

Round Hill School Questions and Answers

The questions in this document are specific to Round Hill School. Some of these questions were asked and answered at the public meeting on February 6. Others were asked that evening and are being answered in this document. Still others have been received by email or letter. Questions that are related to school closure but not specific to Round Hill School are included in a larger question and answer document.

Question: *Why has Round Hill School never been made accessible? What other changes or repairs might be needed in the future?*

Answer: There are several schools in BRSD, mostly built about 60 years ago, that are two-storey buildings. We've installed ramps and made other modifications, but have not taken further steps to increase accessibility unless it was required to accommodate the needs of a student or staff member. If Round Hill School remains open, it will require mechanical work in the future, as those systems are reaching their life expectancy.

Question: *We've been receiving reports on minimum enrollment for years and we have just considered this to be a formality. What's different now?*

Answer: Every year we review the Critical Minimum Enrollment and the Board has tried to continue supporting small schools using reserves to keep schools open. However, we are looking at a \$4 million deficit this year and there are no reserves. That is what sparked this discussion.

Question: *How much does it cost to operate Round Hill School? How much does the Division save by closing Round Hill School?*

Answer: We have been using reserves to keep this school running but we cannot continue.

On average, BRSD allocates **\$7968** per student to each school through the instructional budget. This amount covers the costs of: teachers and principals; school administrative assistants, Librarians (now known as Learning Commons Facilitators), substitute staff costs, classroom supplies, library books, paper and office costs such as telephone, copier, etc. For Round Hill School, the cost per student is **\$8555**.

Annual School Maintenance Costs

If the school were closed, some of annual maintenance costs could be eliminated and others would remain. The Facility Department costs that could be eliminated would save **\$50,500** per year, for items such as caretaking and maintenance.

The costs that would remain (to cover insurance, grass mowing, utilities, etc) until such time as the building was no longer owned by BRSD would be \$42,300. We anticipate there would be savings in power and heat with no occupants in the building, but that has not been accounted for in this calculation.

Changes in Grants

Battle River School Division would see a reduction in some of its grant amounts if Round Hill School were to close. The Small School By Necessity Grant would be reduced gradually over a 5-year period of time. At the end of 5 years, the school division would be receiving \$234,300 less funding.

We expect to save

Closing Round Hill School would lead to a reduction in the number of staff positions required in Battle River School Division. This staffing reduction would result in a savings of \$537,400.

Combined, all of these changes would result in a net savings of **\$353,600** per year to the school division's budget.

Question: *How many more staff would you have to hire to accommodate larger class sizes at schools Round Hill students were directed to?*

Answer: Most of the students could be accommodated within the existing staffing at receiving schools. We estimate there would be a need for about 1.5 or 2 teaching positions to be added at receiving schools.

Question: *Would all the Round Hill School Staff lose their jobs if the school closed?*

Answer: Staff are not employed by a specific school, they are employed by Battle River School Division. There would be fewer positions required across the school division if schools were closed or consolidated, but that does not necessarily mean existing staff of Round Hill School would lose their jobs. Some reductions would take place through attrition across BRSD (not replacing staff members who retire or resign) and other reductions would be made through not renewing the contracts of staff who are on temporary or probationary contracts. Teachers on continuous contracts would be likely to maintain a position. Support staff positions would also be reviewed, with the goal of ensuring staff are in place to meet student needs.

Question: *How can we present options? Why is the Board not working with the community? Why is it up to the Community to come up with solutions?*

Answer: The school division is charged with providing education and we're trying to ensure that we provide the best possible educational services to students. We were very pleased to welcome Kindergarten students to Round Hill and we've worked hard to ensure that junior high students have continued to have access to things like CTS or Band, in hopes that would help maintain the school's population. We have been sharing our realities with the community and are open to working together on viable solutions.

Question: *How are we supposed to come up with a solution? As a school council we agonized over getting students. We proposed option but they never amounted to anything. We asked if we could offer LOGOS and were told no. But Tofield and Camrose were presented as locations for LOGOS. The Division didn't give us solutions to keep Round Hill viable. We presented having kindergarten every day and pre-school. Sparling was allowed every day kindergarten and it caused their numbers to go up. We were not given the same opportunities. Now you have said we have thirty days to present options. Our enrollment has been down for years and where have you been.*

Answer: The School Division has evaluated many options, including LOGOs, and did not find them to be viable options for any community. We were pleased to welcome Kindergarten to the Round Hill School – as it was a private Kindergarten until this year the option of running an every day Kindergarten was not our decision to make in previous years. Funding realities mean it is unlikely that every day Kindergarten or pre-school programs will be offered, in the way they are now, at any BRSD school next year.

Question: *Why aren't the boundaries for Round Hill School extended to the north and east? There are many kids that could be added to the school that are within 8 to 10 miles of Round Hill but are sent to other schools, especially young kids that will be school age in the next few years.*

Answer: There are two parts to this answer. The first part is that moving students between schools does not solve the funding problem for Battle River School Division. We appreciate that shifting attendance boundaries might increase the student count for Round Hill, but it would reduce the student count for other schools. Because the funding we receive from the province is based on the overall student number in our school division, not the number of students per school, changing the boundaries does not lead to an overall increase in funding.
The second part of this answer is that we are looking at reviewing boundaries. The boundaries were set many years ago and changes do need to be considered.

Question: *Instead of making our rural kids ride buses for over an hour, ship some city kids to rural schools. Win-win. Instead of over-populating Camrose schools, why not increase class sizes in Round Hill and give students more access to one on one time with teachers?*

Answer: Transportation funding is provided to send students to the closest designated school, so we would not receive additional funding to send students the additional distance to Round Hill from Camrose. Camrose schools are not over-populated at this time. Plus, we cannot mandate students to attend Round Hill School.

Question: *If Round Hill School closes, what would be the transition plan for students?*

Answer: Students would have the opportunity to visit their new school, meet the staff and students, tour the building and get acquainted. Parents would have the opportunity to do this as well.