

Edson Schools' Community Consultation Open House Report

As part of the Edson Schools Community Consultation Plan, an open house was held at Parkland Composite High School in Edson on Wednesday, May 21st, 2014 from 6:30 to 8pm. The informal event was designed to promote informal discussions around three main areas: grade configurations, attendance boundaries and facility options. Poster boards were set up around tables with pens and sticky notes available for people to provide feedback and then affix to each question. The following GYPSD Trustees and Senior Administration were in attendance to answer any questions from stakeholders:

John Stitzenberger, Board Chair & Edson and Area Trustee
Joan Zaporosky, Edson and Area Trustee
Shirley Caputo, Vice-Chair, Hinton Trustee
Betsy DeClercq, Jasper Trustee
Ken Fate, Grande Cache Trustee
Cory Gray, Superintendent of Schools
Ewen Murray, Deputy Supt.
Leslee Jodry, Asst. Supt. – Learning Services
Ed Latka, Asst. Supt – Business Services
Ken Baluch, Director of Facility Services
Nikki Gilks, Communications Manager
Sandy Axmann, Supervisor - Learning Services

Approximately 35-40 people were in attendance over the evening. Participants included representatives from the local media, staff from Edson schools, GYPSD transportation drivers, community members, parents, Town of Edson Town Councillor Trevor Bevan and Yellowhead County Mayor, Gerald Soroka. Stakeholders were encouraged to provide their comments as well as participate in online survey on division website. Purpose of evening was for trustees and administration to engage the community about facility and other educational issues to answer the underlying question - *What options do you think best meets the future educational needs of students and the community of Edson?*

The following responses are from the feedback written from participants at the open house evening:

a. **Grade configurations** Edson elementary schools currently K-5; Pine Grove is grades 6-8; and PCHS is grades 9-12.

i. *Do the current grade combinations meet the current needs of your family in Edson?*

(14) YES – The combinations of grades in the schools work for our family but I would like to see less elementary schools so that class sizes would be easier to make smaller. The way it is set up now, you could have 3 large classes one in each school. If the schools were combined, they could split up the numbers easier, plus less cost in administration and staff etc.

- *If not, please note what would better suit your needs and the reasons why.*

(6) NO – Fulham School should be same as Edson; change to K-6 7-9 and 10-12 (4); kids in grade 6 are too young to transition as are kids in grade 9.

I am good with what it is but I do have concerns about grade 9's mixing with grade 12's. It works well for hallway behaviour but doesn't work well for maturity and mixing socially –can be hard for sports because kids aren't with the kids they go to school with ie. grade 9's play with grade 8's.

- b. **Attendance boundaries** Families currently have the ability to choose which school their child can attend, called 'school of choice', in Edson. This sometimes can cause enrolment issues both with overcrowding of classrooms or smaller numbers of students in other schools.

- i. *Is it still the best choice for families to be able to choose which school in Edson they wish their child to attend?*

(8) NO – because it builds a sense of neighborhood and kids get to know others close to their homes; four empty classrooms at Dakin while other elementary schools are crowded and have multiple classrooms of each grade; Dakin has 4 classrooms used as storage while other schools are overcrowded; causes overcrowding in some schools while others are overcrowded; it pits one school against another and perceptions rather than facts drive choices; it creates competition in public education and all schools should be the best school; I think there should be boundaries but we should be reasonable with parents reasons-not cut and dried.

I think students should attend their neighborhood school. People moving in to the areas would choose housing according to the school they want. The tail is wagging the dog on this issue, it is a familial issue, not a GYPSD issue.

(6) YES – parents deserve final say where their kids go to school, period; I, as a parent, have the right to choose which school is most beneficial for my child-I love Dakin!; if room is available; parents should be able to choose what is best for their children; Parents have the right to choose which school.

I think it is important to have kids in the learning environment that is best suited to their learning needs. Also if concerns due arise within the current system (that can't be rectified), you are able to move in order to best assist your child which wouldn't occur with closed boundaries. I am very in favor with boundary recommendations where we can be advised based on location.

- ii. *Would your answer change depending on age, size or design of school facility available? Why or why not?*

(9) NO – shiny and new often has more 'kinks' to workout!! It's very kid/family specific; it would still depend on quality of education; but I believe it would for some parents which is sad

that's its only about 'shiny things'; the quality of the education should be the only factor in the choice of a school!; no one wants to send kids to Dakin so why should they change to there when we get a new school; mine wouldn't but others base decisions on 'pretty' factors.

(1) YES - elementary schools should stop competing against each other for students and work to split up students into smaller classes if we could get rid of two of the smaller schools and combine into a larger school, class size numbers could be managed easier and cut costs.

c. **Facility Options** The replacement of AHDakin School in the east end of Edson is the division's number one priority in their current 3 Year Capital Plan. The division wishes to look at possible options to place a new school on this site.

i. *Would you approve a change in the division's capital plan to consolidate AHDakin School with another school in Edson to increase its priority for approval? Please provide reasons why or why not.*

(5) NO – because of overcrowding of classes and short supply of resources; do not consolidate; students could be stuck in overcrowded schools for years; if you try to close Evergreen, you would have WW3!

The government rarely follows through after convincing communities and school boards to force overcrowding/using unsafe facilities. This becomes a long term problem as opposed to getting fix quickly as 'planned' by government.

(6) YES – Dakin needs to be replaced (2); school division would benefit from economy of scale both for the building, staffing and resources as a lot of duplication could be eliminated.

I would support one large school. Better opportunity for smaller classes, less costs in staff, and gets rid of two aging schools. As long as the school built is big enough that we won't have portables brought in like almost every other school in Edson. Portables are not supposed to be permanent as they seem to be treated in Edson.

I guess if that was the only way to get Dakin replaced but the small school atmosphere is very welcoming and family-like. People like the warmth Dakin provides.

I think a newer/larger school on the east end would accommodate the proposed growth in Hillendale and possible growth with new hospital and like I said on another note, I don't think this town will be happy until Dakin is torn down. Sadly, we live in a disposable society where history is not valued. Really, how bad is Dakin? People won't be happy unless its shiny and new.

ii. *What other type of community facility alongside the elementary school would you be willing to consider?*

- Dakin and Evergreen combined with the Fieldhouse and Arts centre at the Dakin site: Advantages are access to provincial and federal funding; economy of scale; economy of design and fits partnership model.

- Fieldhouse (11) – would be awesome!; I would love to see the Fieldhouse attached to the new Dakin. Community use of the school is great and having a linked facility would allow more/ greater opportunities for multi-ages to work with school students and would be used by parents after dropping kids off at school. Students could make more use of Fieldhouse space for P.E./other opportunities.
- Arts Centre (4) - I grew up in NB and every school had a 'stage' for concerts/performances. Our town could use a proper theatre, or make use of the downtown theatre for community events, rather than showing Godzilla three weeks in a row. If you, if 'one' can't afford a proper theatre venue, work together to use what we have, partner up!
- Recreation facility of some type (2)
- Library (3)

iii. *Would having one elementary school in the west end and one in the east end of town be acceptable if a new and larger school was built in the east end? Please provide reasons why or why not.*

(8) NO – too big numbers for only two schools; population would be too big at east school; you don't want kids in huge schools; both should be built to accommodate 300-400 kids; not an elementary school with 500 kids; too big.

Look at refurbishing Dakin and Evergreen. Is that cost effective compared to a new school with all the bells and whistles? Look at things like attracting shiny new teachers to move here – is Dakin a selling point, a fair representation of the strides GYPSD has made in technology et al? The name GYPSD has made for them in the province needs to show in the schools we have. This isn't necessarily my opinion but I don't think this town will be happy until Dakin is reduced to rubble, sadly.

I think with the amount of kids coming up, to limit to 2 schools would not be a good idea. I worry about safety of pure numbers in 300+ means losing the relationships that kids have with all teachers in their schools. The ability to have kids 'feel' involved in the school would be tough. This idea I have HUGE concerns around. Smaller schools are a great way to positively introduce kids and their families into Edson and the education system where larger schools are often daunting and overwhelming to everyone. I love having my children in a small school where 'everyone knows his name'. Also I feel that to create super schools limits the ability for kids to develop critical thinking skills and their sense of self. I really hope this doesn't come to be because yes a bright shiny building is nice but at an elementary you would be selling our early starters/young kids off on the wrong foot.

(4) YES – as long as crowding is not an issue, there is adequate staffing and small numbers in classrooms; having more kids in a school increases opportunities (financially and extracurricular options); if student population stays under 500 kids it would be great as any larger and it would be too crowded.

iv. *What are your priorities in the design of a new elementary school facility?*

- Large classrooms with appropriate storage/shelves (13)
- Welcoming office at front with open floor plan/ foyer (10)

- Accessibility for all people/ single floor (10)
- Physical education space; larger gym with storage facilities (10)
- Fully equipped kitchen with meeting area/ accessible for all classroom & PAC use (9)
- Natural light with windows that open (11)
- New playground (6) with monkey bars; no sand
- Theatre space/stage with sound system (6)
- Rooms for small groups (5)
- Community use opportunities such as Fieldhouse accessibility (5)
- Sinks in classrooms with hot water (5)
- Adequate electricity with lots of plugins (4)
- Indoor courtyard/ nature area (4)
- Staffed Library (4)
- Painted bright or calming colours (3)
- Cubbies or student lockers (3)
- Regulated heat for classrooms (2)
- Capacity to handle technology with internet access & computers in all classrooms (2)
- Quality flooring-not cement (2)
- Sensory room (2)
- Coat hangers for staff & visitors (2)
- Talk to staff (2)
- Cafeteria
- Think outside the box for design – no cookie cutter but a facility that people will covet!
- Outdoor classroom
- Water fountains
- Locking cubbies for staff coats and purses
- Adequate washroom facilities
- Comfortable staff room
- Dedicated art and science rooms
- Dimmable lights
- Environmental controls & design similar to County building with geothermal, energy efficient to carry us into future
- Landscaped esthetically with hills and amphitheatre
- No portables-ever
- Recycling facilities

d. Statistics

i. Do you currently have children in our schools?

- *If yes, please note what school(s) and current grade(s).*

(5) PCHS – grades 9 & 11

(1) EVERGREEN –

(6) DAKIN – kindergarten & language enrichment program; grade 4 & 1; grade 3

(2) WESTHAVEN – grades 2 & 3

(2) PGMS – grade 6

(1) NO KIDS

- *If yes, do your children attend the school in your boundary or in a school of choice?*

(7) In BOUNDARY – many people don't even know boundaries exist. If we have them we need to stick to them or not have them at all = whatever; high schools thus within boundaries

(4) SCHOOL OF CHOICE

- ii. *Please note which area of town you reside: **EAST** **WEST***

(2) EAST

(2) CENTRAL

(7) WEST

e. **Other comments**

- i. *Please feel free to leave other comments for the Board to consider*

I am curious if three elementary schools are necessary.

Proceed with all due haste...our students deserve it.

Community input is crucial to planning the future of GYPSD. It can be scary putting yourself at the mercy of parents but I applaud your courage and look forward to the next event. It is very open-minded to step out the boardroom and away from the planners and slink into the trenches and ask the 'masses' what they think. I have already said this but I don't think people will stop complaining until Dakin is down. It's unfortunate, it is a great school, but the building isn't what has made it great. Committed staff focused on students and that can be found in a one room shack or a state of the art facility, it's just the people. Everyone has to drink the same koolaid.

This would help with anti-bullying – someone to go around to all elementary kids schools at recess times as a games and what to do at recess instructor. Some kids need help to learn how to play. One person could move around all the schools in the division spending days here and there just playing with kids at recess.

Less talk about bullying and more talk about just being positive and nice. There is too much focus on the negative and not enough focus on positive behaviour. Example – 'don't bully' vs 'help a friend'. The don't bully has been said so much they don't seem to hear it anymore.

Teachers need to be checked on more often. Interview parents and kids; just popping in doesn't work.

The following comment was emailed to J. Zaporosky from a parent who was unable to attend the open house event but wished to provide a comment:

My children attend Fulham school and I feel that in grade 6 the students should be bussed to Edson! All the elementary schools in Edson end in grade 5 and they then go to Pine Grove

for grade 6. For the students coming from Fulham to grade 7 they miss that first year that they could be making new friends and introduced to new routine which is much easier being younger! At that age I feel 1 year makes a huge difference! Being in grade 7 and 12 years old is awkward enough!