



# Elk Island Public Schools

## EIPS French Immersion

### Phase 3

### What We Heard Report

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## Overview

Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) is in year two of a three-year public engagement initiative to enhance programming offered throughout the Division. One of the programs EIPS is looking at is French Immersion. Specifically, exploring ways to enhance programming, address enrolment pressures and increase retention at the junior high and senior high levels.

To date, the public engagement approaches used for public participation mostly fall under the consult and involve category of the IAP2 engagement spectrum. The advantage of this form of public engagement is it allows the Division to communicate, create dialogue and collect feedback from the community—authentically and meaningfully.

## A Brief History of EIPS' French Immersion Program

EIPS offers a kindergarten to Grade 12 French Immersion program to students throughout the Division. The program aims to prepare functionally bilingual students—giving them excellent English skills and the ability to speak and write comfortably in French. Through EIPS French Immersion, students complete the regular Alberta Education curriculum—language learning, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, music, health, and art—in French and regular English language arts courses.

EIPS has offered French Immersion programming since forming in 1995. For most of its history, programming was offered at Ardrossan Elementary, Ardrossan Junior Senior High, École Campbelltown, École Parc Élémentaire and Sherwood Heights Junior High. Before EIPS was established, there was a brief period, when senior high French was offered at Bev Facey Community High, run by the Strathcona Education Board.

A sixth school was added in 2020, Heritage Hills Elementary. At that time, École Campbelltown was facing considerable enrolment pressures in early 2019. The Division was worried it wouldn't be able to accommodate all students wanting to enrol in French Immersion. So, the EIPS Board of Trustees conducted a review looking at possible solutions to ensure long-term program access. Through the review, it determined Heritage Hills Elementary—a new school still under construction at the time—could accommodate dual-track programming, regular English, and French Immersion programming, with space available for two classes per grade in each program. Fast forward three years, Heritage Hills Elementary French Immersion program is currently undersubscribed, operating only one French Immersion class for each grade of kindergarten to Grade 3, one Grade 4-5 split class and one Grade 5-6 split class. Ideally, the Division wants more balanced enrolment in the elementary French Immersion program.

## Current Situation

In 2021-22, EIPS identified three new areas of concern for French Immersion long-term planning. The first: program retention at the secondary level. Fewer students are deciding to stay in the program at the junior high and senior high levels. For example, as of Sept. 29, 2022, EIPS has 129 Grade 6 students enrolled in French Immersion. But, in Grade 9, there are only 85 students enrolled in French Immersion. And, in Grade 12, only 37 students are enrolled. Based on historic trends, the two grades with the lowest retention rates are Grade 7, 86%, and Grade 10, 69%. Such a significant drop in students at the senior high level makes providing robust programming challenging.

The second concern is anticipated enrolment pressures in Ardrossan. With several new residential developments underway, the Division expects significant enrolment pressures at schools in Ardrossan in the coming years. EIPS can manage Ardrossan Elementary's enrolment pressures through modular classroom planning. However, that approach for Ardrossan Junior Senior High is not sustainable because it doesn't address the first area of concern, program retention. So, EIPS needs to determine an alternative solution to address the pending growth and accommodate students attending the junior-senior high.

Finally, the third concern is the new Cambrian Crossing development underway in Strathcona County. It's made up of two neighbourhoods, Cambrian and Hearthstone—both being constructed simultaneously. The first phase of residents should move in, starting in fall 2023. Both neighbourhoods do have a planned school site. However, obtaining provincial funding approval and new school construction is years away. As such, EIPS also needs to determine how best to accommodate French Immersion students from these areas using existing infrastructure until new schools are approved and built.

## Engagement Effort

Before making any decisions about French Immersion programming, EIPS is undertaking significant public engagement efforts with the school community—families, students, and community members—to ensure a solution that's in the best interest of all students. EIPS administration has developed a public engagement strategy to seek feedback from the French Immersion school community about programming and possible solutions. Already, it's conducted the first two phases of the engagement. Each phase included a public meeting and an online survey.

Phase 1 was designed to exchange ideas with and determine the values of EIPS French Immersion families. Phase 2 involved informing the community of EIPS' concerns and collecting feedback to develop a potential solution. Six key themes emerged.

1. A desire for robust French Immersion programming, including:
  - course options,
  - French cultural experiences,
  - extracurricular activities, and
  - high-quality, French-speaking teachers.
2. A desire for a school site close to where students live.
3. A desire for the least amount of school transitions as possible.
4. A desire for more academic supports for students and families in French Immersion,
5. A desire for EIPS to develop a clear vision for the French Immersion program,
6. A desire for EIPS to develop possible solutions for the school community to engage about.

Based on the feedback collected from both Phases, EIPS developed a [vision for the French Immersion program and guiding principles](#) that align with the key themes identified during the first two phases. The Division also developed a [potential solution](#), which it presented at the third public engagement session on April 13, 2023. For those who couldn't attend, or wanted to provide additional feedback, EIPS also conducted an online survey, April 14-24.

The purpose was two-fold: To present a potential solution that addresses the space capacity, enrolment and retention issues and aligns with the themes from the previous engagement efforts. And the other, to use the potential solution as a springboard for focused small-group conversations to collectively develop a community-derived solution. It's important to note, even though the Board is reviewing French Immersion programming, it has no predetermined outcome in mind.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY: To date

### Phase 1

**Communications:** Oct. 12, 2022 to Nov. 14, 2022

**Tactics and mechanisms:** Emails to stakeholders (families and staff), website updates, Twitter and Facebook posts

**Public Meeting No. 1:** Oct. 26, 2022

**EIPS French Immersion School Community:** 46 in attendance

At the meeting, EIPS reviewed the results of a 2017-18 French Immersion survey and collected feedback from attendees about the French Immersion program, their values, and long-term needs. The Division used the feedback to help inform next steps and determine if the 2017-18 survey themes were still valid—overall, they are.

**Online Survey No. 1:** October 27 to November 14, 2022

**EIPS French Immersion School Community:** 279 responses

Following the meeting, the Division conducted an online survey after the public meeting to gather even more feedback. The survey ran from October 27 to November 14. The questions were all similar to those questions asked at the in-person public meeting. The Division used the feedback to help inform next steps and determine if the 2017-18 survey themes were still valid—overall, they are.

### Phase 2

**Communications:** Jan. 25, 2023 to Feb. 21, 2023

**Tactics and mechanisms:** Emails to stakeholders (families and staff), website updates, Twitter and Facebook posts

**Public Meeting No. 2:** Feb. 7, 2023

**EIPS French Immersion School Community:** 20 in attendance

At the public meeting, EIPS shared background information, what was heard during Phase 1, and its concerns about the French Immersion program. It then collected input on four key questions—what are their concerns? what should the Board consider? what are the barriers to continuing with French Immersion? and what are possible solutions? The Division used the feedback to help inform next steps and determine a possible solution.

**Online Survey No. 2:** February 8-21, 2023

**EIPS French Immersion School Community:** 280 responses

Following the second public meeting, the Division conducted an online survey to gather further input from the French Immersion school community about their concerns, what EIPS should consider, possible barriers and solutions. The Division used the feedback to help inform next steps and determine a possible solution.

### Phase 3

**Communications:** March 23 to April 24, 2023

**Tactics and mechanisms:** Emails to stakeholders (families and staff), website updates, Twitter and Facebook posts

**Public Meeting No. 3:** April 13, 2023

**EIPS French Immersion School Community:** 98 in attendance

At the public meeting, EIPS shared background information, what was heard during Phase 2, the program's vision and guiding principles and a proposed potential solution. Participants then broke into four groups and discussed the potential solution in detail—its strengths, challenges, ways to make it better and alternative solutions. The Division will use the feedback to help inform next steps and further develop a solution.

**Online Survey No. 3:** April 14-24, 2023

**EIPS French Immersion School Community:** 712 responses

Following the third public meeting, the Division conducted an online survey to gather further input from the French Immersion school community about the proposed potential solution—its strengths, challenges, ways to make it better and alternative solutions. The Division will use the feedback to help inform next steps and further develop a solution.

**Email Submissions:** April 14-27, 2023

**EIPS French Immersion School Community:** 8 responses

### PHASE 3: ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

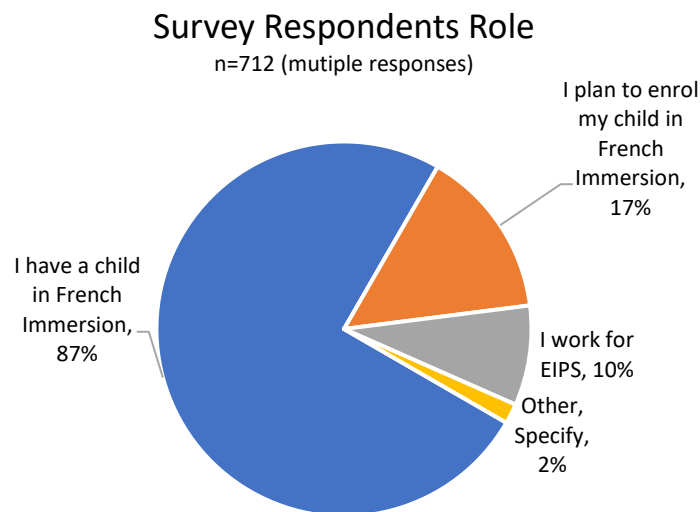
On April 13, EIPS launched Phase 3 of the public engagement, which included an in-person public feedback session, an online survey and email feedback submissions. At the in-person session, and through the survey, EIPS shared information with the French Immersion community and collected feedback on a potential solution for the French Immersion program—its strengths, challenges, how to make it better, and alternatives.

[A potential solution: EIPS French Immersion](#)

The following is a summary of the findings from Phase 3 of EIPS’ French Immersion public engagement efforts.

### Who We Heard From

Through Phase 3 of the engagement, EIPS heard from a range of stakeholders across all consultation methods—from those who currently work at or have children or grandchildren enrolled in an EIPS French Immersion program to former parents, students and retired staff. The survey captured additional details on stakeholders from their role in relation to the program, what community they reside in, schools their child or children attend, and what grades they attend. Below is the breakdown of survey respondents by their role in relation to the French Immersion program. Survey respondents are identified mainly as someone who has a child in French Immersion.

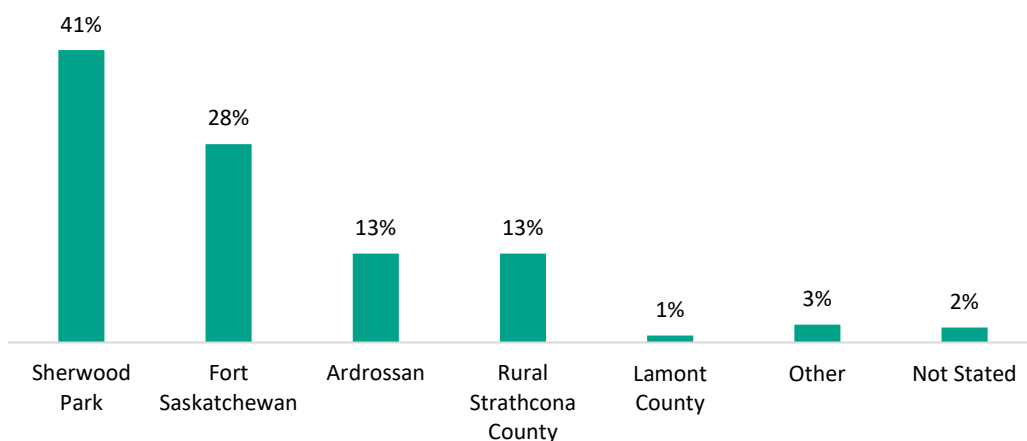


Other responses include retired EIPS French Immersion teachers, parents of former French Immersion students, parents of children in the regular English and French Immersion programs, grandparents of French Immersion students and former French Immersion students.

In terms of the community of residence, a little more than two-thirds of respondents indicated they reside in two communities—41% reside in Sherwood Park, and 28% reside in Fort Saskatchewan. Additionally, more than a quarter of respondents (26%) reside in Ardrossan and Rural Strathcona County.

### What community do you reside in?

n=712

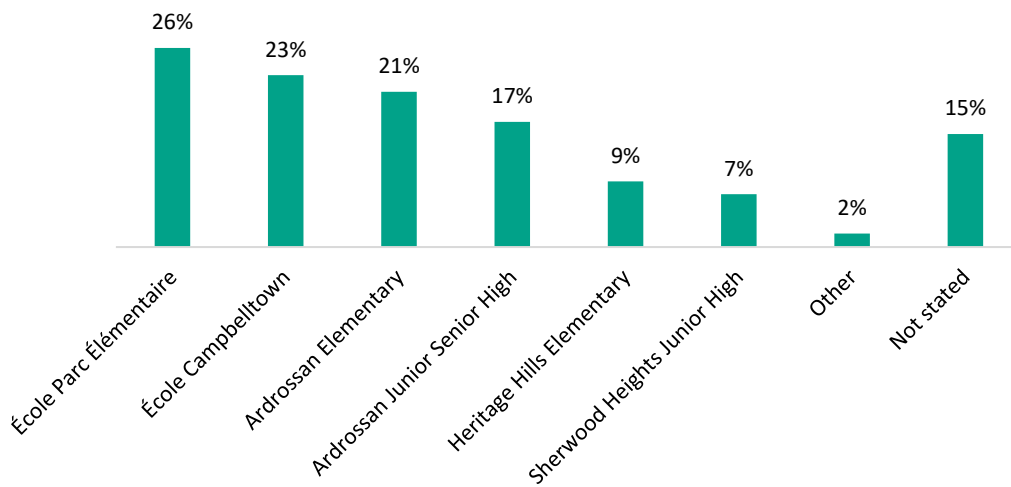


Other responses include Beaumont, Beaver County, Bruderheim, Edmonton, Gibbons, St. Albert and Sturgeon County.

Regarding what school their child attends, roughly one-quarter (26%) of respondents have a child attending École Parc Élémentaire. In comparison, almost one-quarter (23%) have a child attending École Campbelltown.

### What school does your child attend?

n=712



Other responses include Archbishop Jordan Catholic High, Clover Bar Junior High, Run with French Preschool and Pine Street Elementary.

Respondents were asked how many children they have attending the six schools offering French Immersion programming. Below is a breakdown of the number of children a respondent has by the school they attend. Most respondents (53%) have one child attending a school or two children attending a school (39%).

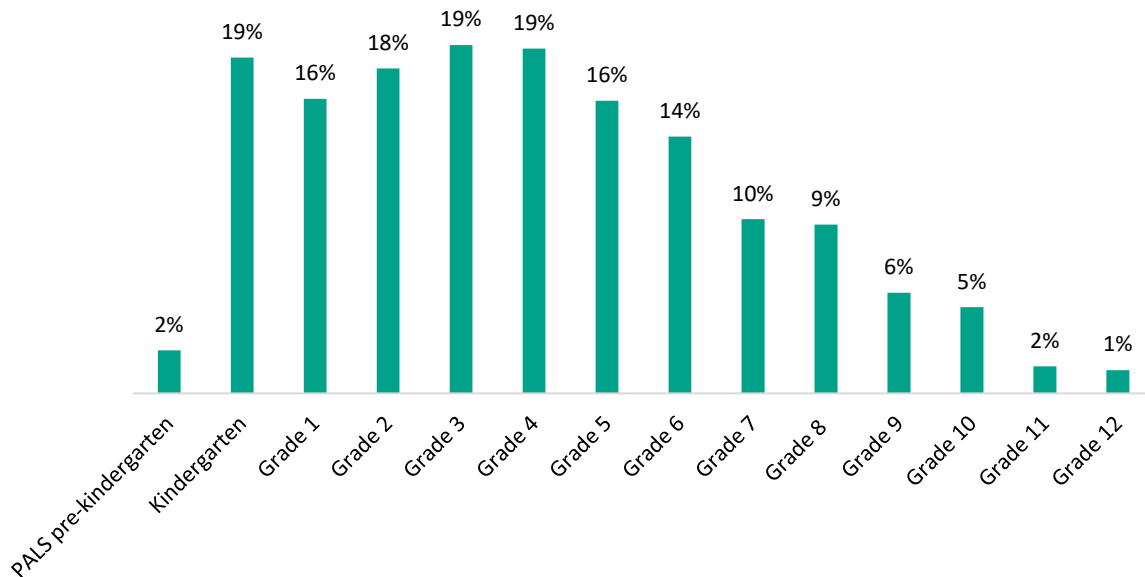
*Table: How many children do you have attending?*

	Ardrossan Elementary	Ardrossan Junior Senior High	École Campbelltown	École Parc Élémentaire	Heritage Hills Elementary	Sherwood Heights Junior High	Other — school not selected
1 child	67	75	84	85	30	40	8
2 children	61	41	61	87	29	10	0
3+ children	19	2	17	16	3	0	1
Total	147	118	162	188	62	50	9

Lastly, respondents were also asked to indicate their child or children’s grade—85% of respondents provided an answer, with most having a child or children in the elementary grades.

### What grade is your child or children in?

n= 606





## What We Heard

Session notes, email feedback and open-ended responses were analyzed for key themes and sub-themes. Survey responses were coded by themes and those coded themes are presented below. Email feedback and session notes were analyzed for themes and summarized. The survey feedback was further analyzed by two key respondent attributes to find additional insights based on the respondent's community and whether they have children attending elementary or secondary school.

## Potential Solution's Strengths

A key theme throughout the feedback collected on the potential solution's strengths was the approach could increase the availability of French Immersion programming, especially at the elementary level. In turn, that could enhance and maintain the French community and culture. In both the survey and session discussion, it was noted the potential solution might enhance retention at the junior and senior high levels, given students are in the same building and transitioning together. It was also noted the approach could strengthen the program's robustness, particularly for grades 7 to 12.

### Survey Feedback

The survey collected 404 comments regarding the potential solution's strengths. The main survey response themes ranged from increased availability of programming to no strengths to improving student retention:

- 21.5% stated it will increase availability and program access to EIPS' French Immersion program locally and in the community.
- 21% stated there are no strengths.
- 18.8% stated it will help ease current enrolment pressures and allow more students to enrol in the program.
- 15.8% stated all junior high and senior high students enrolled in the program are together and in the same building.
- 6.9% stated it will help increase student retention.

Several sub-themes emerged as well, from fewer transitions for students to respondents saying it was a good plan:

- 4.7% stated it allows for fewer transitions for students.
- 4.5% stated it offers ease and convenience of student transportation and commuting to and from school.
- 3.5% stated it offers the convenience of a central location.
- 2.7% stated it will help bring French-speaking students and the French community together.
- 2.5% stated it will help reduce large class sizes.
- 2.5% stated it will help in accommodating future growth and expansion.
- 2% stated it's a great plan and idea.

Additionally, there were also comments representing less than 2% of respondents:

- increases collaboration among program staff and teachers;
- students are close to local amenities and services;
- cost savings related benefits and strengths;
- access to recreational- and sports-related activities, programs, and facilities; and
- will help highlight the success of the program in rural communities.

### Key Attribute Survey Feedback

Those residing in Ardrossan, Fort Saskatchewan and Rural Strathcona County indicated the same Top 3 strengths: there are no strengths to this potential solution, it will help ease current enrolment pressures, and it allows more students to enrol in the program and enhances program access.

Those residing in Sherwood Park indicated similar Top 2 strengths as their neighbours. However, no one from Sherwood Park indicated the solution had no strengths. Additionally, they noted the solutions allow all junior high and senior high students enrolled in the program to be together and in the same building. Below are the Top 3 themes by community respondents reside in.

Ardrossan themes (n=57):

- 30% of respondents indicated that there are no strengths to this potential solution.
- 21% stated it will help ease current enrolment pressures and allows more students to enrol.
- 18% stated it will improve the availability of and access to French Immersion education programming locally and in the community.

Fort Saskatchewan themes (n=113):

- 38% of respondents indicated that there are no strengths to this potential solution.
- 18% stated it will help ease current enrolment pressures and allows more students to enrol.
- 15% stated it will improve the availability of and access to French Immersion education programming locally and in the community.

Rural Strathcona County themes (n=54):

- 26% of respondents indicated that there are no strengths to this potential solution.
- 20% stated it will improve the availability of and access to French Immersion education programming locally and in the community.
- 17% stated it will help ease current enrolment pressures or allows more students to enrol.

Sherwood Park themes (n=168):

- 26% stated it will improve the availability of and access to French Immersion education programming locally and in the community.
- 24% stated a strength is that all junior and high school students enrolled in the program are together and in the same building.
- 21% stated it will help ease current enrolment pressures and allows more students to enrol.

In terms of if the respondent's child attends elementary or secondary grades, one key difference emerged. Fifty-four per cent of respondents, with elementary-grade students, felt the potential solution will help increase retention. Meanwhile, only 12% of the respondent with students in secondary grades felt similarly.

### Session Feedback

The in-person session feedback for the potential solution's strengths ranged from it will help grow the program to using resources effectively to several benefits for students, families, staff, schools or community.

Benefits of the potential solution that focuses on students, families and the community include:

- students meeting students from other areas;
- fewer transitions and more proximity to schools;
- potentially better communication and promotion of programs at fewer sites;
- increasing and maintaining a cohesive French community and culture and identity;
- keeping friends together and keeping French Immersion students together;
- larger campus for more grades at each site; and
- staying together will increase the number of students who stay together.

Several benefits were identified for junior high and senior high students:

- robust programming and better extracurriculars;
- keeping grades 7-12 together reduces transitions;
- love all students together in junior high;
- allows for more options in junior high;
- more support by having all junior high students together;
- keeping all grades 7-12 French Immersion students in the same building; and
- students are less likely to leave in grades 9 and 10.

Additionally, benefits for those residing in Sherwood Park were noted:

- it accommodates the current majority of students in Sherwood Park for elementary;
- potential for all children in the same family to attend a dual-track school—regular English and French Immersion—in Sherwood Park;
- reduces commute times for grades 7-12 students in urban places, especially Sherwood Park;
- fewer transitions for Sherwood Park students—one less; and
- Sherwood Park’s location may attract more people to the secondary level of programming.

Several school sites were specifically mentioned in terms of the strengths and benefits of the potential solution:

- The realignment of the Heritage Hills Elementary boundary will reinforce the school’s community ties in the neighbourhood.
- The effort to grow Heritage Hills Elementary will drive more enrolment at one site—Heritage Hills Elementary and increase programming.
- Students coming from École Campbelltown will be in a new modern and spacious school.
- This will help with enrolment pressure at Ardrossan Elementary.
- This will provide more cultural opportunities at Bev Facey Community High.
- There is potential for enhanced all-French options at Bev Facey Community High.

A few attendees stated the potential solution was logical, balanced and a great way for the Division to maximize its resources. Many attendees noted a strength of the potential solution was the number of elementary sites offering French Immersion, as it would allow for program growth and might keep some students with the EIPS system. Lastly, it was noted the potential solution has benefits for EIPS employees by creating more opportunities for staff interactions and resource sharing.

## Anticipated Challenges

Key themes throughout the engagement mechanisms for anticipated challenges were concerns about junior high students mixing with senior high students, transportation concerns and the impact on extracurricular activities, particularly for junior high students. Also, of high concern for participants and respondents was the loss of community felt by students through having to commute to a neighbouring and urban community.

## Survey Feedback

The survey collected 457 comments regarding the potential solution’s anticipated challenges. The main survey response themes ranged from concerns about junior high students and transitions to student-retention concerns:

- 36% stated concerns that junior high students won’t transition or integrate well with senior high students.
- 32% noted transportation and commuting-related concerns—for example, the distance is too far and busing-related concerns.
- 24% noted challenges related to poor and limited extracurricular activities and junior high programming.
- 20% stated concerns that students may have to relocate and change schools.
- 17% stated student retention-related challenges and concerns.

Several sub-themes emerged for the potential solution’s anticipated challenges, from it won’t help grow the program to bully concerns:

- 9% stated the potential solution won’t help grow the French Immersion program or student enrolment.
- 4% noted the solution doesn’t address enrolment-related pressures and concerns.
- 4% stated concerns about children being split up from their friends and peers.
- 3% stated concern about and dislike for the dual-track education model.
- 3% stated the potential solution isn’t in the best interest of and doesn’t meet the needs of all students.
- 2% noted staffing-related challenges, including the lack of qualified teaching staff.
- 2% stated increased class-size challenges and concerns that class sizes will be too large.
- 2% noted bullying-related concerns and challenges.

Additionally, there were comments provided that represent less than 2% of respondents:

- the potential solution goes against the guiding principles and values;
- cost and budgetary-related concerns and challenges;
- school boundaries-related challenges and concerns;
- the potential solution has no supporting evidence to back up it will be successful;
- lack of and limited available space for modular buildings or classrooms;
- some students have difficulty adapting and getting used to changes;
- dislikes modular buildings or classrooms; and
- concerned that students will receive inadequate support.

### **Key Attribute Survey Feedback**

Those residing in Ardrossan, Fort Saskatchewan and rural Strathcona County have the same top survey themes for anticipated challenges—transportation and commuting-related concerns such as the distance being too far and busing-related concerns.

Meanwhile, those residing in Sherwood Park indicated their top anticipated challenge was concern the junior high students will not transition and integrate well among the senior high population. Below are the Top 3 themes by respondents’ community.

Ardrossan themes (n=62):

- 52% stated transportation and commuting-related concerns.
- 32% noted concerns that students may have to relocate and change schools.
- 21% stated student retention-related challenges and concerns.

Fort Saskatchewan themes (n=143):

- 43% stated transportation and commuting-related concerns.
- 32% stated concerns junior high students won’t transition and integrate well with senior high students.
- 28% stated poor and limited extracurricular activities and programs for junior high students.

Rural Strathcona County themes (n=63):

- 42% stated transportation and commuting-related concerns.
- 29% stated concerns junior high students won’t transition and integrate well with senior high students.
- 27% stated poor and limited extracurricular activities and programs for junior high students.

Sherwood Park themes (n=175):

- 49% stated concerns junior high students won’t transition and integrate well with senior high students.
- 20% stated student retention-related challenges and concerns.
- 20% stated poor and limited extracurricular activities and programs for junior high students.

In terms of if the respondent's child attends elementary or secondary grades, again only one key difference emerged. Thirty-nine per cent of respondents whose children attend elementary grades were concerned that junior high students will not transition and integrate well among a high school population. Meanwhile, only 27% of respondents with students in secondary grades felt similarly.

## Session Feedback

Session feedback for anticipated challenges for the potential solutions ranges from concerns regarding transportation, creating divisions between groups, staff retention, parent satisfaction, secondary concerns and site-specific feedback.

Transportation-related challenges and concerns figured large in the session conversations:

- transportation, longer bus rides;
- bus ride times, costs and access;
- transportation, increased commute times and costs for Fort Saskatchewan and Ardrossan;
- need to think logistically, including age, disability and time students can realistically be on the bus; and
- we don't want to have to travel to a bigger city.

Several attendees noted the potential solution will create divisions and have a negative impact on communities:

- creating division and tension between English and French students and potential conflict;
- loss of neighbourhood school;
- keep what Ardrossan has, the small community feel;
- loss of rural and small-town feel—not looking to send children to an urban setting such as Sherwood Park;
- loss of connection and relationship-building within communities that students reside in;
- families might start choosing francophone schools;
- social challenges for French junior high students being separated from English peers;
- Ardrossan has more junior high students in comparison to the school's senior high students resulting in Bev Facey's junior high students being a small cohort;
- potential for low retention from Sherwood Heights Junior High to Bev Facey Community High because of the transition; and
- kindergarten programming decisions will be made based on location, resulting in lower enrolment for those who live farther away.

Many session attendees raised challenges in terms of the junior and senior high potential changes:

- grades 7-9 French Immersion students alone—no English peers—which could affect options, electives, extracurriculars and field trips;
- have a mixed-age cohort for options;
- potentially not enough students to offer extracurriculars or able to offer lots of options;
- staffing French Immersion options classes;
- younger students in Grade 7 with older Grade 12 students.
- having a small group of junior high students in a high school;
- segregation of French Immersion students at Bev Facey Community High with junior high and senior high together; and
- don't want junior high students going to school with senior high students since there's an age gap.

Session attendees also provided site-based challenges feedback:

- grade 7 students may want to remain at Sherwood Heights with friends in English programming;
- moving Ardrossan Junior Senior High French Immersion Program to a new site will have a big impact;
- no secondary level French Immersion programming in Ardrossan or Fort Saskatchewan;

- potentially low retention of Fort Saskatchewan and Ardrossan students;
- enrolment at the secondary level could decrease because of the location change, since Ardrossan and Fort Saskatchewan like having a community feel;
- Ardrossan has more junior high students in comparison to the school’s senior high students—Bev Facey junior high students would be a small cohort; and
- potential for low retention from Sherwood Heights Junior High to Bev Facey Community High because of the transition.

A few attendees stated the potential solution could also result in the loss of staff and lower parent satisfaction with the Board of Trustees as the French Immersion program has moved before. Some attendees noted that larger groups and classes are not positive for all students.

## Enhancements or Alternative Solutions

Regarding potential solution enhancement or alternative solutions, participants across the sessions, surveys and emails all noted that EIPS should consider changing school boundaries or rezone schools, keep Ardrossan’s French Immersion junior high and senior high site, and offer more French immersion programming across the Division. As well, session attendees added EIPS should specifically offer French Immersion at the replacement school in Sherwood Park and the requested replacement school in Fort Saskatchewan.

### Survey Feedback

The survey collected 403 comments regarding the potential solution enhancement or alternative solutions. The main survey response themes ranged from offering French Immersion programming at more local schools to the need to review or change school boundaries:

- 27% stated offer French Immersion programming at more local schools.
- 25% stated that the French Immersion program should be kept at Ardrossan Junior Senior High and not moved to Bev Facey Community High.
- 19% stated offer French Immersion programming at local high schools—Bev Facey Community High, Ardrossan Junior Senior High.
- 17% noted that the replacement K-9 school in Sherwood Park should accommodate only French Immersion programming students, as a single-track school.
- 10% stated that EIPS should build more schools.
- 10% stated the need to change, review or rezone school boundaries.

Several sub-themes emerged from a deeper focus on easing current enrolment pressures to improve and provide more communication to keep stakeholder informed:

- 5% stated more focus on easing current enrolment pressures and issues.
- 5% suggested adding more modular and portable classrooms to schools.
- 4% suggested more focus on improving student retention.
- 4% suggested expanding and adding more space to existing schools.
- 4% stated maintain current French Immersion programming at schools and do not make any changes to programming.
- 3% suggested improving or offering more extracurricular activities and programs.
- 3% suggested improving or more communication to ensure stakeholders are kept informed.

Additionally, there were comments provided that represent less than 2% of respondents:

- provide students with more support and hire more teaching staff;
- improve program leadership and teaching staff;

- more focus on coming up with a solid solution and plan as soon as possible;
- listen to feedback, input and suggestions from stakeholders while continuing to engage with stakeholders;
- more focus on creating a strong sense of community;
- provide teaching staff with more support and resources;
- look at other jurisdictions where similar learning models are used;
- should keep junior high and senior high schools separated and in different buildings;
- relocate the junior high English program to a different school;
- more and expanded school bus routes;
- offer discounted busing fees for students who are relocating to a different school;
- offer more online learning opportunities; and
- improve long-term planning.

### **Key Attribute Survey Feedback**

When examining survey responses by the respondent’s community, those residing in Ardrossan and rural Strathcona County have the same top survey theme: EIPS should keep the French Immersion program at Ardrossan Junior Senior High School or don’t move the program to Bev Facey Community High. While those residing in Fort Saskatchewan and Sherwood Park indicated, their top survey theme was to offer French Immersion programming at more local schools. Below are the Top 3 themes by community respondents reside in.

#### **Ardrossan (n=58):**

- 52% stated EIPS should keep the French Immersion program at Ardrossan Junior Senior High School and not move the program to Bev Facey Community High.
- 17% suggested offering French Immersion programming at more local schools.
- 16% noted the need to change, review or rezone school Boundaries.

#### **Fort Saskatchewan (n=129):**

- 36% suggested offering French Immersion programming at more local schools.
- 20% EIPS should keep the French Immersion program at Ardrossan Junior Senior High and not move the program to Bev Facey Community High.
- 16% suggested that EIPS should build more schools.

#### **Rural Strathcona County (n= 54):**

- 35% stated EIPS should keep the French Immersion program at Ardrossan Junior Senior High and not move the program to Bev Facey Community High.
- 22% suggested offering French Immersion programming at local high schools—Bev Facey Community High, Ardrossan Junior Senior High.
- 20% suggested offering French Immersion programming at more local schools.

#### **Sherwood Park (n=148):**

- 25% suggested offering French Immersion programming at more local schools.
- 24% suggested offering French Immersion programming at local high schools—Bev Facey Community High, Ardrossan Junior Senior High.
- 17% stated the new school should be designated for K-9 students.

In terms of if the respondent’s child attends elementary or secondary grades, one key difference emerged. Twenty-nine per cent of respondents whose child attends elementary grades want French Immersion programming offered at more local schools. Meanwhile, only 18% of respondents with students in secondary grades felt similarly.

## Session Feedback

Session feedback for potential solution enhancements or alternative solutions ranged extensively from demonstrating evidence-based decision-making, considering mental health impacts to students, rezoning the English program students, working with the Catholic system and site-based reconfiguration to new schools.

Many attendees noted a desire for a solution to demonstrate evidence-based decision-making that goes beyond examining numbers:

- address reasons for attrition rather than statistics;
- look at why students are leaving—for example, one breakout room referenced the book, *Student Retention in Immersion and Francophone Schools*, co-written by Campus Saint-Jean professors Laurent Cammarata and Kristin Marchak; and
- use statistics and evidence for decision-making.

Several session attendees suggested changes to boundaries for regular English program students or to zone new subdivisions to Sherwood Park:

- change the boundaries for English students—change French Immersion school boundaries in Sherwood Park to reduce enrolment pressures at Ardrossan schools); and
- zone new subdivisions to Sherwood Park.

Some interesting suggestions included:

- work with the Catholic system to make sure there is junior high French Immersion in Ardrossan; and
- offer French Immersion level options for students who don't stay in the full program.

Site-specific configurations were raised by many participants:

- best to have K-6 and 7-12 in the same place as there are community links and continuity;
- have K-9 French Immersion at Sherwood Heights Junior High and K-9 French Immersion at École Parc Élémentaire, Ardrossan Elementary and Ardrossan Junior Senior High, and grades 10-12 at Bev Facey Community High;
- keep Ardrossan Junior Senior High for Ardrossan and Fort Saskatchewan students and keep Bev Facey Community High for Sherwood Park students;
- just keep grades 7-9 French Immersion at the replacement school;
- could move grades 10-12 to Bev Facey Community High;
- stay dual-track at junior high and senior high for grades 7-12 at Bev Facey Community High; and
- Bev Facey Community High to improve programming and sports.

New schools were suggested:

- K-12 French Immersion at the new replacement school in Sherwood Park;
- have French Immersion offered in Fort Saskatchewan at a new school; and
- potential for a K-9 French Immersion program, a single-track elementary and a dual-track junior high.

A few participants noted that the mental health aspect of any change should be considered in the solution. Some other participants suggested defining what commute times will be and communicating this information to the French Immersion community. Lastly, it was suggested to work with communities to find individual community solutions and consider phasing in any changes.

## Additional Thoughts – Survey

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked to share any additional thoughts they might have—342 respondents provided comments. The main themes of these final comments ranged from keeping French Immersion at Ardrossan Junior Senior High to the potential solution will not help grow the French Immersion program and enrolment.



- 35% stated EIPS should keep the French Immersion program at Ardrossan Junior Senior High and not move the program to Bev Facey Community High.
- 17% stated they will likely pull their child out of the French Immersion program if the potential solution is implemented.
- 12% stated they do not support or like the potential solution, and it's a bad idea.
- 10% noted the need to listen to feedback, input and suggestions and continue to engage with stakeholders.
- 10% suggested the potential solution will not help grow the French Immersion program and enrolment.

Several sub-themes emerged as well, ranging from concerns about junior high students transitioning and integrating with senior high students to having the new replacement school accommodate French Immersion students only.

- 8% noted concerns that junior high students won't transition and integrate well with senior high students.
- 6% suggested offering French Immersion programming at more local schools.
- 6% said to ensure alternative solutions are carefully and thoroughly considered before making decisions.
- 6% stated offer French Immersion programming at local high schools--Bev Facey Community High, Ardrossan Junior Senior High.
- 6% stated they support, and like the potential solution and it is a good idea.
- 5% noted more focus on improving student retention is needed.
- 5% stated that there is a need to build a new school designated for K-9 students and more K-9 French Immersion programming.
- 5% noted transportation and commuting concerns—distance is too far and busing-related concerns.
- 4% stated needing more information and details about the potential solution.
- 4% suggested more focus on easing current enrolment pressures and issues.
- 2% noted the need to improve and offer more extracurricular activities and programs.
- 2% stated EIPS needs to build additional schools.
- 2% noted concern about their child being split up from their friends and peers.
- 2% stated the replacement school should be made to accommodate only French Immersion programming students, as a single-track school.

Additionally, there were comments provided that represent less than 2% of respondents:

- should obtain feedback and suggestions from students;
- need to improve and expand school busing transportation services and add more bus routes;
- increase promotion and public awareness of French Immersion programming;
- should obtain feedback and suggestions from the teaching staff;
- provide teaching staff with more support and resources;
- add more modular and portable classrooms to schools;
- appreciate the opportunity to provide input and feedback;
- should keep junior high and senior high schools separated and in different buildings;
- need to change, review and rezone school boundaries;
- develop partnership opportunities with other educational institutions and organizations;
- improve long-term planning; and
- the potential solution goes against the guiding principles and values; and
- improve program leadership.

### **Key Attribute Survey Feedback**

Additional thoughts and feedback responses were also examined through the lens of a community of residence. Interestingly, all four communities had the same top response theme: EIPS should keep the French Immersion program at Ardrossan Junior Senior High School or not move the program to Bev Facey Community High.

Below are the Top 3 themes by respondents' community.

Ardrossan (n=51):

- 57% suggested EIPS should keep the French Immersion program at Ardrossan Junior Senior High and not move the program to Bev Facey Community High.
- 18% stated they don't support or like the potential solution, and it is a bad idea.
- 16% stated they will likely pull their child out of the French Immersion program if the Division implements the potential solution.

Fort Saskatchewan (n= 101):

- 39% suggested EIPS should keep the French Immersion program at Ardrossan Junior Senior High and not move the program to Bev Facey Community High.
- 26% stated they will likely pull their child out of the French Immersion program if the Division implements the potential solution.
- 12% suggested that EIPS should offer French Immersion programming at more local schools.

Rural Strathcona County (n= 55):

- 51% suggested EIPS should keep the French Immersion program at Ardrossan Junior Senior High and not move the program to Bev Facey Community High.
- 20% stated they will likely pull their child out of the French Immersion program if the Division implements the potential solution.
- 18% noted that EIPS needs to listen to feedback, input and suggestions from stakeholders and continue to engage with stakeholders.

Sherwood Park ( n=125):

- 18% suggested EIPS should keep the French Immersion program at Ardrossan Junior Senior High and not move the program to Bev Facey Community High.
- 14% stated they support and like the potential solution, and it is a good idea.
- 12% stated EIPS needs to build a new school designated for K-9 students and offer more K-9 French Immersion programming.

## Conclusion

Phase 3 of the French Immersion engagement effort connected with various French Immersion programming stakeholders. While many stakeholders reside in Sherwood Park, people from Ardrossan, Fort Saskatchewan and rural Strathcona County also contributed valuable insights and feedback on the potential solution. Additionally, many stakeholders indicated they had a child or children in elementary as compared to junior or senior high. They also provided feedback pertaining to all aspects of the potential solution.

## Potential Solution's Strengths

Key themes throughout the feedback collected on the potential solution's strengths were that this approach could increase the availability of French Immersion programming, especially at the elementary level. That, in turn, could help increase enrolment and maintain or increase the French community and culture. In both the survey and session discussion, it was noted that this potential solution might enhance retention at the junior high and senior high levels, too, as students will be in the same building and transitioning together. It was also noted that this approach could enhance the robustness of the programming, particularly for grades 7-12.

## Potential Solution's Anticipated Challenges

Key themes throughout the engagement mechanisms for anticipated challenges were concerns about junior high students mixing with senior high students, transportation concerns and the impact on extracurricular activities—particularly for junior high students. Also, of high concern for participants and respondents was the loss of community felt by students through having to commute to a neighbouring and urban community.

## Potential Solution Enhancement or Alternative Solution

Regarding the potential solution's enhancement or alternative solutions, participants across the sessions, surveys, and emails all noted that EIPS should consider changing school boundaries or rezoning schools, keeping the secondary French Immersion program at the Ardrossan site, and offering more French immersion programming across the Division—specifically at the replacement school in Sherwood Park and the requested one in Fort Saskatchewan.

## Additional Thoughts

At the end of the online survey, respondents were asked to share any additional thoughts they might have. The main themes of these final comments ranged from suggesting EIPS keep the French Immersion at Ardrossan Junior Senior High to the potential solution won't help grow the French Immersion program and enrolment. Another piece of feedback emerged, not pertaining to the potential solution, in terms of the engagement process. Several stakeholders, through email and the survey feedback, felt in-person engagement sessions should be held in Ardrossan and Fort Saskatchewan. Several also noted the potential solution did not reflect their values or community. Some respondents also felt the location of the Phase 3 session made it difficult for other stakeholders to attend. Lastly, other feedback suggested the engagement catered to one location of stakeholders.

## Next Steps

EIPS will use the feedback gathered through Phase 3 to inform the next steps and further develop a solution—in a manner that balances stakeholder input; technical requirements; and EIPS policies, procedures, and fiduciary responsibilities. Based on the feedback collected EIPS will provide a recommendation to trustees at the June 15, 2023 Board meeting regarding the Heritage Hills Elementary attendance boundary. EIPS will conduct additional engagement around the junior and senior high program in June 2023. The Board will ensure any decision made is in the best educational interests of all students, which EIPS communicates to the French Immersion school community right way. Decisions related to secondary programming will take effect in the 2026-27 school year, at the earliest.

## FAQ

Throughout the engagement, several questions were raised by stakeholders—organized below by theme. EIPS will provide answers broadly, and where appropriate, in a future Frequently Asked Questions document.

Broad location questions:

1. Why can't a French Immersion secondary program be available in all three communities?
2. French Immersion is the heart and soul of the community. Why are rural families affected by the decision?

Ardrossan and Fort Saskatchewan-specific questions:

3. What happens to students, currently at Ardrossan Junior Senior High for French Immersion, and their families who choose not to move to Sherwood Park? Can they stay at Ardrossan Junior Senior High in English?
4. Is the program viable at Ardrossan Junior Senior High?
5. Why is EIPS considering moving the program out of Ardrossan? It makes the appearance the Division doesn't care about Ardrossan and Fort Saskatchewan students.
6. Fort Saskatchewan is defined as a city so why can't there be a French Immersion program here?
7. Using French Immersion as a solution to the growth issue in Ardrossan, is there another solution? What about regular English programming students?

Sherwood Park Questions:

8. Why is EIPS considering a junior high program at Bev Facey Community High?
9. Why would EIPS consider removing the dual-track program at Sherwood Heights Junior High? The school was part of the ask for the replacement school and a lot of the École Campbelltown families worked too hard to advocate for the new replacement school, thinking their child would stay there for junior high?
10. What is the capacity of the new replacement school?
11. The senior high option at Bev Facey Community High, for students in grades 7-9 French Immersion, would they still have as many options as possible—electives, art, drama—and extracurriculars?

Engagement question:

12. Can EIPS host an in-person conversation about the program at AJS? Or host the next engagement session there?

Transportation questions:

13. What are the statistics for transportation commute times from Ardrossan to Sherwood Park and from Fort Saskatchewan to Sherwood Park? What are the gains and losses for rural and urban riders?
14. Would it increase the bus ride times for rural students and Fort Saskatchewan students?
15. What are the statistics for Ardrossan student bus rider locations—what parts of the county or other communities are they coming from?

Mapping and data questions:

16. Five years from now, the heat map will change significantly. Will this program be moved again?
17. Can the heat map be broken out into elementary, junior high, and senior high enrolment per community?
18. Please provide additional data, current and historical, on student populations, retention, and distributions. I am interested in more detailed data, particularly for the transition years between elementary and secondary, and site-based detailed data.

Other:

19. Are there more details about the modulars available? I heard that moving a modular is too expensive.
20. Why does the French Immersion program need to be affected by student accommodation issues?
21. Will the low number of junior high students at the school impact programming, options and extracurriculars?
22. Why does EIPS want to put 12-year-old with students in grades 10-12?