

Email submissions – Andrew School Consultation

Names have been removed to maintain privacy

Wed 11/21/2018 10:16 PM

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to be involved in the decisions facing Andrew School.

1. What is most important to you about Andrew School?

It's extremely important to me that Andrew School continues to be a K to 12 school. My daughter is in grade 5 right now and it would be awful if she couldn't continue her schooling here up until she graduates. Andrew is a remote community and the nearest alternate school for us would be at least 40 minutes if we were to drive her directly. I can only image how much time she would be spending on the bus if it were necessary for her to attend an alternate school.

It's also fairly certain that the loss of the high school would make the community of Andrew a much less attractive place for families to live. Why would someone choose to bring their family to a town where they will be forced to school their children elsewhere in the future?

2. What learning opportunities are most important for students in the senior high grades?

Core subjects like math, social studies, biology, chemistry, physics, and English should be the main focus. Options like computer classes could be offered through remote learning if not feasible to have dedicated teachers for those subjects. Having a teacher who could also act as a guidance councillor would go a long way. There are opportunities to use things like the green certificate program and the RAP program to give students alternative life lessons but someone needs to be available to the students to help them get into those programs.

3. What are the most important factors EIPS should consider when making decisions about programming for senior high students in Andrew?

That if the programming isn't offered here, students and families will leave the school. Some families have made the decision to leave the school just due to rumours of the high school being removed from Andrew. The message being put forward to these families should be that Elk Island Schools is committed to improving the high school attendance and those families with high school aged children should be consulted about what would keep them at Andrew School.

Thu 11/22/2018 10:35 PM

Thank you for the information and the opportunity to provide my feedback. My answers to the specific questions are below, indicated with a *.

My additional comments are:

Andrew School is a fairly new school with excellent opportunities for children of all ages. In the past 8 years, I personally know multiple graduates of Andrew School, including myself, my husband and my sister, who have went on to have extremely successful careers. This success is in large part due to the support and education provided by Andrew School. The level of education is beyond adequate and being

in a smaller school enables greater one on one attention by teachers. Andrew School has resulted in the careers of accountants, legal secretaries, small business owners, government managers, teachers, nurses and more.

While smaller schools like Andrew might not have the same options as larger schools, the safe, welcoming and positive environment outweighs any potential drawbacks related to less variety.

Closing the high school would be detrimental to the community and surrounding area. With larger classes starting to be present in lower grades, it is clear that young families are in the community and will need education going forward. Ignoring this need and not planning for the future is unacceptable.

If the high school were to close where would children go to school and how would busing work? As a young couple who grew up in Andrew and just recently moved back to the area to start our family, it is deeply concerning that the fate of the high school is being questioned. If EIPS closes the high school they are ultimately doing a disservice to the children because this will mean longer bus rides and unfamiliarity which could impact both their quality of life and quality of education. After school activities would be relatively impossible as parents would have to drive to another community much further away to pick children up when they are done.

The strengths of Andrew School are its intimacy and its ability to bring the entire community together and the high school plays a big part in this. The older students become key members of the community learning the importance of volunteerism and developing strong leadership skills.

Thank you and I look forward to the meeting in January.

Fri 11/30/2018 11:06 AM

What is most important to you about Andrew School?: That students are able to have a school in their community.

What learning opportunities are most important for students in the senior high grades?: Sports teams and Options for students whose interests are for these subjects/opportunities.

What are the most important factors EIPS should consider when making decisions about programming for senior high students in Andrew?: Student retention/making sure students want to come to school and finish High School. Engaging students so their individual needs as far as subjects and interests (sports) are met.

Sat 12/1/2018 10:16 PM

What is most important to you about Andrew School?: A welcoming, safe and caring environment where students develop meaningful relationships with peers and adults. Andrew School is a family-oriented school with a unique opportunity for students to learn from caring teachers and administration from K - 12. Strong, self-reliant students as a result of a close knit school community is most important.

What learning opportunities are most important for students in the senior high grades?: Access to instruction for students based on their learning goals. Whether learning online, face time audio, or small group learning face to face instruction, provide individualized learning opportunities. This does not necessarily mean a teacher for every subject needed for University entrance. Assist students with learning process required to learn rather than solely focusing on content.

What are the most important factors EIPS should consider when making decisions about programming

for senior high students in Andrew?: Consider the impact of long bus rides to other communities. Think about the impact on the mental health of these students. First of all, they are no longer welcome at their own community school, they must now ride 3+ hours per day and attempt to learn when exhausted. The most important factors EIPS should consider is student mental health and provision of alternate modes of instruction without transporting students miles away.

Sun 2/12/2018 11:02 AM

Re: Andrew High School

On behalf of my family and myself, I wanted to thank EIPS for organizing the consultation event on November 22. I unfortunately was unable to attend so would like to submit my thoughts and input via this letter.

As a past graduate of that high school in what admittedly was a much different time, and as a community member who had hoped for so much more for this community, my comments are offered with the best of intentions. Given the causational relationship, some of my comments go to the overall of Andrew School as it culminates toward the high school output.

General Background:

To begin with, I fear this consultation probably comes four to five years too late- possibly too late to reverse what has been happening. I think we can all agree we have been observing a number of disturbing trends for some time now, in terms of school enrollment, overall student achievement, graduation percentage, and on. Obviously some of these numbers are hugely influenced by the size of the community and other demographic factors. What remains then is doing the best with what you have and influencing what you can to overcome barriers.

A) There, I have to question some of EIPS past decision making as it applied to the refurbishing of the Mundare School- when it would have been obvious the Andrew facility, not so many years after it's own overhaul, would see a declining enrollment at early and middle school levels. That decision effectively spelled the end of Andrew School. I am well aware of community advocacy and lobbying pressures placed on EIPS in these situations. I just find it difficult to believe it would not have been foreseen to be stranding a reasonable conditioned facility asset, not to mention the costs associated with now two facility upgrades?

B) Next, and no fault to EIPS for this one, what I believed I observed was the collective community discounting of the value of educational achievement and conventional structures for attendance, achievement and even conduct. At times it looked like episodes of Duck Dynasty with the high water mark

essentially being legislated minimums for truancy. With that came an environment of rebellion toward the staff and school norms, and ultimately pushing many of your willing students to seek alternate places.

C) Obviously this has created a fatigue factor on your staff resulting in a turnover level which further harms traditional teacher/student bonding...and at times it appears EIPS may have been guilty of using Andrew School as an entry level training ground for new teachers coming into the system...not sure that is a sustainable strategy against this back drop?
So enough about background and history...where to from here?
This is not something that is going to get turned around quickly. It had been a steady decline over years and will require a multi-pronged approach over several years.

Suggestions and Solutions:

- 1) I believe the reality of the situation and the decisions facing EIPS with regard to this school are actually quite dire and this should be made very clear to the community. I suggest a quick turn around of all consultation results including those with the Village, staff and students. This concise report back should be leveraged in a very public manner and should include honesty with the community about the difficult choices EIPS is left with. My simple opinion here but my observation is the community has slowly fallen asleep to the realities of what is taking place around them- some harsh realities might be the required wake up call.
- 2) ***Attempt to remedy barriers to the early and middle school feeder system as identified in the Background Section.***
- 3) Some form of triage needs to be applied to programming. Identify the 2 to 3 areas of strength which exist within the facilities infrastructure and or academic outputs. Create specialty programs that could now best utilize Andrew's facility and focus on a center of excellence approach. As quickly as possible, move away from the multi-level/multi-class to single teacher approach- this creates poor results for both the teacher and students.
- 4) Re-establish conventional expectations, rules and norms for school attendance and conduct. The ones who voluntarily leave Andrew School should be the ones who cannot fit in to these norms, not the ones trying to. Engage with parents of the students who have gone elsewhere and see if these can be redeemed back to Andrew, under an improved condition.
- 5) Establish an environment of familiarity and connectivity at this school. Consider implementing teacher contract incentives for minimum three year terms. Focus on matches to the Center of Excellence approach.

6) Related to the item #1 above, a cadence of repeated community involvement (follow-up) forums are necessary to create and maintain momentum. It may even be necessary to identify and approach community members whose backgrounds interests and commitment align to turning around this situation.

At this risk of sounding judgemental here, focus should be on engaging new thought and commitment to what Andrew School is and should be (perhaps with intention external perspective), less about holding true to existing comforts and routines. Some hard decisions need to be made, likely some sacrifices. Continued emulation of the Duck Dynasty persona cannot work as it relates to the value of this school to the community- eventually that show too will go off the air.

I would be happy to further explain any part of this should you have questions. Thank-you again for the opportunity to input.