

WORKING-GROUP MEETING NO. 2

SESSION SUMMARY: OCT. 31, 2018

Project Overview

Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) Board of Trustees is reviewing programming for senior high students living in the Andrew School attendance boundary. The goal: To determine what factors are most important to Andrew students, families, staff and community members when it comes to providing equitable educational opportunities for senior high students. As such, the Division's gathering feedback from the Andrew community about possible ways to address the issue. Input received through the consultation process will ultimately help inform decisions about senior high programming in Andrew going forward.

Session Overview

On Oct. 31, 2018, EIPS Trustees and Superintendent Mark Liguori met with elected officials from Lamont County and Andrew. EIPS provided background data, presented its concerns and described why the consultation is occurring. After the introduction of ideas, attendees engaged in a group discussion focused on what the ideal situation looks like for senior high students in grades 10 through 12 living in Andrew.

IN ATTENDANCE

Elk Island Public Schools

- Trina Boymook, Board Chair
- Colleen Holowaychuk, Trustee
- Mark Liguori, Superintendent
- Laura McNabb, Director, Communications Services

Village of Andrew

- Gary Lepppek, Mayor
- Sheila Lupul, Deputy Mayor
- Herb Fedun, Councillor
- Osama Hamed, Councillor
- Ken Hamaliuk, Councillor
- Pat Skoreyko, Municipal Administrator

County of Lamont

- Wayne Woldanski, Reeve
- Daniel Warawa, Deputy Reeve
- Roy Anaka, Councillor
- David Diduck, Councillor
- Neil Woitas, Councillor
- Stephen Hill, A/Chief Administrative Officer

Board Chair Trina Boymook

- Welcomes the group to the session and thanks them for joining in conversation about the senior high program at Andrew School.
- The Board Chair indicates that EIPS trustees have come together to discuss the school and while elementary and junior high programming is very comparable to other EIPS schools, Andrew senior high students don't have the same access to opportunities as exist at other high schools in the Division.

Superintendent Mark Liguori

- How are we doing at Andrew School? Is the Division serving the community well? Over past 3.5 years, spent a significant amount of time in Andrew, with administration and in the classroom.
- Why are we here? We want to dispel from outset the rumblings about school closure, as they make people very nervous. We are looking at the high school program only, not the closure of Andrew School, not looking at elementary or junior high programming. We are focusing on what are we doing with the high school programming and whether we are serving the kids well.
- What we know over time is that there are a few dynamics in the community that impact what we can offer. One is low enrollment—there are only 5-6 students in a class at the senior levels.
- While kids are in the lower grades, everyone learns the same subjects and material, and the teacher works more closely with individual students who both have challenges and who are excelling.
- In high school, that changes—kids are separated based on level, English, Math, Sciences.
- Curriculum for each subject is very different depending on the level.
- Typically, kids are given booklets and materials, but no class is taught – instead, the teachers work with students individually.
- As a result, there's no full lesson or experience provided, and that impacts how students learn and how teachers teach.
- How are the kids doing? Are kids graduating on time? What are they doing when they're done?
- Metrics gathered by Alberta Education tell us we're not achieving here what we are at other schools in the Division.
- High School should be a chance to experience a variety of different subjects, for students to make a choice about what they want to do—they take the courses they need if they want to apply to different programs, and can make informed decisions about their next steps.
- Great depth of programming at other high schools—for example, cosmetology, robotics, carpentry, commercial foods, and others—that we can't offer in Andrew.
- There are many factors that get kids to school—parents' expectations, some kids love school, students' union, athletics and sports teams, participating in extracurricular programs. At Andrew, these additional opportunities can't take place because there are so few students.
- There are diminishing numbers in high school because a number of students are going to other schools and other school divisions. In Andrew, we're down to very small class sizes. In this year's Grade 12 class, we're not sure if any kids will graduate with 100 credits. This is not the kind of education we should be delivering for Andrew high school students.

- What we want to do is have a community conversation and ask for your impressions. Are there things that are being overlooked or oversimplified, or are you in agreement and you're not happy with what's offered at Andrew high school?
- We are really concerned about the kids and about the equity of opportunity available at other high schools.
- Again, we're only talking about high school – kindergarten through grade 9 doing very well.

QUESTIONS, RESPONSES AND COMMENTS

What do the other schools offer? Why are students leaving?

- Course selections are greater in other locations and different types of classes are offered. Career Technology Studies in particular are important.
- Kids want a different social experience in high school that includes sports, drama, music. Right now, there is no ability to offer those in Andrew.
- Some kids simply leave—for some, it's been socially difficult for the entire time they're in school, and they want to go somewhere else and get a fresh start.
- As mentioned, even core courses are difficult to teach. When you have six different math levels in a single class, you're missing dialogue among the students and the ability to work with one another. Students are left to work on their own, and don't have peers with whom to collaborate and discuss further.

What are the alternatives? Does that mean the kids will need to be bussed elsewhere?

- If we can't provide courses here, we need to talk about where those opportunities might be offered. And maybe that looks like bussing them to Vegreville or Lamont.

Some parents take their kids to Vegreville now.

- Yes, some to Vegreville, some to Sherwood Park, etc.

Why can't you spread out the career technology courses among different schools?

- In order to set up appropriate shops, cost is major consideration, and you also have to bring in a teacher or a journeyman. It's not economically viable to recreate those shops in Andrew. We don't have the dollars to make that happen. For example, a basic welding lab start at \$500,000 to \$600,000.

What are the high school numbers now?

- As of last week, there are 6 grade 11, 6 grade 12s – four of those in Grade 12 are returning students who have come to upgrade marks or graduate with the required number of credits.

If kids were sent to Lamont or Vegreville, would overcrowding be an issue?

- No, both schools have lots of room. Classroom sizes are not an issue in Lamont. For Physics 30, a student from Andrew had to go to summer school in Sherwood Park. If they wanted to take the same class in Andrew, they'd work during one of the other science classes with materials they're handed. In that case, students can approach a teacher to get help or to get assistance online. But direct instruction isn't available. If that is how we're delivering a high

school education to kids in Andrew, that's not acceptable—they need other kids around, they need the class to be taught.

- Can't share ideas, get a different perspective.
- Delivering distance learning is an outreach program.

Do other EIPS high schools have all the programs?

- Very comparable programs at all other high schools. And many other options, extracurricular and sports opportunities. Can take all academic programs that allow them to graduate at those schools.

Can you still get two different diplomas depending on what you want to take?

- There's only one kind of diploma now, the course work determines where you can apply for post-secondary. There are many opportunities through RAP to help those kids who are going towards a trade.

Are kids who leave Andrew for other schools have a lower level than their peers? Do we have statistics on how Andrew kids who leave for other schools are doing academically?

- One of the things we know is that from K-9, kids do well in Andrew.
- Students that remain for high school have lower achievement than at other high schools.
- When the same peer group split off to another EIPS school, they stay the same or improve.
- Kids who are looking for something different or something more may be the ones who are leaving (may already be higher achievers).

We've heard anecdotally that children in lower grades aren't getting the same quality of education at Andrew as other schools (Vegreville).

- Within Andrew, we're working with small group of kids, using instruction geared to the middle of the pack. As a result, great gains in Andrew.

In the past, Andrew was an academic school – when did that change?

- A few years ago, half went on to post-secondary. But there's a need for a critical mass of kids—level of teaching changed.
- Varying curricula in a single class makes it much more difficult to get all kids through to desired outcomes. It's not about academics, it's about a cohort group. We're starting to see the transition rate—from high school to post-secondary—go the opposite way in Andrew when compared to other schools. Kids are often not doing anything for post-secondary. When peers aren't pursuing post-secondary, it has a drag effect on other kids in the group.

Do some kids go to Vegreville Composite because their friends are?

- Many students want to take sports, want to take part in other activities.
- When you do a boundary change in a rural area, you might increase school population by only one or two children.
- It's about the number of kids in the community and what they want in terms of an education. Academic and social, sports, etc.

How many teachers dedicated to the high school?

- There are four at jr high/high. Are also teaching elementary topics in some cases.
- We have teachers qualified for high school courses, but the size of schools means that they teach other grades/courses as well.
- Average class size/ratio is about six to one.

Is there an economic consideration from EIPS as to why they want to have this conversation?

- Absolutely not. We need to do our very best for all students and we are not doing that in Andrew. We want to have a discussion about whether we are providing enough for their kids in this community.
- If the students, families and communities want something more, we want to know how we can accomplish that. We have no result in mind, we need to know what the community wants and expects.

Do Mundare School students all go to Vegreville after graduation?

- Yes, and they also go to Vegreville Composite for junior high CTS courses now.

There's a tendency for kids from Andrew to attend in Vegreville (rather than Lamont). Will closure of CPC impact schools in Vegreville?

- Not to date – parents in Vegreville work in other industries or commute. There's been no significant drop in enrollment since the closure.

Do Mennonite children attend EIPS schools?

- There are a few Mennonite children in Andrew. Children from the Hutterite Colony have a dedicated EIPS teacher on site.

Concern is definitely that students here could be receiving a second-rate education?

- Yes. Students are not receiving an education with the same depth and breadth at other high schools.
- May not be just the course work, it may be the social aspect as well in class—students lack the perspective of others.
- Teachers are doing the very best they can in Andrew right now.

What's the total enrollment for Andrew?

- Right now, it's at 116 students but it fluctuates.

Could it be feasible to offer specialized courses in Andrew? Instead of general education, offer specialized courses—For example, dedicated advanced math course by single teacher? Could it be beneficial to our system to offer something in Andrew not offered in Lamont and Vegreville, and draw them to Andrew instead? Bus them here instead of bussing them there?

- Parents in Lamont and Vegreville wouldn't consider sending kids to Andrew
- For example, offering a specialized Math 31 class—even if we looked at Lamont/Vegreville, we'd still not have enough kids to fill a class. A great suggestion, though.

Could we have remote interactive classrooms?

- Offered in Lamont or Vegreville, video teaching here.
- It has been done in the past, it's certainly an option. Because high school is so small, it might not align with courses in Andrew. Can do videoconferencing but may miss out in other areas. We do have the ability to do that, however.

Is there anything that EIPS should be aware of in the community? We are inviting families who have chosen to stay, and those who have left as well. We are also going to hear from students about their experiences as well. What do we need to know preparing for the community consultation?

- Good format needed
- Be sure you're reaching out to advise families about the consultation in a number of ways—social media, posters, direct email, and so on).

Why did classes become less structured over time?

- Numbers of students are very small in each class, most of the time they're working on booklets with assistance from the teacher.

A lot of teachers used to live in Andrew, used to be part of the community. They aren't part of it now, don't know the parents or the school.

We all share the concerns about the students, glad to hear it's not financial. What's the deadline?

- Nothing set, we have no predetermined end date. It's about the dialogue and where it takes us.

With the closing of the lodge, council decided to try to pursue something else for the community which would involve the school and could mean up to 25 students.

Could we not enforce a boundary?

- Every student is designated to a specific school but we do allow students an exemption to attend another school if there's room. Decisions of that kind are usually made around programming. It also depends on where the parent works, too.

What about bringing in students from Two Hills?

- Transportation becomes an issue. If you're bussing students out of another school division, it's typically not allowed. We can't send a bus into another jurisdiction.
- Funding comes into play as well. Transportation funding is allocated out to schools by Board. Provincial Funding is based on number of students.

Each school allocated a budget?

- Yes. We distribute as needed, we have a rural/urban system for which we have to distribute funding differently, also have other funding for leveraging student achievement and to address areas of need.

Next Steps

EIPS senior administration and the Board will review the input received through the working-group meetings. A student forum is planned for Nov. 6, 2019. A public meeting with the community will follow on Nov. 22, 2018. Collectively, the input will help the Division develop possible options to address the issue of equity of education in the senior high grades at Andrew School. The Division expects to share these potential options with the Andrew community in early 2019.