

## Community Budget Consultation Q & A 2023/2024

Question	Response
Why is full-day Kindergarten only available in some SJASD schools?	There are diverse approaches to Kindergarten across Manitoba school divisions. Full-day Kindergarten in SJASD was started as a pilot program in 2000 with the University of Manitoba and Manitoba Education. Five school sites were selected based on community demographics and space availability. The costs for full-day Kindergarten program are not supported by specific provincial funding and are the responsibility of the school division. There are many benefits of full-day programming for Kindergarten; however, budget constraints have not permitted the expansion of this programming to other schools to date.
Why are there combination grades at most Early Years schools?	Based on school enrolment, students may be placed in a classroom with a teacher who will be assigned more than one grade to meet a class size guideline. Classes are typically combined in the Early Years with the foundational understanding that learning is developmental and based on a continuum. During the school year, the teacher integrates main themes from multiple curricula into the learning experiences for the students, always ensuring that the students are assessed based on their relevant grade-level outcomes. The instructional and assessment approaches suggested for these classrooms are also best practices in single-grade classrooms.
Why do I need to apply to attend a school out of my catchment?	Schools are staffed based on in-catchment enrolment numbers. If there are spaces for additional students in a grade level that do not exceed the class size limits for that grade, students can be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Please see the registration information on the SJASD website for more details about the process and timelines for applications and acceptance.
What are the class sizes guidelines in our school division?	The class size guidelines in SJASD are as follows: Kindergarten to Grade 3 = 23; Grades 4 to 5 = 28; Grades 6 to 9 = 30; Grades 9 to 12 = 36. Only in exceptional circumstances would a class be under 15 students, or significantly over a class size recommended maximum. The average class size in SJASD classrooms is 20.1 students.
How do students learn digital skills and internet safety?	<p>Students in SJASD are engaged with digital tools in classrooms from Kindergarten through Grade 12 to enrich their learning experiences. Teachers utilize many creative opportunities to teach students about the hardware and software that they have access to within our schools and beyond our classrooms. Some of our licensed software provide the opportunity for students to connect, collaborate and share their work in online spaces so we leverage opportunities to discuss digital citizenship and our expectations around interacting positively and productively in these online spaces.</p> <p>Internet safety is often covered in class through authentic learning opportunities, guest speakers and relevant community resources. Our teachers and students discuss current Canadian data related to student use of social media and their online experiences, which is available through MediaSmarts (<a href="https://mediasmarts.ca">https://mediasmarts.ca</a>). Mediasmarts also has great resources available for parents as well!</p> <p>The world of technology has exploded over the last couple of decades and as a result, many new and exciting opportunities exist for our students. There are powerful accessibility features built into the tools our students use today that allow them to interact with technology in various ways, preparing them for the world of tomorrow.</p>
Has the school division considered open source software to reduce license and operational costs?	Yes, the IT Department at SJASD endeavours to consider open source options when making software decisions in order to reduce licensing and operational costs. In many cases open source software has proven to be the best software for the job even when other paid options exist. A few examples of open source software that we have chosen to include in our software catalog include VLC Media Player, Greenshot Screen Capture, OBS, Filezilla, Notepad++, Audacity and Python.
Why doesn't the Board increase the mill rate so that it can fund programs relative to inflation, rather than current levels of funding?	The 2023/2024 budget represents the third year that the province has requested that school divisions freeze the Special Levy and instead provided divisions with a 2% Property Tax Offset Grant. As a result, the Board of Trustees is not able to increase the SJASD mill rate to meet its needs and is entirely dependent on funding increases provided by the province.