

the torch



New School Announced for Devonshire Area

The River East Transcona School Division (RETSD) Board of Trustees was honoured to join Premier Wab Kinew, Tracy Schmidt, minister of education and early childhood learning, and Jelynn Dela Cruz, MLA for Radisson, at Bernie Wolfe School on February 10 for the announcement of a new Grades K–8 school to be built on Devonshire Drive.

“In response to unprecedented enrolment growth in our division, the Board has spent the past decade tirelessly advocating for new schools to meet the needs of our expanding communities. We’re thrilled to share with you that those efforts—and the voices of our community—have been heard, with the provincial government confirming that a new Grades K–8 school will be built in the Devonshire area,” said RETSD Board Chair Colleen Carswell.

“This announcement marks an exciting milestone for our school division, and we look forward to partnering with the province as plans for the new school move forward. We’re building more than a structure; we’re creating a space where future generations of students will learn, grow, and prepare to become skilled,

inspired, and responsible citizens.”

A new school announcement is welcomed by the community; however, we also know that planning and building will take time. While that takes place, continued action is needed to alleviate our increased enrolment numbers, because our new school is already full before it has even been built.

“A new school is great news for our community, we desperately needed it, and I know students will love it once complete,” added Trustee Sheri Hanson. “While we celebrate this announcement, the Board recognizes that there’s more work to be done.”

As a result, the Board will continue to advocate for two more schools for the division, along with expansions and upgrades to divisional facilities.

Each year, the school division submits a list of critical capital projects to the province, addressing necessary upgrades and renovations that ensure our schools remain safe, functional, and conducive to student achievement.

These projects include essential infrastructure improvements, such as converting existing spaces into classrooms, adding portables for

additional school capacity, replacing outdated boilers and air-handling systems, installing air conditioners, and upgrading roofs. These enhancements are vital to maintaining the quality of our learning environments.

Last school year, none of our submitted projects were awarded funding by the province, which is responsible for financing these capital projects. This is unprecedented.

Clearly, it’s important that infrastructure projects are approved and allowed to move forward. The longer this work is left unattended, the worse the situation becomes.

“Our priority is always the well-being and success of our students and staff,” said Trustee Brenda Bage. “These projects play a significant role in achieving this, and we’ll continue to submit our priorities to the province.”

Whether it’s new schools or enhancements to our current schools, it isn’t possible without the provincial government working with our division. The Board of Trustees remains committed to advocating for the needs of our schools and students.

Devonshire Reconfiguration for September 2025

The unprecedented growth of 1,000 students a year has left the Board with only one choice—the reconfiguration of some school catchments. Though we have a new school announced, it will take time to plan and build, and our current needs require immediate action for the fall of 2025.

Both Bernie Wolfe and Joseph Teres schools are at or exceeding enrolment capacity, and these communities are expected to continue growing for some time. We need to make changes now to reduce pressure on both schools for the next few years. Fortunately, our short-term plans to reconfigure boundaries will support us in alleviating immediate enrolment pressures.

“A change like this is never easy for a school community, and our Board looked at every available option we had,” said Trustee Rod Giesbrecht. “While we know the change may seem scary for students at first, our schools will work to prepare them for this transition. Also, schools that are welcoming new students will be scheduling open houses for families to meet staff and tour the school.”

For Joseph Teres, boundaries will change for some students in Grades K–4 who will move to École Sun Valley School, which has space within its facilities. At the end of Grade 5 at École Sun Valley, impacted students will return to their designated Transcona-area catchment school for middle years.

At Bernie Wolfe, boundaries will change for some students in Grades K–4 who will move to the reconfigured boundaries of Westview School, which has space within its facilities. Students moving to Westview will remain at the school for Grades K–5, as this represents a permanent boundary change. John W. Gunn Middle School will be the designated middle years school for these students.

Boundaries will change for some other students in Grades K–4 who will move to Maple Leaf School for Grades K–5. Chief Peguis Middle School will become the designated middle years school for those students in September 2026. Both schools have space within their facilities.

Quick Facts

- Over the last two years, we have increased by over 1,000 students annually
- This number represents the equivalent of two schools, approximately the size of Bernie Wolfe School
- Some school divisions in Manitoba have less than 1,000 students in total
- Short term changes are necessary to support RETSD during this time of increased enrolment
- All these changes go into effect in September 2025. Chief Peguis will not be impacted until the following September



North of the Perimeter Reconfiguration for September 2025

During the recent divisional facilities review, Trustees identified a need to review school boundaries north of the Perimeter Highway due to increasing demand for French immersion programming and overall enrolment growth in the area. This growth has impacted École Sun Valley School and École John Henderson Middle School, both being at or near capacity.

Accommodating the demand for French immersion programming, which is expected to continue growing for some time, required a plan. After reviewing the catchment areas, it was evident that adjustments to the boundaries were necessary. The three schools north of the perimeter—Bird’s Hill School, Dr. F.W.L. Hamilton School, and Robert Andrews Middle School—all have space within their facilities. We can accommodate Grades K–8 French immersion

programming by changing boundaries for the early years schools and making Bird’s Hill and Robert Andrews dual-track English and French immersion. More importantly, these changes will also bring students back to their community.

“With the community growth being experienced within our division, we need to use every seat, in every classroom, in every school to ensure all students can learn in a comfortable environment,” said Trustee Shannon Hiebert.

“The three schools north of the Perimeter had available space to accommodate these necessary moves. We recognize the impact that moves like this have on families but our Board knows students receive tremendous educational opportunities and care at every school in the division.”

Bird’s Hill will become a dual-track Grades K–5 school and Robert Andrews will be a dual-track Grades 6–8 school. Students who live north of the Perimeter and currently attend French immersion at either École Sun Valley or École John Henderson will now complete their French immersion Grades K–8 education within their home community at one of their local schools. Collège Miles Macdonell Collegiate will remain the senior years school for French immersion students in the catchment.

To accommodate the French immersion students at Bird’s Hill, the English program boundaries for Grades K–5 students north of the Perimeter will also be reconfigured. Some students who currently attend Bird’s Hill will move to Dr. F.W.L. Hamilton based on the adjusted boundaries.



Intensive Technical Vocational Programs

In recent years, RETSD has seen an increase in requests for technical vocational programming at our senior years schools. Skilled trade and technology careers are important to the well-being of our communities and are an excellent career path for many young people. Embarking on a career in the skilled trades is great for those who like to think creatively, solve problems, and work actively within a hands-on environment. Interested students can prepare for both a trade and post-secondary studies in the future.

Currently, the division has the facilities and staffing to offer these programs at Murdoch MacKay (MMC) and Kildonan-East (KEC) collegiates. Historically, efforts have been made to ensure students across the division have access to these programs through a divisional program process. However, as enrolment increases divisionwide, it's becoming more difficult to accommodate students in all their required courses at the two schools.

To keep providing equitable access to technical vocational programs, RETSD piloted a different model when offering the Carpentry program to students in the 2024–25 school year.

Rather than have them choose a program in Grade 8 and attend KEC or MMC in Grade 9, the intensive model allows students to enrol and graduate from their community school while accessing the technical vocational credits at either of those schools in Grades 11 and 12.

This has been very successful, and we'll be expanding the intensive model to other programs.

"Ensuring that our programs are equitable and accessible to all students is a priority to our Board, because where you live in our division shouldn't determine what you have access to," said Trustee Susan Olynik.

"Allowing all high school students the opportunity to take a vocational program while continuing other courses at their community school opens doors for everyone."

For the 2025–26 school year, MMC will offer two intensive technical vocational programs, in Carpentry and Fashion Technology, and KEC will be moving to intensive programs in all areas.

These will be available to students at all six senior years schools. Students who don't attend KEC or MMC as their regular catchment school will remain enrolled at their community school and attend one of these vocational schools for two semesters—one each in Grades 11 and 12—and otherwise attend classes, engage in sports and extracurricular activities, and graduate with a technical vocational diploma at their community school.

The intensive programs are designed for students entering Grade 11. This allows them to have two years of high school experience and gain a better understanding of the vocations. The later entry grade gives more time for students to reflect on their interests, skills, and strengths to make an informed choice.

If you're interested or have questions about one of the intensive programs, we invite you to reach out to your school principal or counsellor.

RETSD Board of Trustees—Priorities 2024–25

In the fall, the Board of Trustees identified the following as its priorities for the current school year:

- Review the remaining buildings identified in the facilities review
- Establish a new, long-term (five year) strategic plan for RETSD
- Determine and implement an advocacy plan for new schools and capital projects

"The Board continually works together to set priorities for each school year to support students and staff," said Trustee Keith Morrison. "It's important that we establish and achieve goals that support students and our school communities."

Supporting Students Through the Transition to High School

At RETSD, we understand that moving from middle school to high school is an exciting milestone for students and their families. However, we also recognize that this transition can bring feelings of uncertainty.

One of the biggest differences students will experience is the shift to a semester system and the introduction of credits. In high school, students work toward earning 30 credits from Grades 9–12. To help ease this transition,

Grade 9 students are placed in cohorts (small groups), giving them a chance to build connections in a larger school environment. They'll also have a smaller group of teachers throughout their first year, ensuring that both students and staff can develop strong relationships. Additionally, Grade 9 students receive full-year instruction in English Language Arts (ELA)/French Language Arts (FLA) and Math, providing a solid foundation as they move into higher grades.

Beyond the classroom, each senior years school has a dedicated team of resource teachers, counsellors, and a teacher-librarian to support students academically and personally. An administrator will also work closely with Grade 9 students to foster connections and create a welcoming, supportive environment.

We're committed to making transitions positive experiences for every student!

Universal School Nutrition Program

Every school division in Manitoba, including RETSD, takes part in a universal school nutrition program offered by the province.

At all 42 of our schools, students can get a meal or snack when they need one. As well as providing nourishment, the program exposes students to nutritious options daily in a barrier-free, safe, and accessible environment. It follows both the [School Nutrition Guidelines](#) and [Canada's Food Guide](#). This ensures the meals and

snacks provided include the three main food groups: proteins, whole grains, and fruits and vegetables. And all options meet low sugar, salt, and fat criteria.

“The nutrition program has been a game changer for all of our schools,” said Trustee Sheri Irwin. “No student should be expected to learn and flourish in the classroom with an empty stomach, and this program ensures everyone can have a full stomach whenever it’s needed.”

The program allows us to better support and meet the growing needs of our students. When they have consistent access to nutritious food, they can concentrate, learn, and reach their full potential, and our schools are better equipped to fulfil our core mandate of teaching and learning.

For more information, contact your child’s school.

Congratulations to Mark Bruce and Welcome to Cara Colorado



We congratulate Mark Bruce, assistant superintendent, on his recent retirement. For 37 years, Mark dedicated himself to public

education with unwavering commitment, serving our school division for more than 22 of those years. His work has positively touched the lives of communities, families, students, and staff. Regardless of the situation, Mark always remained steadfast in his commitment to the creation of democratic spaces for all children to feel safe, included, and successful.

We’re also delighted to announce Cara Colorado as our new assistant superintendent—human resources. Cara brings a wealth of experience and a proven commitment to excellence.

She’s well-prepared to build upon the strong foundation Mark has established, helping us continue our commitment to leadership and innovation, while educating our students to be inspired, skilled, responsible citizens.

Cara has been part of RETSD since 2014 in roles that include vice-principal, consultant, divisional teacher, and principal. She also brings diverse experience as a classroom and resource teacher across three provinces. Recently, she earned her PhD in educational administration from the University of Manitoba.

Thank You, Payroll Department

Thank you to all working in the RETSD payroll department who play an integral role in helping deliver education to nearly 19,000 students each school day. Whether it’s processing timely and accurate paychecks, managing employee benefits, or ensuring compliance with regulations, the payroll team works tirelessly behind the scenes to support our staff and contribute to the smooth operation of our schools. Their dedication helps ensure that our educators and support staff can focus on what they do best—educating and supporting our students.

We appreciate their hard work and dedication, and we’re proud to recognize their significant contribution to the continued success of our division.

Try a New Activity and Register with RETLife

If you’re looking for a fun new activity to try this fall, RETLife has a palette of playful programs for people of every age! Whether it’s fitness, leisure, or wanting to try a new interest, they have what you’re looking for in the River East Transcona area. For more information about their community leisure programming, contact RETLife at 204.667.6193 or visit their website at retlife.ca.

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The Board of Trustees meets the first and third Tuesday of each month. You are welcome to attend, either in person or online. For more information about the Board of Trustees, visit: www.retsd.mb.ca > Your RETSD > Board of Trustees