

# Brighter Horizons



An Oyen and Area Education Revitalization Initiative





# Looking Forward

## The impact of rural depopulation



Small rural Canadian towns, including those in Alberta, are facing significant challenges due to depopulation, a trend that impacts their economic stability, social fabric, and overall future viability. Rural communities must act proactively and collaboratively, sharing and building upon the ingenuity, assets, and benefits of small town life. Without this collective commitment rural communities are impacted in several ways:

### Economics

Rural depopulation translates into a smaller workforce, fewer customers for business and a diminished tax base. When this happens, it makes it difficult for these communities to attract new businesses, or residents to the region.

### Healthcare and Education

When fewer people choose to move to the region, the challenge of maintaining accessible health and education services is magnified. Attracting new businesses and services becomes increasingly difficult.

### Aging Population

As more and more young people migrate to larger cities to establish themselves, rural towns are left with aging populations. This shift creates a gap in the community's social dynamics and labour force.

# Moving Ahead

## Change requires a strategic approach



Positive change does not happen overnight and requires a *collaborative, strategic, and community* approach to achieve success. At Prairie Rose Public Schools we are committed to working with our Oyen and area families, businesses, and municipal partners to create engaging and inspiring educational opportunities for our students. We also understand that this also requires thinking ‘outside the box’ to come up with solutions that build upon the incredible strengths of our rural communities and counteract the drivers of rural depopulation. Through regular engagement and conversation with the community, we hope to discover innovative solutions that excite people about the benefits of small town life.

## Moving Forward Using a Strategic Approach

*At Prairie Rose Public Schools we commit to:*

- ✓ Understanding the big picture by speaking with all stakeholders
- ✓ Defining clear objectives as they relate to the overall goal of creating a viable and sustainable education solution for Oyen and area
- ✓ Partnering with business, non-profits and municipal government to leverage local strengths and resources
- ✓ Thinking critically and considering all possible solutions
- ✓ Prioritizing and making decisions that benefit families and students in the long and short term
- ✓ Being flexible and adaptive to try new ideas and solutions

# Oyen and Area Schools

## A closer look at our school communities

Prairie Rose Public Schools (PRPS) is home to 18 public schools, 18 colony schools and two outreach schools. In the north end of the school division approximately 330 PRPS K-12 students live in Special Areas 3, the MD of Acadia and Town of Oyen.



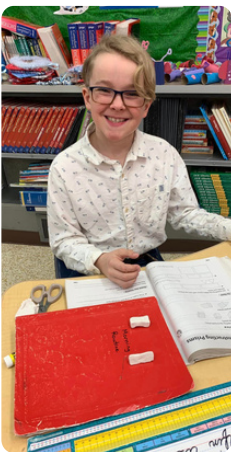
### **Oyen Public School**

Located in the Town of Oyen  
Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6  
2023-2024 Year Enrollment: 100



### **South Central High School**

Located in the Town of Oyen  
Grade 7 to Grade 12  
2023-2024 Year Enrollment: 153



### **Warren Peers School**

Located in Acadia Valley (MD of Acadia)  
Junior Kindergarten to Grade 9  
2023-2024 Year Enrollment: 45



### **New Brigden School**











Located in New Brigden (Special Areas 3)  
Kindergarten to Grade 6  
2023-2024 Year Enrollment: 22

# OUR PROGRAMS

## Optimizing rural opportunity for youth



In Prairie Rose Public Schools we believe that engaging minds in youth not only requires an academic approach, but for students to be excited about the learning they are doing. Thanks to our community partners, we are able to develop programs that are hands-on and relate directly to the passions of our students and families. In the Oyen area, the following programs have been established to **ignite minds, forge futures** and **kindle** the **hearts** of our students.

-  Badlands Baseball Academy
-  Jr Badgers Baseball
-  Dual Credit / Health Care Aide Program
-  REIN - Rodeo and Equine in the North
-  South Alberta Hockey Academy
-  The North Agriculture Project
-  UAV (Drone Certification)
-  South Alberta School of Trades
-  Warren Peers Archery
-  Warren Peers Makerspace

## OUR VISION

Prairie Rose sees a world where everyone is a learner and students and staff achieve more than they thought possible.

## OUR MISSION

To unleash potential through a culture of learning.

# Our Facilities

## Investing in our school buildings



Safe and welcoming spaces for students to come to school and staff to come to work is an integral part of creating positive learning environments where success happens. Prairie Rose is proud of our Oyen and area community schools and continue to allocate resources to ensure they are well-maintained. We recognize that a safe, clean and welcoming school can significantly impact students' emotional and psychological well-being,

### Recently Completed School Facility Projects

Oyen Public	Approx. \$660,000	Mechanical Upgrades, AC Replacements, Entry Renovation, Work Room Renovation, Furnace Replacement, LED Light Upgrade
South Central	Approx. \$650,300	AC Unit Replacement, Staff Room Reno, Furnace Replacement, Ball Diamonds and Lights, Barrier Free Operators, Flooring Upgrade, Boilers, Office Reno
Warren Peers	Approx. \$370,100	Outdoor Equipment, Flooring Replacement, LED Light Upgrade, School Interior Paint, Sick Room Reno, Exterior Improvements, Furnace Replacement, BMS Upgrade
New Brigden	Approx. \$141,500	Mechanical Upgrade, Washroom Fixtures

*\* Costs outlined above represent the approximate spending value over the last five years.*

# Planning for the Future

## Creating a single K-12 Oyen school



### Prairie Rose Public Schools Capital Plan

The proposed combination of Oyen Public and South Central High schools into an updated facility will ensure modern amenities are available for students including a central gathering space, open learning commons, project centres, team teaching areas and break-out spaces. The modernized facility will accommodate the demands of delivering a 21st century education and changing teaching methodologies. A modernization will also allow for the development of common areas to enhance the communities utilization of the facility.

### Current School Configurations

	Area	Grade configuration	School Capacity
Oyen Public School	2,579 m <sup>2</sup> 27,760 ft <sup>2</sup>	Kindergarten to Grade 6	269 Students Current Utilization: 37%
South Central High School	3,933 m <sup>2</sup> 42,334 ft <sup>2</sup>	Grade 7 - Grade 12	325 Students Current Utilization: 45%

# Stakeholder Engagement

## Working collaboratively with the community

### Community Feedback

On February 28, 2024, Prairie Rose administration hosted a community meeting at South Central High School to gather input from stakeholders focused on how to address known rural challenges. Participants were asked to collaborate on two primary questions. Key themes from the focus group discussions are outlined below.

- ✓ What are some of the biggest challenges the school division and community needs to focus on?

Reliable and Consistent Transportation	Staffing and Recruitment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mechanical issues delays</li><li>• Not enough drivers for all routes</li><li>• Lack of spare bus drivers</li><li>• More communication with parents</li><li>• Unreliable - too many route cancellations</li><li>• Lack of driver experience</li><li>• Lack of driver knowledge of the area</li><li>• Incentives for bus drivers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Currently relying on retired staff for leaves and substitutes</li><li>• Current staff having to support in other ways</li><li>• Recruiting new staff members has been challenging</li><li>• Struggle to retain local teachers</li><li>• Lack of housing for new teachers and families</li><li>• Desire for one principal per school</li><li>• Lack of incentive for new education graduates to come to the area; increased need for secondary trained teachers.</li></ul>

- ✓ What are the most important assets or opportunities in our community that could improve student experiences?

- Use community facilities where possible
- Continue to collaborate with local businesses to diversify program options
- Encourage local high school students to enrol in education
- Establish a community support system for new teachers



# Taking Action

## Proposed transportation supports



### What is PRPS doing to address transportation priorities?

#### Action 1

In March 2024, a 52 passenger Integrated Coach school bus was purchased for the Oyen area by Prairie Rose Public Schools at a cost of \$157,500.

#### Action 2

Prairie Rose has begun the process of training current staff (2) and a community member to operate the school bus. This requires a Class 2 Driver's License and "S" Endorsement Training. Costs are being covered by the school division.

#### Action 3

Prairie Rose has established a training and S-Endorsement partnership with both Westwind and Palliser school divisions who own and operate their own school buses. This will reduce delays in getting staff certified.

#### Action 4

A mechanic in Acadia Valley who is certified to conduct repairs on school buses has been secured for PRPS buses.

#### Action 5

Prairie Rose has begun reviewing the possibility of adding GPS software on school buses. Having accurate and real-time data will allow parents to have the most up-to-date information regarding the status of their child's school bus.

# Taking Action

## Supporting recruitment and housing



### What is PRPS doing to support recruitment and housing concerns?

#### Action 1

Starting in the 2024-2025 school year, South Central and Oyen Public will go back to having designated school principals.

#### Action 2

In March 2024, Prairie Rose purchased a new family home in Oyen at a cost of \$235,000 to accommodate new staff moving to the area.

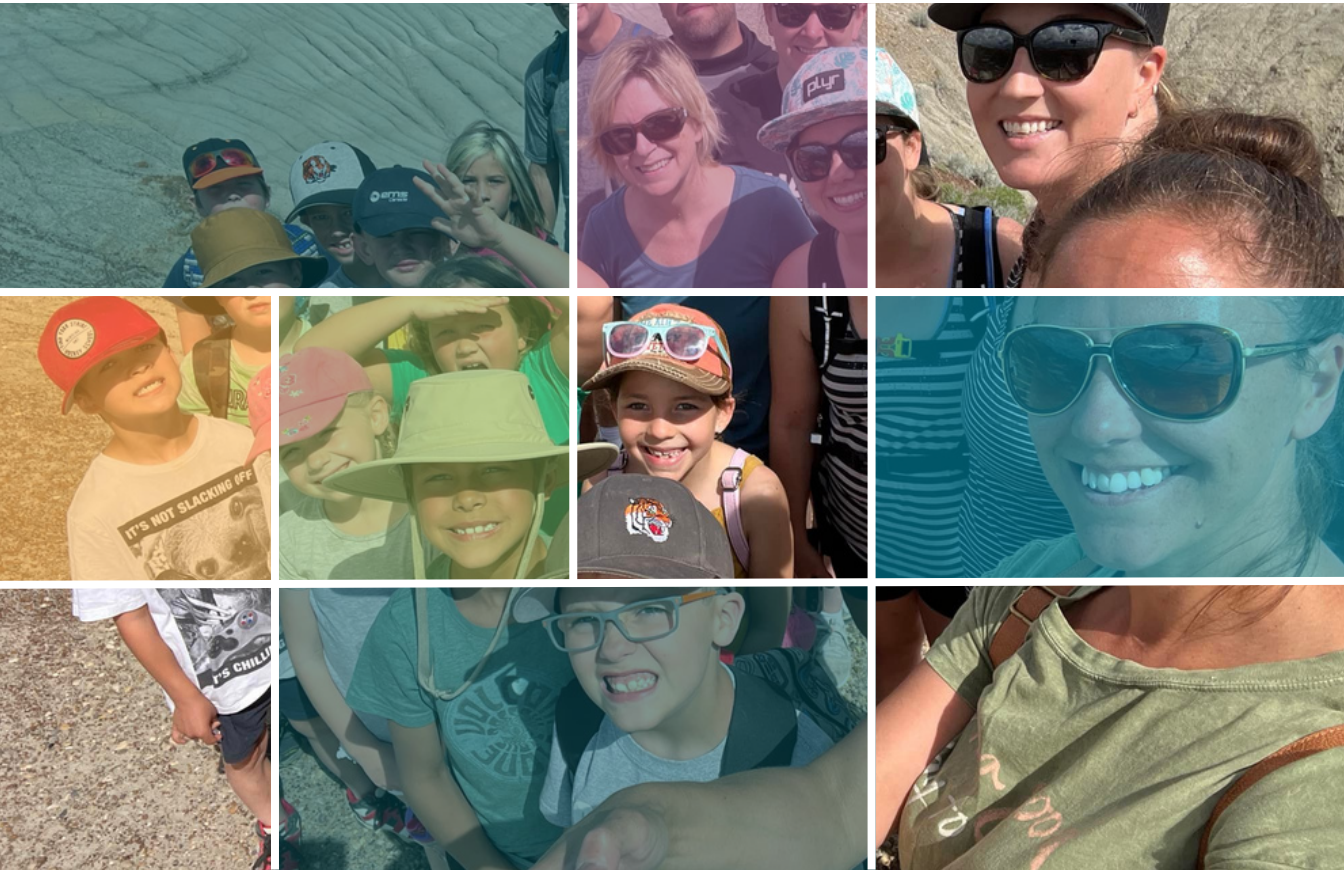
#### Action 3

Oyen high school students will be encouraged to consider pursuing a career in the education field and informed of job opportunities.

#### Action 4

Incentives provided for newly certified teaching staff. PRPS will provide cost reimbursement (pro-rated FTE) towards tuition (max of four years). Eligibility includes, but is not limited to:

- ✓ A final year, education student or 1st year post-grad teacher with a desire to provide service as a PRPS teacher in the Oyen area.
- ✓ The individual must attain a contract to teach at one of the following schools: Oyen Public School, South Central High School, Warren Peers School, New Brigden School, Acadia Colony School, Meridian Colony School, Prairie View Colony School.
- ✓ Incentive possibility for new and/or 1st year post-grad teachers with secondary education training (i.e. Bachelor of Education - Secondary programming), or who work in one of three eligible Hutterite Colony schools. Additional financial compensation may be provided after the first and second year of contracted work.



[www.myprps.com](http://www.myprps.com)