

## Frequently Asked Questions: EIPS School Calendar Changes

### **Q: Why did the Division recommend making changes to the school calendars for 2025-26 and 2026-27 to increase time set aside for staff collaboration?**

A: As Elk Island Public Schools' top priority is promoting growth and success for all students, building collective efficacy through sustained teacher collaboration is a high leverage research-based strategy that will have a positive impact on student learning.

In setting aside regular time for school administrators, teachers and educational assistants to reflect on their practices, share insights, and challenge one another—ultimately resulting in improved teaching practices and student outcomes.

### **Q: Did EIPS administration consult stakeholders before making its recommendation to the Board of Trustees?**

A: Yes, parents, caregivers and staff across the Division were invited to participate in a survey which included two videos from Superintendent Sandra Stoddard explaining the need and purpose for the collaboration time, and the two proposed alternative calendars. There were 5815 individuals who responded to the initial questions and 4027 who answered the long answer questions providing feedback on the two options.

In terms of results, no clear preference of Option 1 or Option 2 emerged; however, parents and caregivers valued consistency and predictability in routine, and staff felt one hour weekly early dismissals were less intrusive to school scheduling. Concerns were raised about two-hour early dismissals every second Friday, specifically the ratio of instructional hours to ride times, and conflicts between weekend tournaments and events should students be dismissed two hours early on Friday. Childcare support was the greatest challenge identified, and assistance in this area was requested.

It is important to note that surveys provide important perspectives about key issues—but the results do not constitute a “vote.” Administration and the Board of Trustees carefully reviewed the feedback received from parents, caregivers and staff, and weighed that input against research, existing programming and schedules, and the strengths and challenges of each option in achieving the goal of improved academic achievement.

**Q: Why did EIPS administration recommend, and the Board of Trustees vote in favour of Option 1 (early dismissal every Wednesday)?**

A: There were a number of factors that influenced the recommendation and the final vote:

- Regular, ongoing, structured, embedded collaboration time is proven to benefit student learning outcomes. Early-out every Wednesday provides more frequent opportunities for this collaboration than did the early-out every second Friday.
- Early dismissal each week is predictable and provides for clear regular scheduling.
- Option 1 has minimal impact on current school schedules and allows for existing routines to be managed.
- Concerns raised regarding attendance and bus ride times related to the Friday two-hour dismissal option are mitigated with the one-hour early out every Wednesday.
- Staff who are coaching teams will not miss collaboration should they need to leave early for weekend events.
- It is easier for the Division to explore and support after-school care options for one hour on Wednesdays with community partners—with the goal of easing the burden for families with young children.
- High schools currently offering Opportunity Wednesdays will not be required to undertake a schedule change.

**Q: What will the school division do to support those families who require additional after-school care for their children because of the change?**

A: We know the change in schedule has raised concerns among some parents in regard to childcare, and we heard in detail about challenges parents might encounter in adjusting to the new school schedule.

To assist families, EIPS will liaise with existing childcare providers and service clubs already within our schools, and engage with local non-profit agencies, recreation facilities and out-of-school care centres, so we can share information about equitable and accessible childcare solutions in the community.

**Q: How will the new schedule impact student transportation?**

A: School schedules will be adjusted across the division with most mornings starting 5 minutes earlier and ending 4 minutes later (this may vary slightly). Bus schedules will be adjusted accordingly and although ride times can vary from year to year for students, they should remain similar to existing ride times.

**Q: Will students have less instructional time with Option 1 than they do with current calendar?**

A: No, the number of instructional minutes will remain the same. The only difference is the minutes will be distributed differently throughout the week to allow for the one-hour early dismissal day.

**Q: How will the change impact kindergarten classes?**

A: Kindergarten schedules will be adjusted so that Schedule A is Monday/Thursday, and Schedule B is Tuesday/Friday—with alternating Wednesdays. This means staff who work with either schedule will be available to participate in collaboration time.

**Q: Does the change impact teachers' assignable time?**

A: As per the collective agreement, teacher assignable time is set at 1200 hours per school year. Even with the addition of 27 hours per year under Option 1, EIPS remains below the cap.

**Q: How will the Division ensure early dismissal collaboration time is used as intended?**

A: EIPS administration is developing an administrative procedure that will guide the work that takes place in schools during this hour each Wednesday. The administrative procedure will allow flexibility to meet the needs of different school communities, while making expectations clear to principals, teachers and staff. The first year of implementation, templates and resources will be provided to help facilitate the sessions, and school administrators will be required to submit a yearly collaboration plan to senior leadership.

**Q: Do other school divisions implement additional collaborative time to enhance teacher efficacy and student achievement?**

A: Within this region, both Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Catholic School Division have weekly early out so staff can collaborate. In 2025-26, both New Horizons Charter School and Elk Island Catholic Schools will also be making motions to introduce weekly early-outs in their schedules.