

**DATE:** November 26, 2024

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** Modular Classroom Update

**ORIGINATOR:** Cliff Richard, Chief Infrastructure and Technology Officer  
Todd Burnstad, Chief Financial Officer

**RESOURCE STAFF:** Shauna Bland, Jenifer Elliott, Leanne Fedor, Roland Labbe, Valerie Leclair,  
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**REFERENCE** [Approval of the 2024–2025 Budget](#)  
[School Construction Accelerator Program](#)

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## ISSUE

The Division has been approved to receive 42 new and four relocated modular classrooms (combined, 46 net new), and funding for the relocation of four existing units within the Division, over the 2024–2025 school year. The total number is a result of the Division’s initial November 1, 2023, modular request submission, a secondary mid-year submission opportunity, and an opportunity to receive four units from another jurisdiction through the Province. Capital reserve funding that had been earmarked to secure new unfunded units is no longer required due to the mid-year approvals. As well, the Province has announced enhanced funding for modular classrooms over the next four years as part of the Alberta School Construction Accelerator Program.

## BACKGROUND

Between 2010 and 2023, the Division has installed or relocated 440 modular classrooms to support schools in accommodating growing student enrolment. Annually, the Division submits a request to the Province through the Modular Classroom Program for new modular classrooms or funding to relocate existing units, typically by November 1st of each year. In the past, when the Division has not received funding for all requested modular classrooms, the Division has used capital reserve funds to acquire and install a limited number of modulators to address top priorities for which provincial funding was not approved. In light of the funding that will now be provided by the Province for modulators, the projected ‘not to exceed’ total of \$5.7 million from capital reserve funds for growth accommodation, as approved in the 2024–2025 Budget, can be revisited.

Over the course of the 2024–2025 school year, the Division will be receiving 42 new and four relocated (used) modular classrooms (for a total of 46 net new units), and funding to relocate four existing Division modulators:

- In October 2023, the Division received notice that we would receive four (used) relocated modular classrooms from another school division.
- In March 2024, the Division received approval for 13 of the 56 modular classrooms requested in our annual Modular Classroom Program request to the Province (submitted on November 1, 2023).

- In order to address unfunded priority requirements, the Division requested and received approval from the Province to self-fund the acquisition of six additional modular classroom units and to relocate four existing units within the Division. This cost was included in the \$5.7 million growth accommodation allocation from the Division capital reserve, as approved by the Board of Trustees in the approved 2024–2025 Budget.
- In May 2024, Alberta Education contacted the Division to inquire whether additional modular classrooms could help address emergent space needs due to increasing enrolment.
- In response, in July 2024, Administration submitted a formal request for 17 additional modular classrooms and a request to cover the six previously unfunded units and four relocations for which Division capital reserve funding had been earmarked.
- In August 2024, the Division received approval for 26 additional modular classrooms and up to 11 relocations.
- Given the approvals noted above, the Division will not need to draw on the capital reserve funds allocated previously for six new units and four relocations.
- Since the Division does not have 11 modular classrooms available to move (all but four are required in their existing locations), approval was granted by the Province to use the residual ‘relocation’ funding (for the remaining seven units) to acquire an additional three new units.

## **CURRENT SITUATION**

Of the 42 new modulars and eight total relocations approved by the Province, 19 units have been installed and are now operational. Eight additional units are on their intended sites and installation will be complete by the end of November. The remainder are anticipated to be received/moved and installed over the course of the 2024–2025 school year.

As the Division continues to grow in enrolment, modular classrooms help but do not solve the capacity or accommodation issues the Division is facing. As of the official September count for the 2024–2025 school year, the Division grew by 5,022 students since the official count for 2023–2024, and in the first three weeks of October alone, added more than 500 additional students. If the Division placed 30 students in each of the approved 46 net new modular classrooms, this would amount to 1,380 net new spaces to counter the growth of over 5,522 students. As the Division continues to grow at a rate of nearly one modular classroom per school day, this ‘straight count’ growth is not sustainable with modular classrooms alone.

The Division continues to require capital funding and construction of new school facilities in new and developing communities to accommodate enrolment growth. The addition of modular classroom units at select existing Division schools does not prevent accommodation, service and cost challenges, such as:

- Schools serving students from new and developing communities, where a new school has not yet been funded or built, may still be required to use the lottery system as there are more requests to enrol than spaces available.
- An increasing number of students will continue to be bussed out of new communities to designated schools. Even if modular classrooms are added to existing sites, the transportation of students from new and developing communities without schools will continue to increase. Additional routes and longer ride times to designated schools and Division centre program sites can be expected. As well, resources and capacity available from contract carriers may increasingly become strained.
- The removal of Division tenants, such as childcare centres, may not be avoidable.
- Building or fire code limitations and other constraints at existing buildings/sites include washroom capacity, gymnasium space, purpose-built instructional spaces (e.g., Career and Technology (CTS) spaces), circulation constraints, lockers, and site and parking limitations. In other words, the ‘core’

school building or site layout may not be able to accommodate the additional students or traffic that would in theory be possible with additional modulars.

- Where building/fire code limitations, P3 contractual limitations, or other site constraints do not preclude additional modulars, it nonetheless becomes challenging for schools to schedule spaces such as gymnasiums, CTS classrooms and music rooms, given that the school facility is operating beyond the original designed capacity. Many of our newer schools have a greater number of modular classrooms vs. permanent construction, which poses challenges for general functionality such as access to water, washrooms and lockers.
- The construction of 25 to 35 specialized Division centre classrooms annually requires building modifications and proximity to facilities like sensory rooms and accessible washrooms, which modular classrooms cannot accommodate. This results in an additional cost to the Division to modify interior spaces to accommodate these programs.

On September 23, 2024, the Province announced the School Construction Accelerator Program. This provincial program aims to increase school construction and funding for school modernizations, but also includes funding for an expanded Modular Classroom Program over the next four years, which is described as “more than 20,000 student spaces in new or relocated modular classrooms”.

Due to the announcement of an enhanced Modular Classroom Program by the Province and the inability to continually add modular classrooms to all sites, Administration believes that the Division may experience a diminished reliance on capital reserve funding in support of self-funded units while the program is at enhanced levels. In response to this recent development, a revised plan for the use of capital reserve funds will be presented in the Capital Reserve Plan agenda item that will be tabled at the November 26, 2024, Board meeting subsequent to this report. Modular classrooms cost approximately \$500,000 each—approximately \$350,000 for the unit and \$150,000 for delivery and installation.

To address capacity challenges for the 2025–2026 school year, the Division’s annual Modular Classroom Program request was submitted by November 1, 2024, including 39 new modular units across 14 schools, as well as a request to fund one demolition.

## KEY POINTS

- For the 2024–2025 school year, the Division is receiving a total of 42 new and four relocated (used) modular classrooms, and funding to relocate four existing Division modulars.
- Of the 42 new modulars and eight total relocations, 19 units have now been installed and are now operational. Eight additional units are on their intended sites and installation will be complete by the end of November. The remainder are anticipated to be received/moved and installed over the course of the 2024–2025 school year.
- In September 2024, the Province announced the School Construction Accelerator Program, which includes increased modular classroom funding for the next four years.
- The additional modular classroom funding approvals from the Province allows the Division to reconsider the amount of capital reserve funding allocated to enrolment growth measures.
- The Division has requested 39 new modular classrooms for the 2025–2026 school year, representing an addition of approximately 1,170 student spaces if fully approved.

## ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I      Modular Classroom Location Summary 2024–2025

JT:jl

### New/Relocated Modular Classroom Location Summary 2024–2025

School	Number of Units	Final Funding Source
Garth Worthington School	3	March 2024 annual approval
Winterburn School	4	March 2024 annual approval
Julia Kiniski School	2 2	March 2024 annual approval August 2024 in-year approval
John D. Bracco School	2	March 2024 annual approval
Jackson Heights School	2	March 2024 annual approval
Ellerslie Campus School	4	Relocated from another school jurisdiction; separate approval
Centennial School	4	August 2024 in-year approval
Daly Grove School	2	August 2024 in-year approval
Constable Daniel Woodall School	1	August 2024 in-year approval
Nellie Carlson	2	August 2024 in-year approval
Velma E. Baker School	1	August 2024 in-year approval
Joey Moss School	6	August 2024 in-year approval
Donald R. Getty School	1	August 2024 in-year approval
Alex Janvier School	4	August 2024 in-year approval
Weinlos School	3	August 2024 in-year approval
Overlanders School	2	Relocated from Dr. Donald Massey School
Malcolm Tweddle School	2	Relocated from Esther Starkman School
Kim Hung School	3	August 2024 in-year approval
<b>Total</b>	<b>46 net new units + 4 internal relocations</b>	