



RECOMMENDATION REPORT

DATE: Nov. 17, 2022

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Mark Liguori, Superintendent

SUBJECT: James Mowat Elementary Enrolment Pressure

ORIGINATOR: Brent Dragon, Planner, Facility Services

RESOURCE STAFF: Sandra Stoddard, Associate Superintendent, Supports for Students
Brent Billy, Associate Superintendent, Human Resources
Dave Antymniuk, Division Principal
Laura McNabb, Director, Communication Services
Corrie Fletcher, Communications Specialist, Communication Services
Karen Baranec, Communications Networking Specialist, Communication Services

REFERENCE: Administrative Procedure 305: School attendance areas and requests to attend non-designated schools
Administrative Procedure 540: Planning for school facilities

EIPS PRIORITIES: Enhance high-quality learning and working environments
Enhance public education through effective engagement

EIPS GOALS: Quality infrastructure for all
Parent and caregiver engagement

EIPS OUTCOMES: Learning and working environments are supported by effective planning, management and investment in Division infrastructure
Student learning is supported and enhanced by providing meaningful opportunities for parents and caregivers to be involved in their child's education

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Trustees approve a two-year Random Selection Process Pilot to address the enrolment pressure at James Mowat Elementary, based on the Closed Boundary Priority Scale, effective for the 2023-24 school year;

that Board of Trustees approve Fort Saskatchewan Elementary as the alternate designated school for the James Mowat Elementary attendance boundary;

that the Board of Trustees approve Grandfathering for current students enrolled at James Mowat Elementary; and,

that the Board of Trustees approve busing fees apply as listed in the Transportation fee schedule.

BACKGROUND:

In May 2022, Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) developed a Three-Year Engagement Strategy. The plan identifies areas where the Division can improve operations to best serve students. It also details strategies and timelines for the various engagement efforts. Collectively, the plan ensures EIPS continues providing high-quality education to all students.

One of the identified projects is Project 2: Enrolment Pressures In Fort Saskatchewan, a two-phase public engagement effort to explore a solution to best address James Mowat Elementary's enrolment pressures.

Phase 1: Y Station developed a community-engagement plan and communication strategy. It then facilitated two public consultation meetings and one online survey. The consultations and survey provided the school community with background information and the school's enrolment pressures. There was also an opportunity to share feedback about what is most important to the school community and what they think the Board should consider before making any decisions.

The goal: To present the issues to the community, collect feedback and explore possible solutions.

Response: 25 attendees at the public meeting and 103 survey responses

Phase 2: Y Station facilitated one public consultation and one survey. At the meeting, and through the survey, attendees were presented with a possible solution to address James Mowat's enrolment pressures. They were also asked to provide feedback for the Board's consideration.

The goal: To gather feedback about piloting a random selection process at James Mowat Elementary for new students, starting in 2023-24.

Response: Nine attendees at the two public meetings and 91 survey response

The Division's Random Selection Process Pilot changed slightly from what was presented at the public engagement session on September 22. The change is minor and deals with the call-back list. Initially, the Division wanted to automatically add students not selected through the random selection process to a call-back list in case space opens later. After careful reflection, the Division determined a call-back list wasn't actually feasible as all decisions about busing, staffing, budgets and schedules are based on the returning student registration data. Adding a call-back list can potentially negatively impact registration numbers at another school. For that reason, the call-back list is no longer part of the recommended James Mowat Elementary random selection process.

The solution EIPS is proposing to address James Mowat Elementary's enrolment pressures is the introduction of a random selection process, as a pilot project, for all new students who register at James Mowat Elementary, starting in 2023-24. If the number of new students exceeds the available space for a specific grade, the school then accepts children using a random selection process and based on the Division's Closed-Boundary Priority Scale (see below, "Closed-Boundary Priority Scale"). The random selection process would remain in place as long as the school has closed boundaries.

Closed-Boundary Priority Scale

Priority 1: Children living within the attendance area with a sibling attending the school and returning the following year.

Priority 2: Children living in the James Mowat Elementary attendance area. *AND*, children living outside the attendance area with a sibling currently attending the school and returning the following year.

Priority 3: Kindergarten children living outside the James Mowat Elementary attendance area, when required.



RECOMMENDATION REPORT

Page 3 of 3

Children selected through the random selection process attend James Mowat Elementary. Children not selected attend their alternate designated school.

NOTE: Students who currently attend James Mowat Elementary can continue to attend the school.

COMMUNICATION PLAN:

If approved administration will:

- Update the Student Transportation fee schedule to include fee information for an alternate designated school
- Update the attendance boundary area maps to include the alternate designated school
- Develop communication materials for the random selection process pilot materials to promote understanding.

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. James Mowat Elementary enrolment pressure engagement summary
2. EIPS Frequently Asked Questions James Mowat Elementary Enrolment Pressures
3. What We Heard – James Mowat Elementary Phase 1
4. What We Heard – James Mowat Elementary Phase 2

CC:

Public Consultations: Report Summary

JAMES MOWAT ELEMENTARY | ENROLMENT PRESSURES

LAST UPDATED: Oct. 27, 2022



TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND.....3

SUMMARY.....4

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY.....4

BACKGROUND

As part of the Division's reporting requirements to Alberta Education, EIPS reviews programs, enrolment transitions and boundaries regularly. When areas of concern are identified, the Division works to determine how best to resolve the issue. In the case of student capacity, the Division developed an EIPS Three-Year Engagement Plan. The plan identifies where the Division can improve operations to best serve students, and the strategies and timelines for various related engagement efforts over the next three years. Collectively, the plan ensures EIPS continues providing high-quality education to all students.

One of the identified projects is Project 2: Enrolment Pressures In Fort Saskatchewan, a two-phase public engagement effort to explore a solution to best address James Mowat Elementary's enrolment pressures. Over the last few years, Fort Saskatchewan has experienced substantial residential growth. In fact, the growth is at a point where it affects the Division's ability to provide accommodation for students living in the area. For EIPS, addressing enrolment pressures at James Mowat Elementary is one of the most pressing issues within Fort Saskatchewan. The school is currently now experiencing significant enrolment pressures. So much so it now exceeds its enrolment capacity, despite adding a modular classroom at the start of the 2022-23 school year.

The reason, James Mowat Elementary is the designated receiving school for the West Park neighbourhood—a significant development growth area in Fort Saskatchewan. EIPS anticipates the enrolment pressures to continue at the school for the foreseeable future. Over the short- to medium-term, the Division must address James Mowat's current enrolment pressures. Long-term, the Division requires additional school capacity to accommodate students in southeast Fort Saskatchewan. As such, a replacement school, and expansion, for James Mowat Elementary is marked as priority No. 3 on the EIPS Three-Year Capital Plan.

To facilitate public consultations, the Division hired Y Station, a local public consultation company, to explore a solution to best address James Mowat Elementary's enrolment pressures.

Phase 1: Y Station developed a community-engagement plan and communication strategy. It then facilitated two public consultation meetings and one online survey. The consultations and survey provided the school community with background information and the school's enrolment pressures. There was also an opportunity to share feedback about what is most important to the school community and what they think the Board should consider before making any decisions.

The goal: To present the issues to the community, collect feedback and explore possible solutions.

Response: 25 attendees at the two public meetings and 103 survey responses

When: June 2022

Phase 2: Y Station facilitated one public consultation and one survey. At the meeting, and through the survey, attendees were presented with a possible solution to address James Mowat's enrolment pressures. They were also asked to provide feedback for the Board's consideration.

The goal: To gather feedback about piloting a random selection process at James Mowat Elementary for new students, starting in 2023-24.

Response: Nine attendees at the public meeting and 91 survey response

When: September 2022

SUMMARY

As outlined in James Mowat Elementary Engagement Pressures What We Heard Report: Phase 1 three key themes emerged for Phase 1 of the in-person engagements:

- impacts on children both academically and socially
- the importance of community; and
- the importance of communication.

The survey responses had similar themes as the in-person meetings, however a broader response covered the following four additional major themes.

- concerns about separating friends and siblings and those students already attending should be prioritized for staying at the school,
- a new school needs to be built;
- concerns over education standards slipping; and
- concerns that classes are or will become too large.

Overall, participants wanted more information about the enrolment pressure, along with open and transparent communication with families. Many respondents expressed concerns about the term “lottery” and the process. Many of the concerns were rooted in a strong sense of community focused on James Mowat Elementary.

As outlined in James Mowat Elementary Engagement Pressures What We Heard Report: Phase 2 three key themes emerged for Phase 2 of the in-person engagements:

- support for the random selection process as it would not impact currently enrolled students;
- concern around busing costs; and
- communication with new families residing in James Mowat Elementary’s attendance area.

The survey responses captured a similar set of themes, however two additional themes emerged.

- parents should be able to pick the alternate designated school; and
- concerns about the work the process places on administration.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

PHASE 1: SPRING 2022

OPEN HOUSE DISCUSSION

No. 1: June 14, 2022, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

In-person attendance: 7

No. 2: June 16, 2022, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

In-person attendance: 18

The facilitated in-person public consultations in Phase 1 asked participants to share their concerns, identify potential solutions and provide advice to EIPS when making this decision. Some of the key concerns of this session were the impacts on siblings, friends and students already enrolled at the school. Other comments focused on wanting clear communication and concerns over educational standards. A series of alternative solutions were suggested, including ensuring those closest to the school could attend, adding more modular classrooms, altering grade configurations and constructing a new school for the area.

ONLINE SURVEY: JUNE 14 TO JUNE 28

Responses: 103

Reflecting similar themes as the in-person sessions 94 responses submitted a postal code from within the James Mowat Elementary attendance area. In addition to the major themes, some moderate themes were raised, including the need to improve planning for future students and growth. Supports for teachers and students. Proposed solutions included the expansion of the school and redesignating a portion of the attendance area.

PHASE 2: FALL 2022

OPEN HOUSE DISCUSSION NO. 1: SEPT. 22, 2022, 5:30 P.M. TO 7:30 P.M.

In-Person attendance: 9

At open house the overall reaction of the proposed random selection pilot was positive. It should be noted that most participants already had children enrolled in James Mowat Elementary. Y Station worked with participants to reflect on the random selection process as if the participants were impacted. The participants emphasized the importance of early and accurate communication.

ONLINE SURVEY: SEPT. 22 TO OCT. 3

Responses: 91

More than 40 per cent of respondents indicated support for the random selection process. In contrast 25 per cent were opposed to the proposed solution. It should be noted, some of these respondents did not fully understand the proposed solution—for example, not fully understanding the Close-Boundary Priority Scale and the Division's priority to keep siblings together. Lastly, busing was another key topic with most concerns about costs and who should pay.

EIPS Frequently Asked Questions

JAMES MOWAT ELEMENTARY | ENROLMENT PRESSURES

LAST UPDATED: September 2022



FAQS: JAMES MOWAT ELEMENTARY ENROLMENT PRESSURES

INTRODUCTION

Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) is exploring how best to manage the student growth and enrolment pressures at James Mowat Elementary.

In June 2022, EIPS contracted Y Station Communications and Research to conduct public consultations with the James Mowat school community. Two in-person public consultation sessions were held. Attendees learned details about the enrolment issues, discussed possible solutions, asked questions and provided feedback. Y Station also conducted an online survey to collect additional input, which it used to produce a [What We Heard Report \(bit.ly/3NEBRvD\)](https://bit.ly/3NEBRvD).

The following are the frequently asked questions (FAQ) from the June engagement efforts.

General

Q: Why is EIPS consulting James Mowat Elementary's school community?

A: As part of the Division's annual reporting requirements to Alberta Education, the Division reviews programs, enrolment transitions and boundaries every year. When areas of concern are identified, the Division works to determine how best to resolve the issue. In the case of James Mowat Elementary, the school is operating at full capacity, despite adding another modular classroom this year. Currently, there's no more room on the school site for additional modular classrooms—the city owns the surrounding land.

As new families move into the Westpark area, EIPS anticipates enrolment pressures to continue at James Mowat. As such, the Division must address the issue to prevent programming challenges related to program delivery, classroom use and accommodating students with special needs. To determine the best solution, EIPS is seeking feedback from the school community.

Q: What's the school's occupancy limit?

A: School divisions don't use fire occupancy limits to determine how many students a school can accommodate. That's because the limit only applies to a school gymnasium. Instead, divisions use school capacity, set by the province. Annually, Alberta Education reviews each school's capacity number using a formula that considers the building's available instructional space, area per student and grade configurations. At James Mowat Elementary, the school capacity is 406 students, which includes the building and modular classroom.

Q: How many spaces does James Mowat Elementary need to find to accommodate students next year?

A: It's difficult to provide an exact number until after the returning student registration process in February. That said, James Mowat Elementary's current utilization rate is at 103 per cent. So, that means the school is completely full. Looking ahead, for the next three years, enrolment projections predict the school needs to create 15 more student spaces, per year, to accommodate all those living in James Mowat's attendance area.

Q: How can we get the City of Fort Saskatchewan involved?

A: The City of Fort Saskatchewan continues to work with EIPS on an ongoing basis. The two meet regularly to discuss mutual matters. In terms of the enrolment pressures at James Mowat Elementary, the city is limited in how they can help as funding comes from the provincial level. A replacement school is listed as Priority 3 on the EIPS' [Three-Year Capital Plan 2023-26](#). However, the province needs to approve funding for a replacement school, which will likely take years.

Q: Can the school community fundraise the cost to address the enrolment-pressure issue at James Mowat Elementary?

A: No. Fundraising can't address the enrolment pressures at James Mowat Elementary. A replacement school is listed as Priority 3 on the EIPS' [Three-Year Capital Plan 2023-26](#). A new school, with a larger capacity, will help address the growing population in Fort Saskatchewan. However, the province needs to approve funding for a replacement school, which will likely take years. Once a replacement school is approved, there are fundraising opportunities for the community, for example, for a new school playground.

Attendance Areas

Q: Does EIPS use census data to establish school attendance areas?

A: EIPS does review federal or municipal census data. But, it doesn't rely on it to determine attendance areas or develop enrolment projections. Instead, EIPS uses Barargar Systems, a planning software used by school divisions nationwide. Using Baragar software, EIPS can accurately develop enrolment projections and comprehensively analyze all demographic data within a school boundary—such as Provincial Birth Registry, Canada Child Benefit database, EIPS' student information system. Annually, EIPS reviews each school's enrolment projections for long-term planning.

Q: How are the current school boundaries enforced?

A: EIPS uses boundaries strategically to ensure high-quality learning environments in all its schools. The Division has established attendance areas and [boundary maps](#) for each of its schools. These determine a child's designated school. Each school also has a set optimal enrolment limit, which is a pre-determined maximum number of students a school can register.

Every year, the Division reviews its enrolment projections and uses the projections to determine a school's optimal enrolment limit. Schools with enrolment projections that fall under the optimal enrolment limit have open boundaries—meaning students who live [outside the designated attendance area](#) can register there. Schools with enrolment projections that fall above the optimal enrolment limit have closed boundaries—meaning only students designated to the school can attend. A school's optimal enrolment limit often fluctuates from year to year, as does its open and closed boundary status.

For the 2023-24 school year, James Mowat's OEL is 374 students. The school has had closed boundaries since 2021-22.

Student Capacity

Q: Are any other EIPS schools within Fort Saskatchewan facing similar enrolment pressures as James Mowat Elementary?

A: EIPS operates eight schools in Fort Saskatchewan. To determine if the school is at capacity, the Division looks to the school's utilization rate, which Alberta Education updates annually. As of the 2021-22 school year, James Mowat is the only EIPS school in Fort Saskatchewan at full capacity.

Fort Saskatchewan student utilization, in percentages:

James Mowat Elementary – 103%

Fort Saskatchewan Christian – 90%

SouthPointe School – 87%

Win Ferguson Elementary – 84%

École Parc Élémentaire – 78%

Rudolph Hennig Junior High – 72%

Fort Saskatchewan Elementary – 66%

Fort Saskatchewan High – 65%

Q: What elementary schools in Fort Saskatchewan have more available student space than James Mowat Elementary?

A: All EIPS elementary schools have more student capacity than James Mowat Elementary. Fort Saskatchewan Elementary has the most space available, with roughly 140 surplus student spaces. Next is Win Ferguson Elementary, it has 75 surplus student spaces.

SouthPointe School has closed boundaries because of anticipated enrolment pressures from the Southfort neighbourhood. Meanwhile, École Parc Élémentaire and Fort Saskatchewan Christian have 86 and 41 surplus student spaces, respectively. However, both offer Alternative Programming and can't take regular program students.

Q: When current James Mowat Elementary students enter senior high, will the enrolment pressures also follow them there?

A: EIPS anticipates enrolment pressure issues across Fort Saskatchewan for the foreseeable future. In fact, if no additional capacity is added, the Division projects fewer than 600 student spaces available by 2028—that's for every grade level, kindergarten to Grade 12. As the senior high level, EIPS anticipates fewer than 150 student spaces available at Fort Saskatchewan High by 2028.

Q: How many extra spaces does the school need to find to accommodate all students living in the James Mowat Elementary attendance area?

A: Providing an exact number is challenging. That said, James Mowat Elementary's utilization rate is at 103 per cent. That means the school is completely full. EIPS believes the school needs approximate 15 additional student spaces, annually, to accommodate children living within the James Mowat's attendance boundaries.

Random Selection Process

Q: How will it work if EIPS decides to pilot a random selection process at James Mowat Elementary?

A: If the Board pilots the proposed random selection process at James Mowat Elementary, it will start in the 2023-24 school year. The process remains in place as long as the school has closed boundaries. However, it only affects new students wanting to attend the school—not current students, they can stay at the school. Essentially, each grade would have a limit for the number of classes and registrable students. If the number of new students exceeds the available space for a specific grade, the school accepts all new children registering using the random selection process and a closed boundary priority scale. Those selected through the random selection process attend James Mowat Elementary. Those not selected attend their alternate designated school and are automatically placed on a callback list, by grade—used if space becomes available before the September 29 cutoff.

Q: How will the closed-boundary priority scale work?

A: The proposed process includes a closed-boundary priority scale made up of three categories. Using this process, school administration would select students to attend the school using a random selection process by grouping registrants into one of three priority categories.

Priority 1: Children living within the attendance area with a sibling attending the school and returning the following year.

Priority 2: Children living in the James Mowat Elementary attendance area. *AND*, children living outside the attendance area with a sibling currently attending the school and returning the following year.

Priority 3: All kindergarten children living outside the James Mowat Elementary attendance area, when required.

Q: How do students register for James Mowat Elementary using the random selection process?

A: The process to register at James Mowat Elementary would be the same as in previous years. All students wanting to attend the school register during the returning student registration process in February. Families indicate they want their child to attend James Mowat. Students currently attending the school are automatically accepted for the following school year. Meanwhile, new students are grouped into one of the three closed boundary priority categories. School administration randomly select new students, starting with those in Priority 1 and moving down to each category until all available spots, by grade, are full. Children not selected, attend their alternate designated school and are automatically added to the school's callback list—used if space opens in a class before the September 29 cutoff.

Q: My older child currently attends James Mowat Elementary. If EIPS introduces a random selection process, can my younger child also go to James Mowat when they reach school age?

A: When the younger child turns kindergarten age, they can register to attend the school. The child will be grouped in the Priority 1 category for the random selection process. The younger child can attend the school, as long as space is available.

Other Solutions Raised at Previous Engagements

Q: Why did EIPS decide against changing the James Mowat Elementary attendance area?

A: An attendance-area adjustment would impact the entire James Mowat Elementary school community—new and existing students. Whenever there’s a change to a school’s attendance area, current students are redirected to another school. A random selection process only impacts new students to James Mowat.

Q: Why did EIPS decide against a grade reconfiguration at the school?

A: It’s imperative the enrolment-pressure solution is in the best educational interests of all students living within Fort Saskatchewan. Part of that means ensuring the solution disrupts the least number of students and families possible. Introducing a grade reconfiguration at James Mowat Elementary would impact far more families than a random selection process for new students.

Q: Instead of the random selection process, can EIPS create more alternative classroom spaces—for example, rental spaces owned privately or by the city?

A: No, alternative classroom spaces are not feasible. These spaces present their own challenges and often come with additional costs, including added rental cost and student transportation fees that cost that also take away from student instructional time.

Q: Instead of the random selection process can EIPS add more modular classrooms to the school site?

A: No. EIPS added a modular classroom to the James Mowat Elementary this school year. There is no more room on the school site for additional modular classrooms. The land surrounding the building belongs to the city.

Busing

Q: How will busing work for students requiring transportation services?

A: EIPS provides an enhanced transportation service for both eligible and ineligible riders. So, anyone who wants to access Student Transportation can do so by requesting busing services during the returning student registration process in February. Families simply indicate on the online form busing is required for their child. Before the end of the school year, the family will receive their child’s busing information, including any associated fees.

Q: How are families charged for busing?

A: EIPS offers enhanced transportation services for students, using the below fee structure.

Eligible Fee: Riders who attend their designated school and live more than 2.39 kilometres from that school. For 2022-23, the eligible fee is \$121 per year.

Ineligible Fee: Students who attend a non-designated school or live less than 2.4 kilometres from their designated school. For 2022-23, the ineligible fee is \$346 per year.

Next Steps

Q: When will EIPS make a final decision about the how it will address James Mowat Elementary's enrolment pressures?

A: A final decision is expected before the end of November. Before making a decision, the Board will review all the information and feedback gathered throughout the public consultations. EIPS is committed to keeping the community informed about the process and will provide information as it becomes available.

Q: What is the registration process for affected families? Can families apply to other schools?

A: Families can apply to have their child attend another EIPS school during the returning student registration process in February 2023. Families can request registration at a different school—subject to available space. If Student Transportation services are required, fees apply.

What We Heard James Mowat Elementary

Phase 1

 **ystation**

August 15, 2022
Produced for EIPS



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Methods	5
Results	6
Open House	7
Initial reaction and concerns	7
What should EIPS consider, potential solutions and advice	8
Survey Feedback	10
Initial Reaction	11
Concerns	11
Priorities	12
Values	12
Solutions and Advice	13
Final Comments	13
Children in Household and Attending EIPS	14
Postal Codes	14
Frequently Asked Questions – FAQs	15
Conclusions	16

Executive Summary

James Mowat Elementary is the designated receiving school for the Westpark neighbourhood in the City of Fort Saskatchewan. Enrolment projections for James Mowat Elementary indicate the school will be at capacity for the 2022-23 school year despite the addition of one modular classroom. Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) must determine the best way to accommodate students in the James Mowat Elementary enrolment area and in elementary schools within Fort Saskatchewan. There are many possible solutions under consideration and as such EIPS wished to share information with and gather feedback from families to inform recommendations for the Board of Trustees' consideration as they decide how best to move forward.

Engagement with the James Mowat Elementary community is planned in two phases. The spring engagement, covered by this report, presented the issue to the community and collected their reactions and potential solutions. The fall engagement will present these findings back to the community along with options for consideration that would address the issue.

The spring engagement consisted of two in-person facilitated open house discussions and an online survey. In total, 25 people attended the two sessions held on June 14 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and June 16 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the James Mowat Elementary gymnasium. The online survey was open from June 14 to 28 and a total of 103 survey responses were collected.

The key questions the engagement sought to answer were:

1. What are your initial concerns? For your family? For the school? For the community?
2. What will be important for EIPS to think about as it explores different processes or options in relation to enrolment pressures for elementary students?
3. What do you think are potential solutions to this issue?

During the open houses, three central themes emerged:

- Concerns about the impact on children both academically and socially.
- The importance of community.
- The importance of communication.

Open house attendees' priorities and solutions focused on:

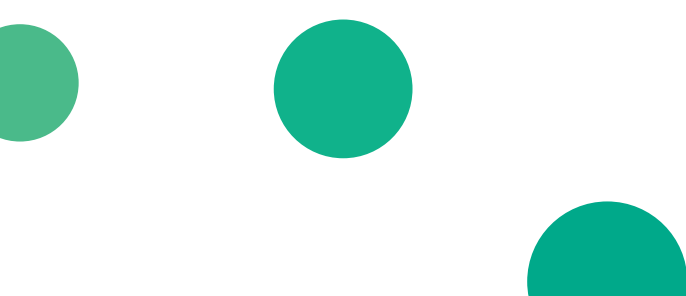
- adding more classrooms (portables, outdoor classrooms, or underutilized spaces elsewhere in the city),
- a new school,
- moving older grades to junior high sooner,
- making other schools more attractive and
- keeping friends and siblings together.

Some attendees noted feeling like they did not have enough information on the problem to offer solutions and others noted that their initial reaction was that since their children were already attending the school any changes to enrolment would not impact their children.

While survey respondents had similar concerns, priorities and solutions as the open house attendees, they also expressed more diverse responses. Four central themes emerged from the survey responses:

- Concerns about separating friends and siblings and those students already attending should be prioritized for staying at the school.
- A new school needs to be built.
- Concerns over education standards slipping.
- Concerns that classes are or will become too large.

Survey respondents also had several additional suggestions/solution themes that emerged:

- hire more teachers or staff,
 - add more portables,
 - rezone or change the boundaries of the school,
 - the government needs to fund education better and
 - there needs to be better planning.
- 

Methods

The purpose of this engagement was to inform the James Mowat Elementary community of the enrolment issue and to begin to consult with them about potential solutions. To achieve this purpose, two key public engagement methods were deployed to gather insights from the James Mowat Elementary community: facilitated open houses and an online survey. Both methods have a proven track record for providing diverse input opportunities and gathering nuanced responses.

The success of these methods relies on a solid engagement communication plan. To ensure all school community members had an opportunity to participate in the engagement, a letter was electronically delivered to all school families one week in advance stating the date and time of the open houses and notifying them of the opportunity to participate via survey. A-frame signs were placed near the front of the school six days prior to the event and an advertising spot ran on local radio station MIX 107.9 seven times a day.

The open houses were scheduled to start at two different times, the Tuesday session at 5:30 p.m. and the Thursday session at 6:30 p.m. to give attendees options to choose from for their family's schedule. Childcare was offered at both sessions to ensure parents with younger children felt welcome to fully participate and were not burdened with sourcing childcare. Childcare was accessed by attendees for both sessions. Refreshments were also provided. A slide presentation was used so attendees had a visual reference for the conversation and the gymnasium was set up in an arched theatre-style seating so the facilitator could easily see all participants.

During the open houses, an overview of the issue was provided by EIPS leadership, and the facilitated session sought to answer these questions:

1. What are your initial thoughts or opinions?
2. What are your initial concerns? For your family? For the school? For the community?
3. What will be important for EIPS to think about as it explores different processes or options in relation to this issue?
4. What do you think are potential solutions to this issue?
5. If you could give EIPS one piece of advice on this issue, what would it be?
6. Is there anything we have missed? Any additional comments?

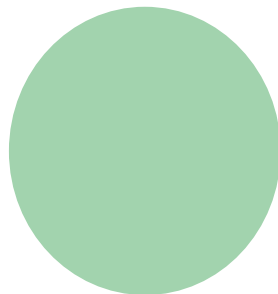
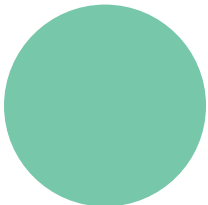
The survey opened on the same day as the first open house. The survey preamble gave participants an overview of the issue that paralleled what was presented in the open house, then asked the open-ended questions from the open house and closed by asking a few questions about the number of children a respondent has at James Mowat Elementary or in EIPS, along with their postal code.

One additional feedback mechanism was available but not utilized. A call-in phone line was included in the letter to families and on the survey but was not accessed in this phase by any respondents.

Results

Themes from the open house mirror themes that emerged in the survey. Overall, the conversations in the open house were respectful, only gentle reminders were needed in the second session about side conversations. There was no major disagreement among the attendees. There were participants in both the open houses and survey who acknowledged the difficult decision that EIPS must make.

“I would just like to state that I understand this is a difficult situation the school is in and not as simple as it may seem. That being said, I still believe keeping current students attending James Mowat is the priority and of the utmost importance to our children and community moving forward. Any and all options should be exhausted before resorting to a lottery or anything else along those lines.”



Open House

Overall, 25 people attended the open houses (seven attended the Tuesday session and 18 attended the Thursday session). The Tuesday session lasted approximately one hour and 45 minutes and the Thursday session lasted two hours. While the questions were designed to encourage participants to reflect and respond to different aspects of the enrolment issue, a few key themes repeatedly surfaced throughout the conversation: impact on children academically and socially, the importance of community and communication.

Initial reaction and concerns

Similar thoughts and concerns were raised in response to the first two questions and these themes continued to echo throughout the entire conversation. Many attendees were concerned about the impact any decision would have on students, both academically and socially. A major concern raised was the potential for increased classroom sizes and the ensuing impact on academic outcomes for children. Attendees expressed concern about a potential lack of educational assistants or teachers to teach to the increased number of students:

“In my mind, we are trying to create more space, if we create more space will there be enough staff?”

Concerns were raised about the social impact of having kids attend a school outside of their community; there was concern they would be the outsiders and miss out on the opportunity to connect with their neighbourhood peers. Larger schools and larger class sizes were also noted as having a negative impact on the children by making it harder for some children to speak up or connect with peers:

“Kids being bused into the community have no connection to the school. Will my kid be the outsider?”

“We start here, we want to finish here. My shy kid doesn’t want to move into a new school, it would be horrible.”

The sense of community was a dominant theme throughout the discussion. Concerns were raised about the community school serving kids from outside of the community, that any type of enrolment management mechanism could split up communities and that being in the community is safer for children (less risk from busing and more options for active transportation which foster independence in children):

“We picked this place for the sense of community.”

Several attendees noted that this is not a new problem, as enrolment was noted as a concern several years ago. They expressed frustration that the issue was not addressed and worried about the issue persisting as their children move through the school system.

Concerns about funding were also raised. One attendee noted the situation seems to be a result of underfunding and the need for a new school was raised.

What should EIPS consider, potential solutions and advice

After reactions and concerns were explored, the conversation turned to addressing what EIPS should value as it explores different processes or options and coming up with solutions. Attendees also were asked to provide one piece of advice to EIPS.

Once again, community figured largely in this part of the discussion. Attendees wanted EIPS to consider using parent and community voices to advocate for change at the municipal or provincial level. Many attendees were eager to help more broadly to create change that would benefit EIPS and their community, wanting to support the development of a long-term plan to address enrolment issues. Another attendee suggested EIPS should consider reaching out to community-based organizations in the area for help and these organizations' input will ensure that a great diversity of input is gathered (for example the Families First Society). It was also suggested that EIPS should consider thinking about the community in a geographical sense when changing the boundary lines, ensuring kids are close enough to their schools to use active transportation modes (walking and biking).

Adding more classrooms/class space was raised as something EIPS should consider, but this suggestion caused several attendees to voice concerns about educational standards. Some in attendance felt this would cause a lapse in education standards and strain available resources and could cause good teachers to leave. Some attendees suggested they might consider homeschooling if EIPS moved in this direction:

“It pains me to hear that quality education is something we value, but there is no classroom size cap. It’s important to me to have my kids in the community school but that makes me want to homeschool them or send them to a private school.”

One attendee suggested figuring out why parents want their children at James Mowat and using those findings to help improve enrolment at low enrolment schools.

Another central theme raised for EIPS consideration was communication. It was noted that not enough information was provided on the scope of the issue before the session for attendees to be able to provide informed advice and opinions. More communication and greater transparency throughout the process were requested. One attendee noted the impact of language and word choice on how the problem and solutions are perceived. They expressed concerns over the word lottery and many other participants agreed:

“Lottery implies a sense of luck – some kids will be lucky and some will not. No one wants their child’s education to be left to luck. It feels very random.”

Attendees raised several potential solutions, from increasing parent fundraising and advocacy to the long-term solution of building a new school. Short-term solutions focused on the current building included adding more portables or a second storey, changing the current boundaries to reflect the community boundaries, or creating outdoor classroom spaces. Another solution raised was to reach out to the City to access some of their underutilized spaces for classroom space. It was also suggested the Grade 5 or 6 students could be moved out of the building to junior high sooner creating more space for younger kids who can have a hard time with transitions.

Busing children to other schools as a solution was also discussed, but many attendees felt there were a lot of problems with this solution, from lengthy bus rides causing motion sickness to increasing EIPS liability. Some attendees also raised concerns about accessing local before and after school care in the neighbourhood if their children move schools.

When discussing a central piece of advice for EIPS, attendees once again raised the central themes of impact on children, community and communication. In addition to reiterating some of the potential solutions, it was also noted that EIPS should consider making busing more affordable or let people who are within the boundaries but don’t want to be a James Mowat Elementary access other schools. Attendees also agreed that a perfect solution would be difficult to find, and one raised the need for both a short and long-term plan.

As the conversation was wrapping up, attendees were canvassed for final comments, which mainly took the form of additional questions about the next steps and where to get more information. A few noted they did not think that an enrolment decision would impact them as they already have children at the school, so clearly the communication about options impacting current families should be enhanced.

Survey Feedback

The survey feedback reflects the comments and concerns noted in the open houses. The survey opened on June 14 and closed on June 28. Reminder advertisements were used on EIPS social media, and one reminder was sent out using the EIPS SchoolMessenger platform. In total, 103 people completed the survey.

The survey included a brief description of the issue facing James Mowat Elementary and then asked very similar questions to the ones covered during the open house sessions. There were four central themes repeated throughout the questions. While the questions were designed to gather nuanced details about respondents' reactions and solutions, repeated themes emerged across all the open-ended questions. The count number of mentions is noted in brackets and at times is higher than the number of respondents due to how their comments reflected a theme regardless of the topic of the question. These themes are areas of high concern and are key priority areas to the respondents:

- 182 mentions of separating current students or preventing siblings and community children from entering the school/the need to prioritize existing families staying in the school.
- 160 mentions of the need for a new school.
- 147 mentions of students not receiving adequate education or support/the need to prioritize quality education.
- 141 mentions of concern about current class sizes as too large and/or the need for smaller class sizes.

In addition to the high-count central themes, several more themes emerged across the responses:

- Concerns for teachers and staff (burnout) were noted with a priority on hiring more teachers and staff (41).
- A key priority and solution mentioned was to increase the number of portables (36).
- Prioritize rezoning or modifying school boundaries (30).
- Many respondents simply stated they are against a lottery process (29).
- The government needs to invest more funding/resources in public schools/ education (29).
- Need to improve planning for future student growth/be better prepared (25).

Additional themes for each question are presented below and the number of times a theme was mentioned is noted in brackets. Between 95 per cent and 92 per cent of respondents answered all the open-ended questions, with the exception of the final open-ended question, where only 31 per cent of respondents provided additional comments.

Initial Reaction

The first question asked for initial thoughts or opinions. Five additional themes were identified:

- General concerns expressed about current enrolment pressures (8)
- Need more information/need more information about the lottery system (3)
- Lack of/inadequate City infrastructure to accommodate future growth (3)
- School is old/outdated/in need of upgrades/renovations (2)
- Should stop accepting new students if already at full/overcapacity (2)

Concerns

Concerns for the school:

Next respondents were asked to note their concerns for the school regarding enrolment pressures. Three additional themes or concerns were identified:

- School is old/outdated/in need of upgrades/renovations (5)
- Lack of/poor school management/leadership (1)
- Bullying related concerns/issues (1)

Concerns for your family:

When asked what concerns they had for their family in this context, respondents provided the following additional themes or concerns:

- Changing primary transportation mode (e.g., having to bus now)/additional fees associated with transportation (7)
- Lack of/not enough teachers/available teachers (4)
- School is old/outdated/in need of upgrades/renovations (1)

Concerns for your community:

Respondents provided the following additional themes or concerns when asked about their concerns for their community:

- Lack of/inadequate City infrastructure to accommodate future growth (9)
- A decline in community culture/losing sense of community (6)
- Is causing division/stress/angst within the community (4)
- Lack of/not enough teachers/available teaching staff (3)
- Increased traffic volume in the community (2)
- Lack of/limited available parking spaces (2)
- Bullying-related concerns (1)

Priorities

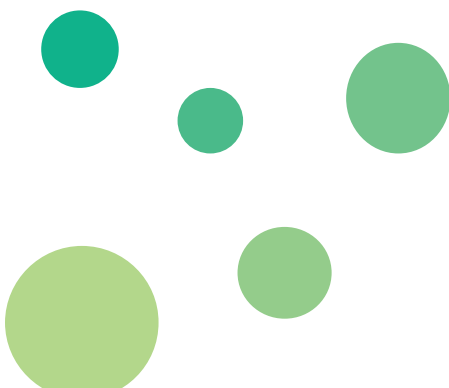
When asked “What should EIPS prioritize?” respondents identified four additional ideas:

- Prioritize mental health-related support/programs (1)
- Improve transparency/be more transparent with communication (1)
- Develop more specialized educational programs (1)
- Utilize available space at other schools for special needs-related educational programs (1)

Values

When asked “What values should be guiding EIPS?” the largest diversity of responses was provided resulting in thirteen additional themes:

- Community values/maintaining sense of community (9)
- Student safety/security/maintaining a safe school environment (7)
- Family values (5)
- Fairness/equality/equal opportunities (5)
- Respect (4)
- Compassion/empathy (3)
- Prioritize mental health-related support/programs (2)
- Consistency/ensuring consistency (2)
- Transparency/being transparent with communication (2)
- Relationships/relationship building (1)
- Integrity/honesty (1)
- Commitment/dedication (1)
- Accountability (1)



Solutions and Advice

Respondents were offered the opportunity to suggest potential solutions.

In addition to the potential solutions listed above, three more solutions were provided:

- Develop fundraising-related programs/events (1)
- Develop more specialized educational programs (1)
- Utilize available space at other schools for special needs-related educational programs (1)

We also asked respondents to provide one piece of advice for EIPS that they would like the organization to take away from this first phase of engagement. In addition to the key pieces of advice, eight additional themes or suggestions were received:

- Improve/increase the level and transparency of communication (8)
- Follow through with/listen to advice/feedback/suggestions provided (4)
- Upgrade/update/renovate school building (1)
- More focus on student safety/security/maintaining a safe school environment (1)
- Prioritize mental health-related support/programs (1)
- Improve school leadership/management (1)
- More focus on bullying-related concerns/issues (1)
- Be more proactive in addressing issues (1)

Final Comments

Finally, we offered respondents the opportunity to provide any closing comments.

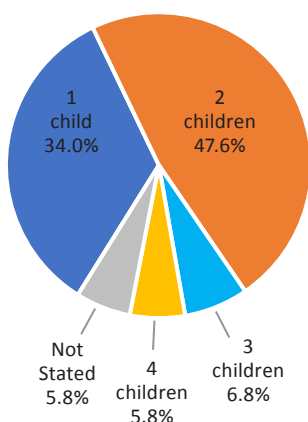
In addition to the main themes, these responses included:

- Need more information/details about enrolment-related pressures (2)
- Improve/increase the level of communication (2)
- Improve school leadership/management (1)
- Appreciate the opportunity to provide input/feedback (1)
- Ensure that school bus transportation is considered/arranged/planned (1)

Children in Household and Attending EIPS

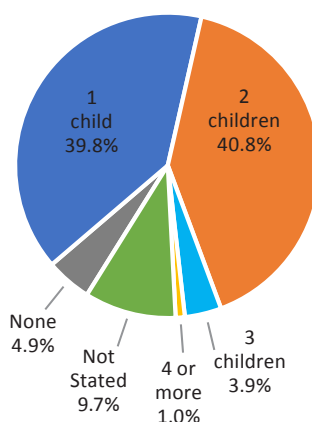
Respondents were asked about the number of children in their household, how many attend James Mowat Elementary and how many attend other schools in EIPS (see graphs below). Nearly 50 per cent of respondents had two children in their households, while close to 41 per cent had two children enrolled at James Mowat Elementary and 22 per cent had children enrolled in other EIPS schools.

How many school-aged children are in your household?* n=103

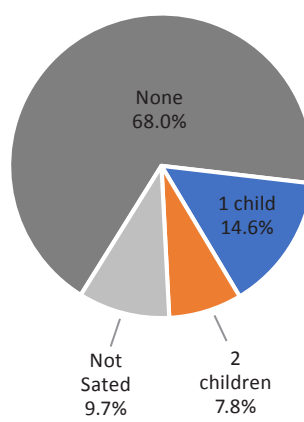


*No respondents selected none or five children or more

How many children do you currently have enrolled at James Mowat Elementary? n=103



How many children do you have enrolled in other EIPS schools?* n=103



*No respondents selected three children or four or more children

Postal Codes

Lastly, respondents were asked to input their postal code information. Only three respondents entered invalid postal codes. Comparing postal codes entered to the postal codes for the James Mowat Elementary catchment area, only six respondents were outside of the catchment.

Frequently Asked Questions – FAQs

During the open house, we tracked questions raised that were out of the scope of this phase of the engagement. Sharing answers to these questions prior to phase two of the engagement will demonstrate to school community members that they were heard and prevent similar questions from being raised again.

Scope of the issue questions:

1. What is the scope of the problem? How many extra kids?
2. How many schools are having this issue in Fort Saskatchewan?
3. What schools have more capacity?
4. Will the current enrolment issue continue for these kids when they enter high school?
5. What is the fire occupancy of James Mowat Elementary?

Boundaries questions:

6. Is census data used to determine boundaries?
7. How are the current boundaries enforced?

Accessing/providing more support:

8. How can we get the City involved?
9. How can we support the Division?
10. What are the costs and what can the community fundraise for?

Possible solution details:

11. How would a lottery system work?



Conclusion

From the results of both the open house and survey, it's clear that parents and caregivers want more information about enrolment pressures along with clearer and more transparent communication about the issue and their opportunities to contribute to the conversation.

A solution that attendees and respondents favoured was adding more classrooms (portables, outdoor classrooms or using underutilized city spaces) as long as more teachers and support staff are added. A new school was also mentioned as a priority for parents and caregivers. If EIPS were to move forward with a solution where students currently enrolled in the school were moved out, it was suggested that it should be the older grades moving to junior high sooner and that keeping friends and siblings together should be a priority.

Many parents and/or caregivers expressed strong negative feelings about the use of a lottery system. Fears around the lottery system come from a strong sense of community that surrounds James Mowat Elementary. Attendees and respondents fear a lottery or any other mechanism to separate out children living in the community from attending their community school will damage that sense of community and the safety that comes from it resulting in long-term negative impacts on their children.



Your Future in MIND

What We Heard James Mowat Elementary

Phase 2

 **ystation**

November 2, 2022
Produced for EIPS



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Methods	4
Results	6
Open House	6
Initial reaction and concerns	7
Strength of this approach	7
Could this process be improved?	7
Survey Feedback	8
Initial Reaction	8
Strength of this approach	9
Weaknesses of this approach	10
Overall, what is your position with regard to this approach?	11
Final Comments	11
Children in Household and Attending EIPS	12
Postal Codes	13
Conclusions	14

Executive Summary

James Mowat Elementary is the designated receiving school for the Westpark neighbourhood in the City of Fort Saskatchewan. James Mowat Elementary is at capacity for the 2022-23 school year, despite the addition of one modular classroom, and is projected to continue to be at or above enrolment capacity for subsequent years. Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) must determine the best way to accommodate students in the James Mowat Elementary enrolment area and in elementary schools within Fort Saskatchewan.

The fall engagement, “Continuing the conversation”, consisted of one in-person facilitated open house discussion and an online survey, covered by this report. In total, nine people attended the session held on September 22 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the James Mowat Elementary gymnasium. The online survey was open from September 22 to October 3, 2022, and a total of 91 survey responses were collected.

This engagement sought to collect feedback on the proposed enrolment solution, the random selection process pilot, and the three priority selection criteria. It asked:

1. What are your initial thoughts?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?
3. What do you overall think of the proposed solution?

During the open house, it was clear that parents were pleased to learn that current students would not be impacted and expressed concerns about busing costs and communication with new families to the James Mowat Elementary area.

“I’m glad that children already attending James Mowat won’t have to leave.”

While survey respondents had similar feedback as the open house attendees, they also expressed more diverse responses. For example:

- Parents should be able to pick the alternate designated school.
- Concerns about the work this process places on Administration.

While more than 40% strongly supported the proposed solution, nearly 25% were strongly opposed to the proposed solution when asked about their overall position.

Methods

The purpose of the fall engagement was to inform the James Mowat Elementary community of the proposed solution developed by the EIPS to address the enrolment issue, which had been presented in the spring engagement, and to collect the community's reactions to the recommendation. To achieve this purpose, as we did in the spring session, two key public engagement methods were employed to gather insights from the James Mowat Elementary community: a facilitated open house and an online survey. Both methods have a proven track record for providing diverse input opportunities and gathering nuanced responses.

The success of these methods relies on a solid engagement communication plan. To ensure all school community members had an opportunity to participate in the engagement, Y Station and EIPS completed several communication activities:

- Two weeks prior to the open house a letter was electronically delivered to all school families. It noted:
 - the date and time of the open house,
 - opportunity to participate via survey,
 - included links to the spring What We Heard (WWH) Report, and
 - the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).
- A-frame signs were placed near the front of the school six days prior to the event
- An advertising spot ran on the local radio station MIX 107.9 seven times a day for six days preceding the event.

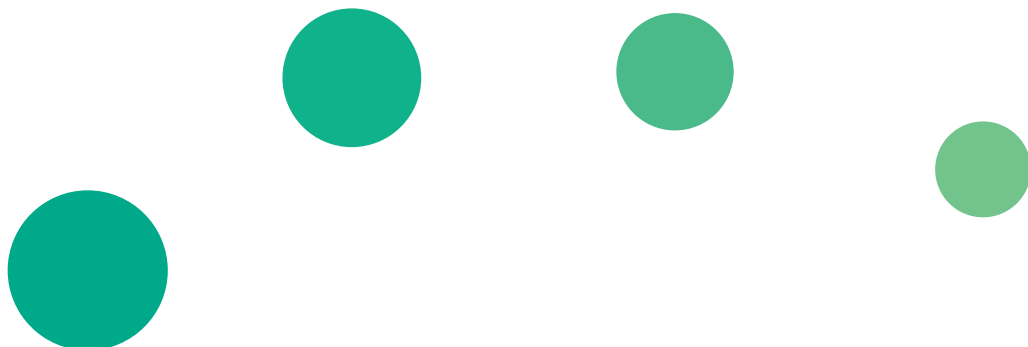
The open house was from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 22. Child minding was offered at the session to ensure parents with younger children felt welcome to fully participate and was accessed by attendees. Refreshments were also provided. A slide presentation, with handouts, was used so attendees had a visual reference for the conversation and the gymnasium was set up in an arched theatre-style seating so the facilitator could easily see all participants.

During the open house, an overview of the issue was provided, high-level themes from the spring WWH report were confirmed, and the proposed solution, the Random Selection Process Pilot was presented. The discussion focused on exploring these questions:

1. What are your initial thoughts?
2. What are the strengths of this approach?
3. How could this process be improved?
4. Overall, what is your position with regard to this approach?

The survey opened the same day as the open house. The survey preamble gave participants similar information to what was presented at the open house, an overview of the issue, proposed solution, and scenarios. The survey participants were then asked the same open-ended questions from the open house and then were asked a few questions about the number of children they have at James Mowat School or enrolled in another EIPS school, along with their postal code.

One additional feedback mechanism was available but not utilized. A call-in phone line was included in the letter to families and on the survey but was not accessed in this phase by any respondents.

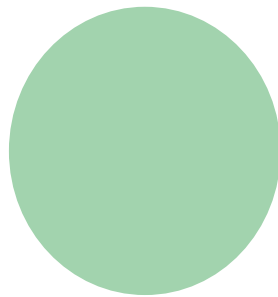
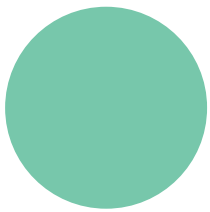


Results

Themes from the open house mirror themes that emerged in the survey. Overall, the conversations in the open house were respectful. There was no major disagreement among the attendees. The survey was completed by 91 participants over the 12 days it was open.

Open House

In total, 9 people attended the open house which lasted just over one hour. Clarification questions were asked during the scenario presentation and the overall response to the proposed solution was positive. Questions were raised around enrolment cut-off dates, the timing for when families would be notified about enrolment decisions, and what the alternative designated school after James Mowat Elementary would be.



Initial reaction

The initial reaction to the proposed solution, the Random Selection Process pilot, was very positive. Some attendees felt the solution was “perfect” as it did not impact their families. When asked to consider new families in the area they still felt the proposed solution was acceptable and that it was reasonable at the moment. Concerns were raised regarding busing and busing costs.

When asked what word they would use for this solution people indicated ‘fair’ and ‘effective’.

Strength of this approach

A key strength of this approach noted by attendees is that this does not affect current families and students. Disruptions to current students were a key concern raised in the spring session. Some attendees noted the priority selection criteria were well thought out.

Many stressed the importance of ensuring those families in the random selection process know the results as soon as possible so that they have time to plan and make alternative arrangements. It was noted that the earlier the families know, the fairer it will be for everyone.

Could this process be improved?

Attendees reiterated the importance of communication in this part of the discussion. They felt it was important to make sure new families understood as soon as possible that their children might not be able to attend James Mowat Elementary. They also felt it would be worth letting real estate agents know so they can communicate the process to families looking to move into the area. Several attendees felt that clear information on the school website and the division’s website was crucial.

“Frustrating for families if they do not know this when they move into the area”

Survey Feedback

The survey opened on September 22 and closed on October 3, 2022. Reminder advertisements were used on EIPS social media, and two reminders were sent out using the EIPS school messenger platform. In total, 91 people completed the survey. The survey feedback reflects a greater diversity of opinions than the feedback gathered at the open house, but the overall response to the proposed solution was positive.

A key theme that emerged, reflected in the open house feedback, was regarding keeping siblings/families and/or peers attending the same school. Over 55 comments addressed this concern. Most respondents appreciated that the approach allowed for siblings to stay together, and some expressed concerns that siblings and/or would be split up. The second key theme, also reflected in the open house feedback, was concerns regarding busing. Most concerns centred on costs and who should be responsible for covering busing fees.

All the themes for each question are presented below and the number of times a theme was mentioned is noted in brackets. The number of mentions is at times higher than the number of respondents, due to the ability to provide more than one response to each question.

Initial Reaction

The first question asked respondents for their initial thoughts and 84 per cent provided comments. The comments ranged from support for the random selection process pilot (22) to concerns similar to those expressed in phase one about siblings and peers being separated (16). Other mentions include:

- Student enrolment should only be available to families living within the attendance area (13)
- Students attending alternative designated school should not have to pay busing fees or provided a reduced rate (12)
- Need to build another local elementary school/additional school (7)
- Ensure that students currently enrolled remain at designated school (6)
- Need to change/review/revise school boundaries/attendance area (4)
- Concerned that my child(ren) may have to switch/change schools (3)
- Need to expand school/add more modular classrooms (2)
- Concerned about current enrolment limitations/pressures (2)
- Should allow parents to choose an alternate designated school (2)
- Random selection process sounds too complicated/confusing (2)
 - the process was confusing for those who did not seem to grasp the sibling rule, they seemed to think that children from the same family would be split up, as such favoured revised boundaries

- Need more information/details about the random selection process (2)
 - respondents would like to know what is the alternative designated school, the current boundaries for James Mowat Elementary, and the maximum number of children per classroom

Single mentions

- I do not support the random selection process
- Concerned about students receiving inadequate support/education/attention

“My initial thoughts are that it does seem like a fair way to do things if James Mowat cannot handle the number of students applying.”

“My initial reaction is that it super sucks. I have a three under five so this means every year the next enters kindergarten age it’s a random lottery. It’s ridiculous that I would have this anxiety about if my children will be allowed to attend the same school.”

“This scenario is nice for the children who are already attending James Mowat to keep doing so. I think it seems like a fair way of managing the pressures.”

Strength of this approach

Next respondents were asked to note any strength of the approach and 70 per cent provided comments. Resoundingly, respondents felt the strength of the approach was that siblings will stay together (26) and current students will remain at the school (18). A small number of respondents indicated no strength in the approach (8). Other mentions include:

- Is an unbiased/fair approach (16)
- Students that live within attendance area are given enrolment priority (7)
- Is a well-planned approach (2)

“It seems to affect fewer people than the alternatives.”

“It does allow families the option to keep all kids together in one school should they wish while also prioritizing children who live in that designated area.”

“Keeps those children who are already attending the school with their friends and maintains consistency. Has pre-set rules about those joining the school and gives options to choose between James Mowat and another designated school.”

Weaknesses of this approach

Respondents were also asked to note any weaknesses of the approach and 73 per cent provided comments. The top weakness identified was a concern for children not being able to attend a school close to where they live (21). Other weaknesses ranged from busing fees (11) to noting concerns about classroom size (2). Other mentions include:

- Concerned that siblings/families may not be able to attend the same school (12)
- I dislike/do not support the random selection process/is a bad idea (7)
 - respondents do not like that anything is left to chance, they plan where to live around the schools their children will attend and expect to be able to attend the school they are in the boundary for
- Does not accommodate/consider the needs of all families (6)
- Stress/anxiety-related concerns (5)
- The random selection process sounds too complicated/confusing (3)
- Concerned about my child(ren) being split up from their friends/peers (3)
- Administrative-related concerns/issues/workload (2)
- The approach allows students to register that live outside of the designated area (2)

Single mentions

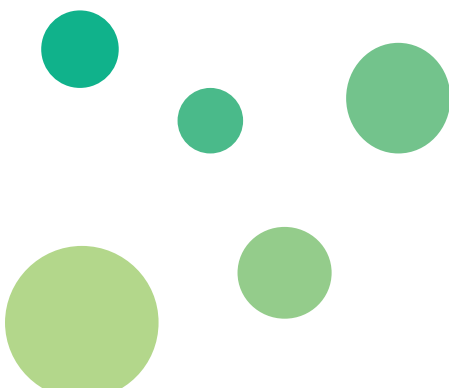
- Is a short-term/temporary solution
- Concerned about student growth/enrolment pressures/limitations
- None/no weakness

“Those that don’t get selected, their children will potentially be on a bus for longer than they would be otherwise. Possibly a reduced rate for that scenario.”

“The weakness is that this is just a short-term solution that will eventually need to be addressed with a new school.”

“Stress if you have two children already attending that the third child may or may not get in.”

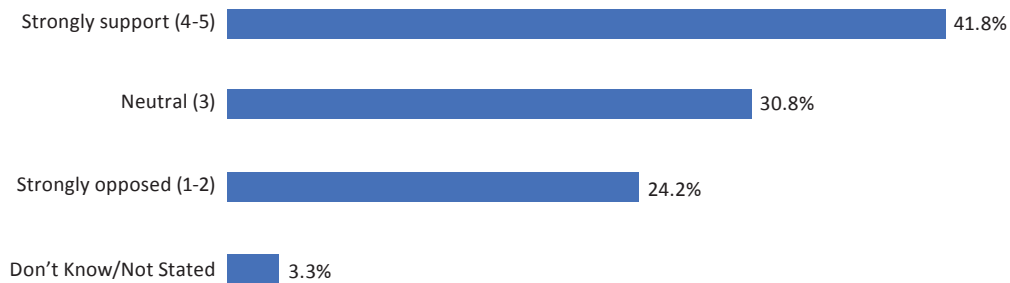
“I feel it still puts pressure to keep class sizes very large.”



Overall, what is your position with regard to this approach?

Respondents were then asked to rate their position about the random selection process pilot. Under half of the respondents noted strong support for the approach and close to one-third were neutral about the approach.

Strongly support position with regard to this approach (n=91)



Final Comments

Finally, we offered respondents the opportunity to provide any closing comments and 41 per cent entered a closing comment. The most frequently mentioned concern was that students/families may not be able to attend school close to where they live (9) followed by statements about public education funding (7), funding statements centre around class size and a new school. Other mentions include:

- Need to improve planning for future student growth/be better prepared (4)
- Need to change/review/revise school boundaries/attendance area (4)
- Concerned about cost of student busing/transportation fees (3)
- Concerned that siblings/families may not be able to attend the same school (3)
- Concerned about increasing class sizes/classes becoming too large (3)
- Concerned about teacher workload/burnout (2)
- I like/support the random selection process/is a good/fair idea (2)

Single mentions

- Bullying related concerns
- Should allow parents to choose alternate designated school

“Seems well thought out and gives priority to siblings of students who are already attending.”

“Our schools are hurting for student supports. They have been pulled away by the Alberta government and our kids are suffering. This also puts additional pressure on teachers who are being asked to provide even more to students with fewer resources.”

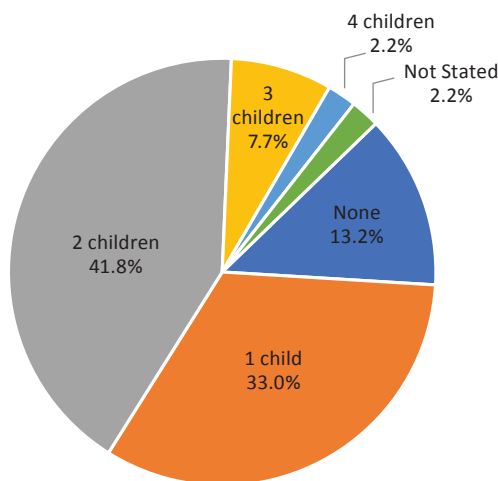
“Although new schools obviously cannot happen magically, the government neglect of public education is very clear.”

“I think that if this method prioritizes students in the area that already have a sibling attending the school that this is the most important. Separating families or making children bus to a different school when they are walking distance to a school seems silly.”

Children in Household and Attending EIPS

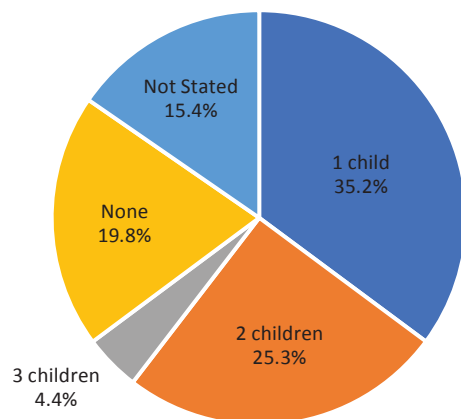
Respondents were asked about the number of children in their household, how many attend James Mowat Elementary, how many future children will attend EIPS and how many attend other schools in EIPS (see graphs below). Just over 40 per cent of respondents had two children in their households, while 65 per cent had children enrolled at James Mowat Elementary, 45 per cent have one or more children that will attend EIPS in the future and 23 per cent had children enrolled in other EIPS schools.

How many school-aged children are in your household? (n=91)



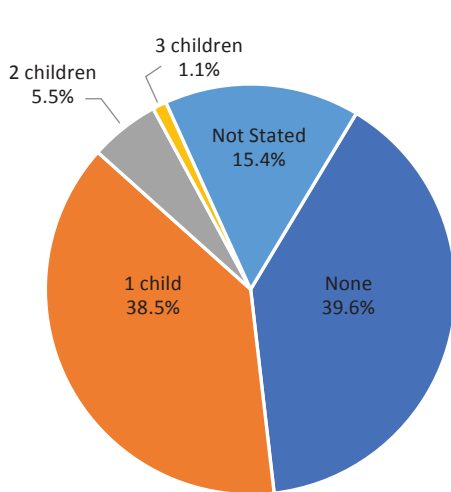
*No respondents selected five children or more

How many children do you currently have enrolled at James Mowat Elementary? (n=91)



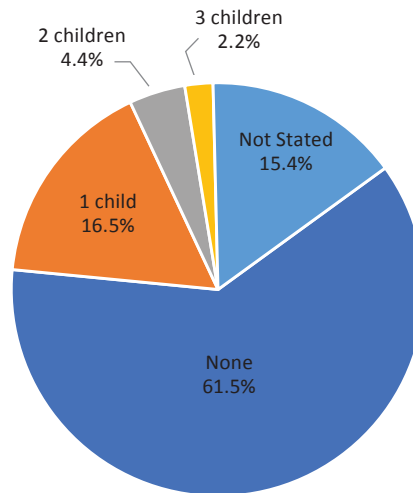
*No respondents selected four children or more

How many younger children do you have, not yet in school, who will attend an EIPS school in the future? (n=91)



*No respondents selected four children or more

How many children do you have enrolled in other EIPS schools? (n=91)



*No respondents selected four children or more

Postal Codes

Lastly, respondents were asked to input their postal code information. Only six respondents entered invalid postal codes. Comparing postal codes entered to the postal codes for the James Mowat Elementary catchment area, only five respondents were outside of the catchment.



Conclusion

From the results of both the open house and survey, it's clear that parents and caregivers are generally satisfied with the proposed solution, but they remained concerned about specific items, including:

- siblings and peers being separated;
- busing costs; and
- information sharing with new families to a catchment area of James Mowat Elementary.

A few survey respondents noted dislike for the name of the solution, random selection process pilot, and find it confusing. Some of the sentiments expressed indicate that not all survey respondents fully understood the random selection process pilot; this was indicated by the fears and weaknesses they expressed. Moving forward, EIPS should consider a few actions. First, the random selection process explanation needs to be simplified, using plain language and with a focus on siblings staying together. Include visuals to help explain the process. Provide the alternate designated school in communications ahead of the enrolment deadline. Ideally, a designated individual or email address is listed in communications for people to contact with questions and concerns. Lastly, set a review and evaluation date for the Random Selection Process Pilot to ensure the process is functioning as intended.

"I understand there is no easy solution to this and I think no matter what this is going to end not so great for some families."

"I feel it is fair to try to direct new additions to the school to other schools that have space."

"This scenario is nice for the children who are already attending James Mowat to keep doing so. I think it seems like a fair way of managing the pressures."



Your Future in MIND