



Memorandum

Date: September 10, 2024
To: Board of Education
From: Kevin Kaardal, Superintendent of Schools/CEO
Re: 2024 School Opening Report – Part 1

1. RELEVANT BOARD MOTION/DIRECTION

Annual report requested by the Board.

2. BACKGROUND

This report covers the time period of September 3, 2024 through to September 10, 2024 (unless otherwise noted) and provides an update regarding the first days of the 2024/2025 school year. There will be additional adjustments and refinements in the coming weeks, and these will be reported at the next Public Board Meeting on September 25, 2024.

3. SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

School Opening

The District has had a great start to the 2024/2025 school year.

4. INFORMATION STATEMENT

District Enrolment Trends

In the spring of 2024, the projected headcount for September 30, 2024 was 24,765, which represented an anticipated increase of 562 students from the same time in September of 2023. As of September 9, 2024, 24,402 students were registered in the system, representing a decrease of 363 from original projections, but 199 over last year's September 30, 2023 numbers (24,203). These numbers do not include International students or Alternate Education students. Having noted this, it is important to recognize that schools are continuing to accept registrations and following up with student absences/withdrawals. A more accurate count of student enrolment will be provided in Part 2 of the 2024 School Opening Report at the September 25, 2024 Public Board Meeting, as well as following the September 30th 1701 submission to the Ministry of Education and Child Care.

Currently 25,252 students are attending in-class instruction with 243 attending eSchoolBC, which results in a current student head count of 25,495. From a budgeting perspective, the student FTE, including International, Alternate Education and eSchoolBC students is 25,591.

International Education Program and The Welcome Centre

International Education

The Central Okanagan Public Schools' International Education Program continues to be attractive to students from around the world due to the outstanding efforts of staff, quality schools, homestay families, and a welcoming community.

There are 410 students confirmed to come to the Central Okanagan during the 2024/2025 school year. To date we have 476 fee paying students who have arrived and another 85 coming in the second half of the school year.

The students attending in the International Education Program for the 2024/2025 school year represent 28 countries and jurisdictions including: Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, the Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, the United States, and Vietnam.

The Welcome Centre

The Central Okanagan Public Schools' Welcome Centre helped to settle 744 students (K-12) and their families into the District and community in 2023/2024. We are seeing steady increase in enrolments for school opening this year. The Welcome Centre staff have welcomed 313 (K-12) students and their families from 46 countries compared to last year's new registrations of 286 students. There are currently 2,362 newly immigrated children attending Central Okanagan Public Schools - all of whom are supported through the Welcome Centre and the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) Program.

The Central Okanagan has become a settlement destination and has seen a steady influx of families from an ever-growing number of countries around the world. Students from 96 different countries are currently attending Central Okanagan Public Schools. The top 10 countries for newly registered newcomers are: Philippines, India, Syria, Jamaica, Ukraine, Mexico, Afghanistan, UK, USA and China.

The large numbers of newly arrived students and their families continue to have a positive impact creating a much more culturally diverse and globally aware local community. Students, teachers and schools are enriched through the exchange of ideas and infusion of culture from around the world.

Human Resources Recruitment

The Human Resources Department has completed the initial placement of teaching staff for school start-up. Senior staff continue to monitor enrolment, to determine if any teaching staff need to be reassigned. As enrolment needs become clearer, assignments or reassignments may be required.

Staffing at the elementary, middle and secondary levels continues to be monitored. With classes starting on September 3rd, the secondary schools are still working to balance class size and composition requirements.

The District continues to meet the requirements for staffing required by the Collective Agreement with respect to District ratios. Recruitment will continue to focus on School Psychologists, Physiotherapist, and Elementary Counsellors.

During the months of May and June, a total of 313 teacher postings were processed. This summer approximately 225 full-time temporary contracts were awarded to teachers. The majority of these temporary assignments were created due to unfilled postings or teachers taking a leave of absence for a variety of reasons (maternity and parental leaves, medical leaves, leaves to participate in job share assignments and self-funded leaves). Since September 2023, approximately 226 new teachers were hired into temporary contracts or placed on the Teachers Teaching on Call (TTOC) list.

In addition to other universities within and outside of the province, the partnership with the Teacher Education Program at the University of British Columbia-Okanagan (UBC-O) continues to provide the District with high quality beginning teachers throughout K-12. In addition to hosting teacher candidates from UBC Vancouver, University of Victoria, University of Calgary, and Thompson Rivers University, the District is hosting 92 UBC Okanagan teacher interns who will complete their program in December 2024.

Over the months of September and October, recruitment will continue for CEA's, bus drivers, and other Operations Department staff.

During the 2023/2024 school year, the Human Resources Department processed:

- 520 support staff postings, which included 370 Certified Education Assistant (CEA) postings
Ninety-three CEAs have been hired since January 2024. The ability to recruit CEAs into contract positions is currently outpaced by the number of contracts.
- 313 teacher postings during the Spring staffing period
- 101 Senior staff, Management, Principal, and Vice-Principal changes (retirements, resignations, appointments, reassignments, contract renewals)

The selection process for the following senior staff and management positions were concluded:

- Assistant Project Manager
- Business Process Manager
- Director of Instruction – Indigenous Education and Equity
- District Principal of Human Resources
- District Principal of Transitions
- District Vice-Principal of International Education
- Human Resources Advisor
- International Homestay Coordinator
- Purchasing Manager
- SWIS Program Manager

Close to 3,305 employees (FTE) or 4,495 headcount are now employed in Central Okanagan Public Schools, which includes 56 District-Level Senior Administration/District-Level Exempt Staff, 110 administrators (Principals/Vice-Principals), 2,422 teachers/teachers teaching on call and 1,907 support staff. Recruitment of Teachers Teaching on Call and Certified Education Assistants continues to be a priority for Human Resources.

Financial

The external auditors have concluded their year-end review of the District's financial reports. The fiscal and accounting and control processes were once again found to be comprehensive and appropriate.

Facility Updates

Thank you to Director of Operations, Rob Drew, the operations and capital teams, for their tremendous work taking on the most projects over the summer in District history. A full reporting will be provided at the Finance and Planning Committee Meeting on September 18, 2024 and at the Public Board Meeting on September 25, 2024.

Technology

Over the summer, the Learning Technology Services team has been actively working on several key initiatives to enhance the educational experience and ensure the security and privacy of systems. Here is a summary of the work conducted:

1. Technology Refreshes:

- Completed 8 whole school (staff + students) technology refreshes (École KLO Middle, École Kelowna Secondary, North Glenmore Elementary, Watson Road Elementary, Quigley Elementary, École Peter Greer Elementary, Pearson Road Elementary and Peachland Elementary)
- Refreshed student devices at 23 schools
- Updated 393 staff devices and 2242 student laptops
- Refreshed 2 high-end labs
- Provided 706 new iPads

2. Digital Equity, Wellness, and Learning Technologies:

- Implemented amendments to school Codes of Conduct that restrict student use of personal digital devices at all Central Okanagan Public schools.
- Continued the multi-year plan to address the impact of ChatGPT and other Generative AI-driven technologies on teaching and learning.
- Created a District AI working group consisting of Administrators and Teachers at various school levels to develop AI Guidance documents for Central Okanagan Public Schools.
- Contributed to collaborative Generative AI networks with districts in BC and across Canada to share and learn about the impact of AI.
- Supported digital equity and wellness in schools with a focus on student mental health and supporting families.
- Continued to support families with personal learning devices for their students, distributing over 500 Chromebooks last year and assisting 19 families with the Telus – Internet for Good program.
- Worked with Lead Tech Learners and Digital Equity Teams to support teachers and students in their technology skills.
- Continued the implementation of the Microsoft Teams Collaboration Platform in Central Okanagan Public Schools.
- Continued the implementation of Online Field Studies Forms for teachers and parents.
- Hosting the Innovate-Ed Technology Learning Conference on October 25th at École Kelowna Secondary School, in collaboration with six Thompson-Okanagan School Districts.

3. Privacy and Cybersecurity

- Implemented various protocols and software updates to improve cybersecurity.

This comprehensive effort demonstrates the District's commitment to enhancing the educational experience, ensuring the security and privacy of systems, and supporting digital equity and wellness in schools.

Transportation

Transportation Services has implemented several significant processes and procedures which support the Vision and Goals of the Board of Education and provides the Department with direction and continuity for managing the long-term and day-to-day operations of the Transportation Department.

New Technology in School Buses:

School buses in Central Okanagan Public Schools are now equipped with routing software that enhances student safety, increases fleet efficiency, and improves communication with parents, drivers, and schools. The software is available on a tablet mounted in a school bus. Key features of the technology include:

- **Telematics System:** Allows for real-time data of each school bus and provides the bus driver with a list of students assigned to their route, turn-by-turn route directions, and bus stop placement.
- **Bus Pass system:** Students assigned to a school bus route are provided with a bus pass with RFID technology that is scanned when they board or leave the school bus.
- **Student Information:** The tablet provides drivers with information regarding the student's name, school, grade, bus assignment status and any medical or diagnosis information (as per Policy 436R - Managing Students with Medical Alert/Anaphylaxis Conditions and 437R – Managing Students with Diabetes), which is important when transporting students on the school bus.

This modernization of the transportation system will improve fleet and bus route efficiency, enhance student safety and provide additional peace of mind for parents.

Field Studies:

In February 2023 the Transportation Manager presented a comprehensive report on the Department's field study budget and provided recommendations to both the Secretary-Treasurer/CFO and Director of Operations, to streamline the process for field studies and how those events are charged to the school.

On September 1, 2024, revised procedures were implemented which provide schools consistency and clarity when budgeting and planning for field studies. The procedures were also designed to ensure the field study budget for transportation services remains balanced, enabling resources in an efficient and effective manner.

Transportation Services completes an average of 3,200 field studies annually.

Inclusive Education:

Transportation Services and the Inclusive Education Department continue to collaborate ensuring students with diversabilities have the opportunity to ride the school bus in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Each year, the number of students transported on Inclusive Education bus routes increases in demand. The number of students transported on Inclusive Education bus routes has doubled since 2022. Due to the number of additional requests for transportation on these routes, there are plans to implement two additional Inclusive Education routes, increasing the number of routes operated to fifteen.

Driver Recruitment:

Transportation Services has four part-time Driver Instructors on staff who provide refresher training to current drivers and deliver a comprehensive 3-week training program for new drivers hired. The team of Instructors also provide school bus safety presentations to schools.

The Department currently has 75 drivers assigned to bus route positions with 30 casual drivers available to cover absences or scheduled leaves. Historically, bus drivers have been retired or semi-retired individuals working in a part-time role with the District. Since September 2022, the Department has experienced a 90% turnover in drivers which has resulted in some isolated driver shortages.

Transportation Services continues to recruit, hire and provide refresher training to bus drivers, ensuring a professional and safe level of transportation service for students.

Student Transportation:

The Transportation timeline for processing applications for the school bus was developed in alignment with Policy 470R – Transportation Services Management (Regulations) Guiding Principles for Transportation in Central Okanagan Public Schools, resulting in a consistent practice which has been very successful in terms of communicating information and expectations to parents, schools, and stakeholders.

Transportation Summary (as of September 5, 2024)

7733	Transportation Applications received between January 31 and September 5, 2024
75	School Bus Routes
5157	Assigned Seats
3952	Eligible students currently assigned to a bus route
1017	Courtesy riders currently assigned to a bus route
155	Special Education (SPED) students assigned on 13 SPED routes
33	sensisyusten students transported under contract with Westbank First Nation

Although the number of students currently assigned to Inclusive Education routes is 155, this number is expected to exceed 200 students by the end of September 2024.

As of August 26, 2024, the waitlist of students for bus routes was less than 100 students. At the time of preparing this report, the Department has received an additional 354 applications and anticipates that many of the middle and high school applications will be placed on a waitlist, as most bus routes for these schools are at full capacity.

Transportation Services continues to receive and process applications and will assign students to bus routes that are not at full capacity.

5. NEXT STEP

An update will be provided at the next meeting of the Board of Education on September 25, 2024.