



DATE: June 2, 2015

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Marianne Barrett, Director, Early Learning

SUBJECT: Public Consultation – Kindergarten Programming

ORIGINATOR: Eileen Zimmerman, Associate Superintendent, Instructional Services

RESOURCE STAFF:

REFERENCE:

ISSUE

In December 2014, the Board of Trustees passed a motion directing administration to complete a public consultation in the hamlet of Sherwood Park and the city of Fort Saskatchewan to determine the community's interest in alternating full-day kindergarten programs.

The primary reasons for the consultation were concerns related to transportation. Some parents expressed concerns to trustees regarding both the length of bus rides and the amount of transportation fees. Furthermore, several trustees expressed concern that noon-hour busing is operated at a loss of approximately \$70 000.

This report for information summarizes the consultation process and results.

BACKGROUND

Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) offers a mix of half-day every day and alternating full-day kindergarten programs. Historically, alternating full-day kindergarten programming has been offered in EIPS rural communities. The most prominent model in urban areas is half-day every day kindergarten programming; however, alternating full day programming is offered at some urban elementary schools.

Reviews of Alberta Education information and the research literature revealed very limited research comparing the educational benefits of half-day every day and alternating full-day kindergarten programming. It is noted in the literature that the decision to offer alternating full-day kindergarten in rural communities is often made due to transportation considerations including both the length of bus rides and transportation costs.

Currently in EIPS, 25 schools offer kindergarten programming:



- Fourteen schools offer alternating full-day kindergarten programming (A.L. Horton, Andrew, Ardrossan Elementary (English), Bruderheim, Fort Christian, Fultonvale, Lamont Elementary, Ministik, Mundare, Strathcona Christian Elementary, Uncas, Woodbridge Farms, Westboro, and Wye).
- Ten schools operate half-day every day English kindergarten programming: Brentwood, Fort Elementary, Glen Allan, James Mowat, Lakeland Ridge, Mills Haven, Pine Street, Wes Hosford, Win Ferguson, and Woodbridge Farms.
- With the exception of ukrainian bilingual at A.L. Horton School, EIPS immersion and bilingual kindergarten programs are offered half-day every day (Ardrossan Elementary, École Campbelltown, École Parc, and Mills Haven).
- One urban Sherwood Park School (Woodbridge Farms) offers both half and full day programming. A second urban Sherwood Park school (Pine Street) will offer alternating full-day options beginning in the 2015-2016 school year.

In terms of transportation, noon hour busing is available to parents in Sherwood Park. In Fort Saskatchewan, this service is only offered to parents whose children attend one of the three major daycares.

All Elk Island Catholic Schools (EICS) in Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan offer half day kindergarten programs. EICS also offers noon hour bussing for kindergarten in Sherwood Park. In Fort Saskatchewan, EICS kindergarten children attending one of the three major daycares access noon hour bussing provided by EIPS.

Currently 152 kindergarten children and 16 Play and Learn at School (PALS) early intervention children are bused at noon in Sherwood Park.

In Fort Saskatchewan, 30 children access bussing at noon including seven EICS children and four children who attend PALS.

CURRENT SITUATION / KEY POINTS

A proposed consultation plan was brought forward and approved by the Board of Trustees in April 2015. The consultation plan included focus groups and a survey.

HIGHLIGHTS OF KINDERGARTEN CONSULTATION

Based on the IAP2 Public Participation framework, the level of public participation was determined to be consult – to obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decision.



Consult - Commitment to keep community/stakeholders informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus Groups were held as a way to gather information on the pros and cons of both models of kindergarten programming. The focus group information informed the survey structure and content.

1. 16 teachers (8 teachers who currently teach half-day kindergarten and 8 teachers who currently teach alternating full-day kindergarten) attended a teacher focus group on April 27, 2015.
2. 12 parents attended the Sherwood Park parent focus group on April 29, 2015.
 - a. 10 parents have children who attend half-day programming
 - b. 2 parents have children who attend full-day programming.
3. 6 parents attended the Fort Saskatchewan parent focus group on April 30, 2015.
 - a. 4 parents have children who attend half day
 - b. 2 parents have children attending alternating full day
4. 4 of the 18 parents have children attending immersion programs.
5. In total 45 parents were invited to attend the focus groups through phone and/or email.
 - a. 5 parents provided feedback via telephone conversation or email.

SURVEY COMPOSITION

1. The survey was designed to provide information basic factual information as well as things to consider when making an informed decision. The questions were designed to be as clear as possible.
2. A draft survey was composed and subsequently reviewed by an ad hoc committee (consisting of 3 principals, 2 trustees, and, the Associate Superintendent of Instructional Services). Three parents who attended the focus groups also reviewed the draft survey. The committee made several changes to the draft survey which improved its clarity.
3. The draft survey was reviewed by the Education Committee of the Board on May 07, 2015. No suggestions for improvement or revisions were brought forward at that time.

SURVEY DISTRIBUTION

1. The survey was made available at noon on Monday May 11, 2015. It was promoted and distributed through a variety of methods:
 - a. A newsletter article

- b. An invitation to participate synervoice email was sent to parents who have children currently enrolled in kindergarten through Grade 6 in all Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan Schools.
 - c. An invitation to participate was emailed to general school contacts in Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan elementary schools.
 - d. An invitation to participate was emailed directly to Kindergarten staff, Student Support Services Personnel, Speech and Language Pathologists and Occupational Therapists
 - e. An email was sent to Strathcona County Family and Community Services and a Fort Saskatchewan EC-Map Coalition representative.
 - f. An email was sent directly to Greenland and Little Wonders Child Care in Fort Saskatchewan and invitation to participate flyers were mailed to Ann’s Daycare.
 - g. Survey link was posted to the division’s website and an invitation to participate was communicated via twitter.
2. The survey closed at noon on Friday, May 29, 2015.
 3. 1517 survey responses were collected.

SURVEY RESULTS

A summary of survey data is presented in Table 1. The response trends are similar in both the hamlet of Sherwood Park and the city of Fort Saskatchewan.

		Survey Responses	
Community	Survey Questions	Yes	No
Sherwood Park	Do you feel that EIPS should explore offering more alternating full-day kindergarten options in the community you represent?	68.8%	31.2%
	Do you feel that EIPS should explore the elimination of half-day programming and offer only alternating full-day kindergarten?	36.6%	63.4%
Fort Saskatchewan	Do you feel that EIPS should explore offering more alternating full-day kindergarten options in the community you represent?	64.1%	35.9%
	Do you feel that EIPS should explore the elimination of half-day programming and offer only alternating full-day kindergarten?	37.0%	63.0%

Tables 2 and 3 below provide detailed survey information. Table 2 summarizes the results from Sherwood Park, including the total number of respondents per category (parents, teacher/administrator, support staff [primarily educational assistants], service provider [speech and language therapists and occupational therapists], community member, and other [includes respondents who did not identify a category]). Table 3 summarizes the same information for the city of Fort Saskatchewan.



Table 2: Kindergarten Consultation –Sherwood Park Results

Sherwood Park Total			
		#	Percentage
Question 4: Do you feel that EIPS should explore offering more alternating full-day kindergarten options in the community you represent?	Total	1083	
	Parents	781	72.1%
	Teacher/ Administrator	186	17.2%
	Support Staff	61	5.6%
	Service Provider	15	1.4%
	Community Member	21	1.9%
	Other	19	1.8%
Question 4 Yes, to more alternating full day kindergarten	Total Yes	745	68.8%
	Parent	542	69.4%
	Teacher/Administrator	125	67.2%
	Support Staff	41	67.2%
	Service Provider	5	33.3%
	Community Member	13	61.9%
	Other	19	100%
		#	Percentage
Question 4 No, to more alternating full day options	Total No	338	31.2%
	Parent	239	30.6%
	Teacher/Administrator	61	32.8%
	Support Staff	20	32.8
	Service Provider	10	66.6%
	Community Member	8	38.1%
	Other	0	0
No response on Question 4		53	
Question 5 Do you feel that EIPS should explore the elimination of half-day programming and offer only alternating full-day kindergarten?		#	Percentage
	Total	1083	
	Parents	781	72.1%
	Teacher/ Administrator	186	17.2%
	Support Staff	61	5.6%
	Service Provider	15	1.4%
	Community Member	21	1.9%
	Other	19	1.8%
Question 5 Yes, to <i>only</i> alternating full day programs	Total	396	36.6%
	Parent	293	37.5%
	Teacher/Administrator	60	32.3%

	Support Staff	32	52.5%
	Service Provider	0	0%
	Community Member	11	52.4%
	Other	0	0%
Question 5			
		#	Percentage
No, to <i>only</i> alternating full day programs	Total	687	63.4%
	Parent	488	62.5%
	Teacher/Administrator	126	67.7%
	Support Staff	29	47.5%
	Service Provider	15	100%
	Community Member	10	47.7%
	Other	19	100%
No response on Question 5		53	

Table 3: Kindergarten Consultation – Fort Saskatchewan Results

Fort Saskatchewan Total			
Question 4: Do you feel that EIPS should explore offering more alternating full-day kindergarten options in the community you represent?		#	Percentage
	Total	365	
	Parents	293	80.3%
	Teacher/ Administrator	33	9.04%
	Support Staff	20	5.5%
	Service Provider	1	.003%
	Community Member	9	2.5%
	Other	9	2.5%
Question 4			
Yes, to more alternating full day kindergarten	Total Yes	234	64.1%
	Parent	176	60.0%
	Teacher/Administrator	26	78.8%
	Support Staff	17	85%
	Service Provider	1	100%
	Community Member	5	55%
	Other	9	100%
Question 4			
No, to more alternating full day options		#	Percentage
	Total No	131	35.9%
	Parent	117	39.9%
	Teacher/Administrator	7	21.2%
	Service Provider	0	0%



	Community Member	4	45%
	Other	0	0%
No response on Question 4			
		16	
Question 5			
Do you feel that EIPS should explore the elimination of half-day programming and offer only alternating full-day kindergarten?		#	Percentage
	Total	365	
	Parents	293	80.3%
	Teacher/ Administrator	33	9.04%
	Support Staff	20	5.5%
	Service Provider	1	.003%
	Community Member	9	2.5%
	Other	9	2.5%
Question 5			
Yes, to <i>only</i> alternating full day programs	Total	135	37.0%
	Parent	103	35.1%
	Teacher/Administrator	16	48.5%
	Support Staff	11	55%
	Service Provider	0	0%
	Community Member	5	55.6%
	Other	0	0%
Question 5			
No, to <i>only</i> alternating full day programs		#	Percentage
	Total	230	63.0%
	Parent	190	64.9%
	Teacher/Administrator	17	51.5%
	Support Staff	9	45%
	Service Provider	1	100%
	Community Member	4	44.4%
	Other	9	100%
No response on Question 5			
		16	

CONSIDERATIONS

The following are three possible options moving forward:

OPTION 1

Conclude the consultation process, release a summary report to the public and retain the status quo for kindergarten programming.

Considerations/ Implications:

- The majority of survey respondents were in favour of exploring offering more alternating full-day kindergarten programming.
- Transportation situation remains static.

OPTION 2

Release a summary report to the public and direct administration to further explore offering more alternating full-day programming in the hamlet of Sherwood Park and the city of Fort Saskatchewan.

Considerations/ implications:

- This option most closely aligns with the survey feedback.
- This option may offer more choices for families.
- Resources will be required including the time and attention of central services departments and elementary principals.
- Careful consideration is needed to minimize establishing a competitive atmosphere in relation to full-day versus half day kindergarten programming.
- Careful consideration is needed to determine alignment and tensions with designated/feeder school framework.
- Depending on the degree of change, there are implications for noon hour supervision and the associated parent fees.
- Depending on the degree of change, there may be implications for the delivery of speech and language and occupational therapy services.
- This option will likely not address transportation situation to a significant extent.

OPTION 3

Release a summary report to the public and direct administration to further explore the elimination of half-day programming and offer only alternating full-day kindergarten.

Considerations/ Implications:

- This option does not align with the majority feedback.
- This option will reduce choices for families.
- Significant resources will be required including the time and attention of central services departments and elementary principals. Professional development for kindergarten teachers will also be required.
- There are significant implications for children requiring additional supports and services (e.g. speech and language and occupational therapy services).
- The transportation concerns would be addressed.
- The elimination of noon-hour busing would impact EIPS early intervention programs as these children currently share noon-hour busing with kindergarten children. Lack of transportation to these programs may be a barrier for vulnerable families.



- Noon-hour supervisors will be required in all kindergarten classes (Cost estimate - \$67 131).
- There are implications for the service delivery by our community partners.