

School Closure Process

What does the motion to initiate the school process mean?

First off, the notice of motion is procedural in nature, as reflected in our policy and the School Act, so that we can begin a conversation with the community.

Why was the September 10 Board meeting held in Princeton?

Our School District exists in both the Nicola and Similkameen valleys. Our board meetings alternate between Merritt and Princeton, and twice a year, the Board passes a motion to set the meeting dates. With the alternating between Merritt and Princeton, and given that the June meeting was in Merritt, the September meeting had previously been scheduled for Princeton.

Will there be meetings in Merritt?

As a Board, we will be holding a series of meetings with Rightsholders and the community in both Merritt and Princeton. We also welcome the opportunity to meet with the Mayor and City Council to look at future growth in the City of Merritt and the Nicola Valley, as well as our current state in terms of enrollment. A meeting is scheduled with the City of Merritt for November 4, 2025. The schedule for consultation meetings is being set now that the motion to initiate the process has been passed.

Why is the Board considering a school closure as an option?

We have declining enrollment and in the past 5 years have over 100 less students in our K-12 Standard schools (think brick & mortar), which is about 1.2 million less in revenue. We also had a Rightsholder and parent ask at Budget consultation meetings in the Spring about considering a school closure. We do a 1701 count on September 30th, which will give us a better indication of the 25/26 school year population by grade. This is part of the reason for starting the public consultations in October. The data below shows our nominal capacity for the 2024/2025 school year at each of the schools in Merritt and Princeton to give you a better snapshot by catchment area.

School District No. 58 (Nicola Similkameen)

-Capacity Utilization of School Buildings

			Capacity	Enrolled*	Utilization
Merritt	Collettsville Elementary	Elementary	195	114	58.5%
Merritt	Diamond Vale Elementary	Elementary	265	128	48.3%
Merritt	Merritt Bench Elementary	Elementary	120	153	127.5%
Merritt	Merritt Central Elementary	Elementary	320	226	70.6%
Merritt	Merritt Secondary	Secondary	675	620	91.9%
Merritt	Nicola Canford Elementary	Elementary	170	140	82.4%
Princeton	Princeton Secondary	Secondary	325	193	59.4%
Princeton	John Allison Elementary	Elementary	145	136	93.8%
Princeton	Vermilion Forks Elementary	Elementary	195	138	70.8%

Total	2410	1848	76.7%
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Secondary	1000	813	81.3%
Elementary	1410	1035	73.4%
Merritt	1745	1381	79.1%
Princeton	665	467	70.2%

Elem - Merritt	1070	761	71.1%
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*Enrolled - September 30, 2024

**September 2025 enrollment - will be updated in Dec. 2025 once confirmed by the Ministry

Another piece of data is our grade 12 versus K enrollments over time. The data below covers all students at Merritt and Princeton; K-12 Standard and POLS (provincial online learning schools – SCIDES).

[B.C. Education System Performance - Nicola-Similkameen School District: Contextual Information](#)

Number of Students Across All Grades

		Grades													
Student Group	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	K	Others
All Students	2,458	135	121	129	132	148	161	171	182	173	177	299	318	109	203
Diverse Abilities**	352	13	12	11	16	36	33	37	44	33	48	29	32		
Indigenous	955	53	48	40	54	59	65	62	91	85	75	130	117	45	31

*Other includes elementary ungraded, secondary ungraded, and graduated adults in the school system

**Disabilities or Diverse Abilities

When is the school closing after you passed the motion at the September Board Meeting?

Again, **no decision** will be made to close a school at the September Board meeting - it is a procedural motion so that we can start a dialogue with the community through a series of meetings that will occur.

There will be a series of meetings and consultations in Merritt with parents, PAC, rights holders, community groups, staff, and education partners before any decision is made. Any final decision will be made in Merritt.

How did we get here?

For the past 10 years, the Board had been supplementing its operating budget from its surplus/reserves to maintain programs and services for students. The reasons were twofold: the lack of sustainable funding in Public Education by the Province, coupled with declining enrollment.

After the flood, the Board asked the Ministry if we could use insurance dollars for Diamond Vale and Merritt Central to build one new school. That proposal was turned down as it would have required an additional \$20-30 million beyond the flood recovery costs. The Board was told that the insurance dollars/grant were to get back to pre-flood conditions, which in Central's case was a 1936 structure with modifications over the years.

During the Budget process, parents asked us if we had considered closing a school to reduce our ongoing operating costs in light of having more than 100 less students.

Following that budget consultation, a notice of motion was made to consider a potential closure on May 7, 2025. There was then a formal motion at the May 14, 2025, Meeting in Merritt to move ahead with a consultation and options.

We had already passed a motion to initiate the process to consider the closure of Merritt Central Elementary. However, we were in a policy review, and our legal counsel recommended that we pass an additional motion now that Policy 6.50 School Closure has come into effect. The Board wanted to explore more than one option for potential closure. We have a new policy that requires a public notice to go out a minimum of two weeks in advance. That is what was released on August 25, 2025. This was a notice to parents. The message needs to go out to all parents and stakeholders at the same time. There is a specific process that must be followed. Part of exploring more than one option was parents from French Immersion who were questioning whether Collettsville was the right location for the program and whether it was possible to return to being a dual track school.