

PUBLIC MEETING NO. 3: UPDATE

MEETING SUMMARY: APRIL 11, 2019

Project Overview

Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) Board of Trustees is reviewing programming for senior high students living in the Andrew School attendance boundary. The goal: To determine what factors are most important to Andrew students, families, staff and community members when it comes to providing equitable educational opportunities for senior high students.

Throughout fall 2018, public consultations were conducted with students, families, staff, town and county officials, and community members. These included two working-group meetings, a student forum and a public meeting. Topics presented at all four sessions were similar in nature—background information, Andrew school successes and challenges, and important considerations. The feedback received through the working-group sessions, the student forum and public meeting was invaluable. Collectively, the input gathered helped the Division develop three preliminary programming options, which were presented to the community at a second public meeting on Feb. 20, 2019. Attendees were also invited to comment and give feedback on the preliminary options through an online survey. Trustees then hosted a third working-group meeting with Andrew School students, grades 7 to 11, discussing bus ride times, programming and the ideal senior high experience.

Public Meeting Overview

On April 9, a public consultation summary report was sent, by email, to all Andrew School families. The 68-page report details all the feedback collected from students, staff and community throughout the review process. The report was also presented at an Andrew School public meeting on April 11. The purpose of the meeting: To discuss the report, provide information about next steps and offer an opportunity for attendees to ask questions and offer more feedback.

In total, 25 people attended the public meeting, which included students, staff, families, town officials and community members. From the EIPS Board of Trustees and senior administration the following were in attendance:

- Colleen Holowaychuk, Trustee
- Mark Liguori, Superintendent
- Brent Billey, Associate Superintendent
- Sandra Stoddard, Associate Superintendent
- Dave Antymniuk, Division Principal

Mark Liguori welcomed everyone to the meeting, explained the reason for the review and discussed general themes from the public consultations. Based on the feedback received through the consultations, EIPS administration is now preparing a report for the Board of Trustees, which will include a recommendation regarding programming at Andrew School.

Review of Public Consultation Themes

In general, the feedback confirmed students lacked access to peer-group classes, enhanced options and important school-community experiences—a sentiment felt at both the senior high level, and at the junior high level. Below is an overview of the feedback heard through the consultations:

- Students want more options, particularly those that offer insight and experience in future career opportunities.
- Students want an opportunity to take classes within their own peer group; that is, students taking a specific class of a core subject together, receiving instruction in a classroom and not made up of several grades and levels.
- Students want to receive instruction in a classroom setting, from a teacher and with other students. It's important they have an opportunity for class discussions, and a chance to speak with a teacher, ask questions in real time, and form positive relationships.
- Students who took classes online or remotely often indicated it wasn't a successful learning model for them, and some struggled without having a teacher on hand to provide guidance and direction.
- Students, from junior high through senior high, often felt lonely and isolated. Because of the small social circles, it was difficult to make friends and find people who shared common interests.
- Many people said it was an issue that there was no chance to form clubs or join in larger events.
- Students with an interest in either competitive or intramural sports had no opportunity to be part of a school team. In many cases, there weren't enough students in a physical education class to even try a variety of sports, never mind form teams to compete.
- There were students who had some concerns about what ride times would look like—some said if it meant more course options, sports, and activities, riding the bus for longer is acceptable.
- The students who expressed a strong desire to maintain the status quo were those moving into Grade 12 next year.
- Families and other members of the community, voiced a stronger desire to keep Andrew School a K to 12 facility.
- Families expressed concerns about bus ride times and increased child care needs.

Question and Comments

Following Superintendent Liguori's presentation. Those in attendance were given an opportunity to comment, ask questions and offer feedback. Below is a summary of what was said, broken down into the major themes discussed.

COMMUNITY

- It takes a village to raise a community.
- Senior high students can get the experiences they need through community sports teams.
- Important students have a home-grown education where the teacher is personally invested.
- Small class sizes aren't a setback.
- I just don't see a need to go to a school that's further, it's not going to help build resilience.
- High school students in a small school are encouraged to go on to further education. They're not missing anything.
- The reason why I made my family move to Andrew is that it has a K to 12 school. It's a great community. You take that high school away, and it gets broken.
- The community and volunteer aspects are only getting stronger. High school students may feel like they're missing out and isolated, but we have those opportunities in the village. It's a big part of Andrew that it has a K to 12 school. I live in Willingdon, I live out of district. But I've chosen to send my daughter here with the hopes that she'll go to high school here too, and make choices about her future.
- Things aren't going to change for the better if you change things.

RELATED COMMENTS: FROM SUPERINTENDENT LIGUORI

- I know this is incredibly difficult.
- I will make a recommendation to the Board premised on what we've heard so far.
- Ultimately, the Board will make their own decision.

OPPORTUNITY AND PROGRAMMING

- What are students going to do here? There is nothing here.
- It's different from when we graduated. The stuff that is offered here is different.
- It's a great school, but there are no opportunities here.
- My son is in Grade 9, but there are no sports offered. My son who just graduated did modules and went on to college. He was told to stay in Andrew because he was guaranteed a spot on the basketball team. But that boy didn't get offered gym. Since there was only one kid, it wasn't worth it for the school to offer.
- When you get more kids here [the lack of opportunities] will change.
- I think there could be more effort taken to plan classes and make schedules work between schools.

- I have a student in Grade 11, and he couldn't take a core course. What will happen? Will you bring in more teachers?
- There is so much different now, technologically. The options are there. People can gain the insights they need if they want to branch out.
- The Board could bus those students one day a week for those courses. It would be cheaper than busing them every day.
- With my son, four children were interested in physics, but the other parents lost interest. So, there couldn't be a class.
- What I'm picking up, is that if the Board decides to keep the senior high open, things won't change. But they need to change, that's why we're sitting here.
- Let's say the school does close for sake of conversation. Some of us are voting for it to close for lack of options. If the senior high closes in June, how will you guarantee our students get into the classes they want?
- If the courses are optional, we shouldn't have to suffer for other peoples' choices.
- When we went to high school, did we have two periods of flex time? These kids have two hours of flex time when they could be doing something else.

RELATED COMMENTS: FROM SUPERINTENDENT LIGUORI

- If the grades stay the same, we will look at what we can do within the fiscal realities.
- If the senior high stays, the school will remain as it is now. The Division will not allocate more money to Andrew School.
- If numbers continue to drop it will be difficult to offer programming with the existing resources.
- If students want to go to NAIT and need experience in carpentry or culinary arts, Andrew School doesn't have the resources to offer that class for a single child.
- Andrew could become a small elementary school. There's nothing wrong with that. Or, it could become an elementary and junior high. That's a decision the Board will have to make.
- If the grades are reconfigured, whatever school students choose, they can enrol in courses they want to take, despite the late registration.

OTHER OPTIONS

- Mundare doesn't have a high school. What would be wrong with busing those children north? We're closer than Lamont. Raise the bar here. Instead of taking them away.
- It would be good for the school here, and it would be good for the entire system.
- Andrew could be very poised for specialized learning, whatever that may be. Computer, agriculture, woodwork, or whatever it may be. The options are endless.
- I'm not suggesting unrealistic classes, but there has to be some good things that could have a gap in some other schools that aren't offering it. Offer it here.

RELATED COMMENTS: FROM SUPERINTENDENT LIGUORI

- One of the things that we do know, the Grade 9s from Mundane School split off after they leave the school. Half go to St. Mary's Catholic School, for a Catholic education. That won't help the numbers at Andrew School and it potentially puts another school at risk.
- We can look at all sorts of programming options. The green certificate is a great program, but the truth of the matter is, if we don't have kids who are interested in that, we can't offer it here.

RIDE TIMES

- To take children who now come to Andrew School and put them on a bus for up to four hours a day, I don't see any positives there.
- How are students going to do sports if they have to catch a bus? They could be on that bus for an hour and a half. They can't take sports. They can't join the basketball team.

RELATED COMMENTS: FROM SUPERINTENDENT LIGUORI

- A recommendation will go to the Board. Trustees will continue to listen to everything with an open mind. They will consider the entire perspective, not just mine. They will consider what is best for students and the Division.

STUDENT PROJECTIONS

- Are the elementary numbers low too?
- We're actually growing. Five homes have sold in Andrew this year, and out of those, three have children. That's a pretty big number for this point in the year.

RELATED COMMENTS: FROM SUPERINTENDENT LIGUORI

- Within the Andrew transportation zone, there appears to be six kindergarten-aged children. So far, only four are registered.
- When you start to look at the grade configurations there are some bleak-sized grades, especially when you get to junior high.
- The elementary numbers are declining and we see the decline over time.
- This is an issue that we are also seeing regionally.

RECOMMENDATION

- What is the recommendation?
- So in the survey, all the pictures show people voted mostly to keep the senior high open. How does that weigh into the recommendation?
- What's next?

RELATED COMMENTS: FROM SUPERINTENDENT LIGUORI

- The people who first see my recommendation have to be the Board of Trustees. The Board will likely receive the report on Saturday, and on Monday we'll post it on the Division website. At that time, it will be a public document.
- The recommendation takes all the feedback received into consideration. One of the most telling things heard was when the trustees spoke with junior high students, almost all of them voiced not wanting to stay at Andrew School.
- The Board will either accept my recommendation report or not. If the Board says they want more information, then we go out and gather it.

RELATED COMMENTS: FROM COLLEEN HOLOWAYCHUK

- I thought I knew what the situation was here. It hurts when I hear people say that the decision has been made.
- Four trustees spoke to the students. And they were very forthcoming. They weren't pressured. We listened to them. They have wisdom that people need to listen to.
- Trustees are going to look through the eyes of students.
- Sports teams is a huge one, another is more students.

Next Steps

The EIPS Board will review the recommendation report and all the input received through the various public consultation sessions at the Board meeting on April 18, 2019. A final decision about senior high programming at Andrew School is expected within the 2018-19 school year.