen Thibeault**, Chartered Professional Accountant and Certified General Accountant



Northern Gateway
Public Schools

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Next Meeting

The next Board meeting will take place **virtually on June 16, 2020** commencing at **1:00 p.m.** Members of the public are welcome to attend. Please contact Board Secretary Wendy Robertson at the Division Office for more information, 780-778-2800 or 1-800-262-8674.

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