



1. Enhance two-way way communication during sustainability review/ school closure

Parents, school staff and community members criticize the process for lacking two-way communications. While Edmonton Public does solicit information from the public regarding options for sustainability of the school in question, they are not seen to engage in a dialogue with parents, staff or community members. There is frustration regarding the lack of feedback on input. When decisions are made about the sustainability of a school, parents, staff and community members are not given the background on why a decision is made, nor are they given feedback on the suggestions they offered.

The following opportunities exist to improve communication and create an opportunity for meaningful dialogue and genuine problem solving:

- **Introduce an independent, third-party facilitator:** The introduction of an independent facilitator will encourage group discussions that are less adversarial and more collaborative.
- **Clarify all potential outcome possibilities:** Be clear from the outset of the sustainability review and school closure process that school closure is one of the potential outcomes.
- **Provide feedback to the public's comments and suggestions:** Participants in the sustainability review and school closure process feel Edmonton Public Schools does not address or provide feedback on community questions and/or recommendations.
- **Introduce and explain the planning tools and principles that direct the sustainability review and school closure:** There is significant lack of awareness of or mistrust of the evaluation metrics used in the sustainability review and school closure process. For those respondents who are familiar with and trust the objectiveness of the planning tools and principles, there is more support for the sustainability review and school closure process and its outcomes.

2. Undertake sustainability review and school closure process as part of a sector analysis

Respondents tend to react positively to the concept of sector based analysis, which is reviewing the needs of the broader community, involving several community school catchment areas (both elementary and junior high) to determine how to best meet the educational needs within the sector.

A successful sector based analysis is seen to include:

- **Increased timeline.** Respondents strongly believe that it is unreasonable to have a sustainability review and school closure occur within the same school year.
- **Consider the impact of school closure on the wellness of the broader community.** Schools are to be seen to have value in addition to education. They become a core component of community spirit. The impact of a school closure on the long term viability of the community should be considered.

- **Determine the best use of resources:** A sector based analysis should evaluate the best allocation of resources and facilities for the broader community, ensuring a full range of community schooling options are available within the sector.
- **Include the City of Edmonton Planning Department.** Participants believe that decisions regarding the closure of a school (or the building of a new school) will have a significant impact on the long term evolution of the community and the City as a whole, and as such, the City of Edmonton should have a roll in influencing the process.

3. Support the transition of staff and students

Those directly impacted by the school closure (parents and staff) indicate they feel abandoned once the decision to close the school is made. Staff are left with the responsibility, often without adequate funding or guidance, to close the school down and transfer furniture, equipment and supplies. Teachers are responsible for moving their teaching supplies, again without funding or support. Students and parents do not feel they are given any guidance on choosing an alternative school, nor do they feel supported emotionally during what they describe as a very difficult time.

The following opportunities exist to create a successful transition for staff and students once the school closure occurs:

- **Assist with the selection of appropriate alternate schools** to support the best educational opportunities for students.
- **Assist staff with securing new positions.** This could include offering letters of reference, making calls of recommendation, or giving first opportunity on job openings.
- **Create guidelines / process for the redistribution of school materials, resources, furniture and equipment** including assigning human resources to assist with the process.
- **Create and track success indicators.** Edmonton Public Schools is expected to be tracking the successes and outcomes of a school closure. In particular, there is an expectation that costs savings, changes in space utilization, and academic achievement of students would be monitored so that the process could be evaluated over time.
- **Monitor and record students' success post-transition** and create opportunities to assist those students who are not thriving. Success measures should include both academic achievement and social connectedness. This will also be important data to share over time with parents and community members to reinforce the positive impact that school closures have on the quality of education for students (both those involved in closures and for EPS students as a whole).