

DATE: April 9, 2024

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Division Centre Establishments Projected Deficit for the 2023–2024 School Year

ORIGINATOR: Cliff Richard, Chief Infrastructure and Technology Officer

RESOURCE STAFF: Todd Burnstad, Terri Gosine, Valerie Leclair, Coreen Moccia, Allison Sylvester, Amanda Wong, Christopher Wright

REFERENCE [CHA.BP Board Delegation of Authority](#)

ISSUE

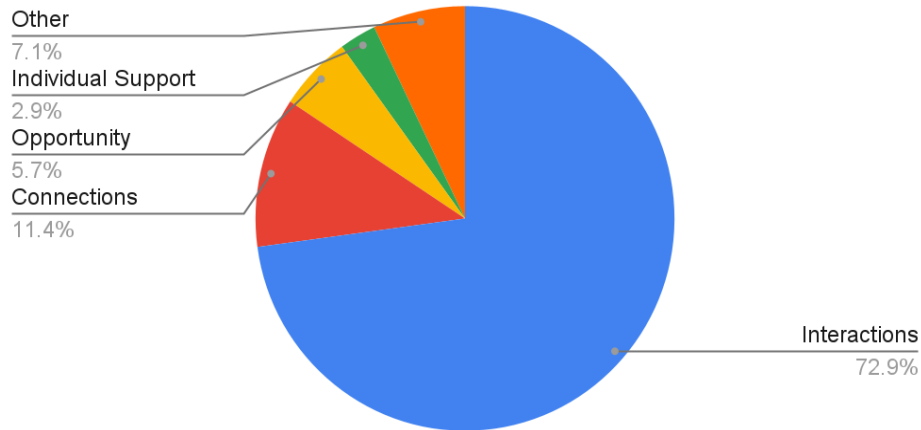
The Division continues to experience cost and space pressures associated with infrastructure needs and student accommodation. In preparation for September 2024, the Division will be required to establish a number of Division centre classes to accommodate programming demand. Anticipated costs associated with establishing the classrooms required are projected to exceed the original budgeted funds. As outlined in CHA.BP Board Delegation of Authority, the total additional funds anticipated exceed the threshold above which the Board has the authority to make decisions regarding new unanticipated expenditures that have not been accounted for in the current annual budget.

BACKGROUND

The Division offers a comprehensive range of learning environments to help nurture students' emotional, mental and physical well-being. For students with specialized learning needs, our Division offers regular, alternative and specialized programming options. For families who choose a specialized program, there are a number of Division centre programs available.

Of the 194 Division centre classes established over the past 10 years, 140 were established in the past five years (an average of 28 classes/year). This is almost triple the 54 Division centre classes established in the previous five years (an average of 11 classes/year). The most acute increase in demand is for Interactions Division centre programming. In the past five years, Interactions programming accounted for 73 per cent of new Division centre program establishments with the addition of 102 classes.

New Division Centre Classes in the Past Five Years



The 102 newly established Interactions classes in the past five years is an increase of 228 per cent from the previous five years when only 27 Interactions classes were approved.

Last year, the Division prepared to open 35 Division centre classes for September 2023, 31 of which required construction and fit-up. Following the close of SNAP Phase 1 this year, it is anticipated another 45 classes will be established, 38 of which require construction and fit-up.

Number of New Division Centre Classes for 2024–2025		
Program	Number of Classes	Facility Modifications Required
Interactions	38	33
Connections	2	2
CLS	1	1
CLS/Connections	2	1
ISP	1	1
Opportunity	1	0
Total	45	38

In finalizing the placement of Division centre classrooms, the following factors are considered:

- a shortfall of space for a Division centre program in a transportation zone at the elementary, junior high or senior high level
- schools with available space for Division centre classes considering:
 - utilization rates
 - student accommodation (overflow designated schools and new neighbourhood designations)
 - programming already in place at the school

- future growth considerations
- proximity to where students who are requesting the Division centre program reside
- consultation with the school principal, assistant superintendent and staff from Financial Services, Human Resources, Property Management, Specialized Learning Supports, Division Support Services, Student Transportation and Integrated Infrastructure Services regarding:
 - available space
 - impact on lease groups such as childcare tenants
 - infrastructure requirements and related costs given the age of the school building
 - specialized supports required
 - class capacity and grade configuration
 - budget
 - staffing
 - student transportation
- other demands for space in schools:
 - mental health support classrooms
 - alternative programs
 - early years programming

Funding to Support the Distribution of Division Centre Classes

Annually, the Division provides an allocation to Programs and Student Accommodation to support the upfit of classrooms necessary to accommodate new Division centre classes and address student growth pressures across the Division. While the Division also identifies Capital Reserve funds each year to address the cost of portables and larger enrolment growth initiatives, smaller projects (sometimes related to space shifts caused by establishing Division centres) are often addressed using the annual allocation. Such efforts ensure schools can continue to accommodate anticipated enrolment growth, and allow for smooth transitions as Division centre classrooms are welcomed into school communities.

To address growth accommodation and the establishment of Division centre classrooms, in 2022–2023, the allocation provided was \$4.0 million. For the 2023–2024 year, the allocation was raised to \$5.8 million. As noted above, following the recent close of SNAP Phase 1, there are an estimated 38 Division centre classrooms requiring fit-up for the 2024–2025 school year. This is an increase from the 35 classes projected earlier this year. Additional funding, estimated not to exceed \$2.0 million, is required. Costs associated with both enrolment growth and Division centre classroom construction are tracked by a committee overseen by the Chief Infrastructure and Technology Officer and Chief Financial Officer.

While every attempt is made to ensure that construction costs are efficient and predictable, the number of classrooms required based on family choice is the primary driver for the annual budget requirements. As the Division utilizes spaces in older school facilities and the overall age of Division infrastructure increases, costs associated with code compliance, materials testing, air monitoring, as well as abatement and/or safe work procedures related to hazardous materials are also increasing.

RELATED FACTS

- In 2022–2023, an allocation of \$4.0 million was provided to manage growth accommodation and the establishment of Division centres. For the 2023–2024 year, the allocation was raised to \$5.8 million.
- The most acute increase in demand is for Interactions Division centre programming.
- Of the 194 Division centre classes established over the past 10 years, 140 were established in the past five years (an average of 28 classes/year).
- The 102 newly established Interactions classes in the past five years is an increase of 228 per cent

from the previous five years.

- This year, an estimated 45 Division centre classes will be established, approximately 38 of which will require construction and fit-up.
- The cost to construct and fit-up a Division centre classroom varies depending on the extent of design and construction work and the improvements necessary to support the specific Division centre program. Primary cost drivers include hazardous materials remediation, structural and mechanical modifications, and delayed egress installations.
- Construction costs reflect reasonable and operationally necessary improvements only—schools may choose to add additional scope to Division centre establishment projects if the school budget allows.

RECOMMENDATION

That authorization to direct up to \$2,000,000 of the Division’s 2023-24 operational budget to support the construction of Division centre classrooms required for the 2024–25 school year be approved.

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

The primary considerations in funding the establishment of additional Division centre classrooms include:

- Establishing Division centre classes supports the Division’s Strategic Plan Goal 1; recognize and support the diverse learning needs of all students, of Priority 1; build on outstanding learning opportunities for all students.
- Establishing additional specialized program sites in response to family choice allows students accessing Division centre classrooms to attend a school as close to home as possible.

NEXT STEPS

Should this recommendation be approved, planning for construction will proceed.

Administration will ensure that the upcoming 2024–2025 Distribution of Funds report includes a request to increase the annual ongoing allocation to better reflect the expenditures the Division is currently experiencing for Division centre classroom establishments.

CW:jl