

# EIPS Frequently Asked Questions

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JAMES MOWAT ELEMENTARY | RANDOM SELECTION  
PROCESS

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# JAMES MOWAT ELEMENTARY RANDOM SELECTION PROCESS

Starting in the 2023-24 school year, James Mowat Elementary introduced a random selection process for any new students wanting to attend the school. The same process will be used for 2024-25 registration. The new process helps the school better manage the enrolment pressures it's currently facing. The Division is piloting the process for two years. If the process works well, James Mowat will continue using the random selection process for new students as long as the school has closed boundaries. The following are the frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the random selection process. EIPS will update the document as new questions come forward.

## General

**Q:** [Why does James Mowat Elementary need to use a random selection process at the school?](#)

**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 a modular classroom this year.

Because James Mowat is the designated school for Fort Saskatchewan's Westpark neighbourhood, EIPS Division anticipates the high enrolment to continue at the school. As such, the Division consulted the school community on how best to address the issue and prevent future challenges related to program delivery, classroom use and accommodating students with special needs. Through the public engagement efforts, the EIPS determined the best option was introducing a random selection process for new students to the school.

**Q:** [What is the random selection process at James Mowat Elementary?](#)

**A:** The random selection process is an enrolment strategy James Mowat is piloting to register new students at the school—continuing in 2024-25. The random selection process does not apply to current James Mowat students, only new students.

New students, including those attending kindergarten, complete and submit the [New Student Registration Form](#) or [Kindergarten Registration Form](#), whichever applies, between February 1 and March 8. On March 11, James Mowat randomly selects applicants until each grade reaches the maximum number of spaces. Those selected attend James Mowat for the upcoming year. Those not selected are redirected to their alternate-designated school, Fort Saskatchewan Elementary.

**Q:** [How does the random selection process impact current students?](#)

**A:** It does not impact current students at all. Current students attending James Mowat Elementary are grandfathered into the school and can continue attending until they complete Grade 6. Current families must complete the [returning student registration](#) process—open February 8-21.

**Q:** [How does the random selection process impact new students with siblings who attend the school?](#)

**A:** It does not impact new students who have a sibling attending the school in the upcoming school year—as long as the student registration form is submitted by March 8.

New students with siblings currently attending the school, and attending in the upcoming school year, are automatically guaranteed a spot if they register by March 8—the random selection deadline. After March 8, the school directs any new student registrations, including siblings, to the alternate-designated school—unless space remains available in a grade at James Mowat.

## Registration: 2024-25 school year

**Q:** [How do students register at James Mowat Elementary?](#)

**A:** [Registration](#) for the 2024-25 school year takes place in February 2024.

- *Current students* attending James Mowat, complete the [Returning Student Registration Form](#)—open February 8-21. These students are grandfathered into the school and can continue attending until they complete Grade 6.
- *New students* enrolling at James Mowat, including those entering kindergarten, register using the [New Student Registration Form](#) or [Kindergarten Registration Form](#)—opening February 1. New students must register by March 8—the random selection process deadline. NOTE: *New students with siblings currently attending the school, and attending in the upcoming school year, are guaranteed a spot—as long as they register by March 8.*
- *After March 8*, the school directs all new student registrations, including siblings, to the alternate-designated school—unless space remains available in a grade at James Mowat.

**Q:** [If my child isn't randomly selected to attend James Mowat Elementary, what school do they attend?](#)

**A:** All new students, living within the James Mowat Elementary attendance area, who aren't selected through the random selection process are redirected to, and guaranteed a spot at, their alternate-designated school, Fort Saskatchewan Elementary.

**Q:** [When does the random selection process take place?](#)

**A:** March 11. James Mowat will collect registrations for the random selection process between February 1 and March 8. Then, on March 11, the school will conduct the random selection draw—by randomly selecting from the submitted new student registrations until the maximum enrolment number is reached for each grade. School administration will notify all families by mid-March. Those selected will attend James Mowat in the 2024-25 school year. Those not selected are redirected, and guaranteed a spot at, their alternate-designated school, Fort Saskatchewan Elementary.

**Q:** [How will the result of the random draw be communicated?](#)

**A:** James Mowat will conduct the random selection process on March 11. After that, school administration will notify all those randomly selected to confirm their registration. At the same time, the school will also contact those not randomly selected, by phone, to let them know the result and confirm their registration at their alternate-designated school, Fort Saskatchewan Elementary. The school will notify all families by mid-March.

**Q:** [My child currently attends James Mowat Elementary. Can they stay at the school?](#)

**A:** Yes. Current students attending James Mowat Elementary can continue attending until they complete Grade 6. All current families need to do is complete the [Returning Student Registration Form](#)—open February 8-21.

**Q:** [My older child attends James Mowat Elementary. Can my younger child also attend the school?](#)

**A:** Yes. New students, including those entering kindergarten, with a sibling currently attending James Mowat Elementary and returning next year, are guaranteed a spot at the school—through the sibling clause. However, the new student must register between February 1 and March 8—the random selection process deadline. After March 8, the school will direct any new student registrations, including siblings, to the alternate-designated school—unless space remains available in a particular grade at James Mowat Elementary.

**Q:** [If my child isn't selected to attend James Mowat Elementary through the random selection process, can they request to attend an EIPS school other than their alternate-designated school?](#)

**A:** Yes. If your child is not selected to attend James Mowat through the random selection process, they can request to attend a school other than their alternate-designated school. Simply, request the school you want your child to attend when contacted by James Mowat about the random selection result. James Mowat staff can confirm if space is available and assist with transferring your child's registration to another school, as needed. Acceptance into a non-designated school is based on available space. If Student Transportation services are required, [fees apply](#).

**Q:** [Can a new student to James Mowat Elementary register after the March 8 deadline?](#)

**A:** The [New Student Registration Form](#) or [Kindergarten Registration Form](#) remain open yearlong. However, after the March 8 deadline, James Mowat will direct any new student registrations, including siblings of current students, to their alternate-designated school—unless space remains available in a particular grade at James Mowat Elementary.

## Student Accommodations

**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 Baragar Systems, a planning software used by many school divisions nationwide. Using Baragar software, EIPS can accurately develop enrolment projections and comprehensively analyze all demographic data within a school boundary—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 school. 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. Schools with enrolment projections under the optimal enrolment limit have open boundaries—meaning students who live [outside the designated attendance area](#) can register there. Schools with enrolment projections above the optimal enrolment limit have closed boundaries—meaning only students designated to the school can attend.

For the 2024-25 school year, James Mowat's OEL is 386 students. The school has had closed boundaries since 2020-21. Starting in the 2023-24 school year, it introduced a random selection process for new students registering at the school. That process will continue for 2024-25 registration. Those not selected are guaranteed a spot at their alternate-designated school, Fort Saskatchewan Elementary.

**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's utilization rate is 100 per cent—meaning the school is full. EIPS believes the school needs about 15 additional student spaces, annually, to accommodate all children living within James Mowat's attendance boundaries.

**Q:** [Can EIPS work with The City of Fort Saskatchewan to expand James Mowat’s student capacity?](#)

**A:** EIPS has an ongoing working relationship with The City of Fort Saskatchewan. The two meet regularly to discuss mutual matters. In terms of the enrolment pressures at James Mowat Elementary, the city is limited in how it can help as funding comes from the provincial level. A replacement school is listed as Priority 2 on the EIPS’ [Three-Year Capital Plan 2024-27](#). However, the province has yet to approve funding. Approval, design and construction will likely take years.

**Q:** [What can the school community do to expedite provincial approval for a replacement school?](#)

**A:** There isn’t a lot the school community can do, other than speaking with your local member of the legislative assembly of Alberta. A replacement school is listed as Priority 2 on the EIPS’ [Three-Year Capital Plan 2024-27](#). A new school, with a larger capacity, will help address the growing population in Fort Saskatchewan. However, the province still needs to approve funding for a replacement school, which will likely take years. Once a replacement school is approved, there are several fundraising opportunities for the community, for example, for a new school playground.

## 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 request busing services during the new and returning student registration processes 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. There is a base rate for all students accessing bus service, and one or more additional, ineligible fees may apply for students accessing busing who are distance ineligible or attending a school they’re not designated to.

More information about [2023-24 transportation fees](#) is available on the Division website. Fees for 2024-25 will be reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees in spring 2024.

**Q:** [What is the typical ride time for riders using Student Transportation Services in Fort Saskatchewan?](#)

**A:** In 2022-23, the average bus ride time for riders attending James Mowat Elementary was 22 minutes. And, for riders attending Fort Saskatchewan Elementary the average ride time was 21 minutes.

## Decision Process

**Q:** [How did EIPS consult the community before deciding on the random selection process?](#)

**A:** Yes. EIPS consulted the school community extensively before deciding how best to manage the enrolment pressures. In June 2022, the Division contracted Y Station Communications and Research to consult the James Mowat school community. Two public meetings were held. Attendees learned details about the enrolment issues, discussed possible solutions, asked questions and provided feedback. Then, in September 2022, EIPS continued the conversation with the school community through another public engagement meeting. Attendees discussed possible solutions, shared ideas and provided additional feedback. After each meeting, Y Station conducted online surveys to collect additional feedback to produce two What We Heard Reports—[Spring 2022](#) and [Fall 2022](#). After reviewing the feedback, related information and background documents, the Board determined the random selection process was the best way to address James Mowat’s enrolment pressures.