

## Q&As

### Sector Planning Reviews

#### **Why are we doing sector reviews?**

Edmonton Public Schools owns and operates more school space than it requires to meet the needs of students. There are too many spaces and too few students.

The District has more than 30,000 excess student spaces today and with the opening of six schools in September 2010, 5000 more student spaces will be added. Three more schools will open in 2012, adding up to 1700 more school spaces.

This situation means that limited resources which could be used for student instruction are instead being used to heat, light and maintain excess empty school space.

By taking a close look at schools and programs in each sector of the city, and by talking to parents and community members, recommendations can be developed to support a quality education for every student.

#### **How will this sector review process help students?**

When the number of schools is aligned with the student population in a sector, it results in community schools with stronger, more viable enrolment. The goal of the review is to make the best possible use of our resources so that students in all areas of the city have access to vibrant schools and a range of programming opportunities. Although a new initiative, the review process will be ongoing as demographics in the District change.

#### **What is driving this initiative?**

The sector review process was developed by the Board of Trustees after reviewing the existing school sustainability process. It was also developed in response to parent and community input. This process addresses enrolment and programming in a sector in a systematic manner. The goal is to provide viable schools and program availability for all district students.

#### **What is the process for sector reviews?**

The Ten-Year Facilities Plan: 2009-2018 provides direction for how the District will address current space challenges and describes the sector review model.

The entire city will be reviewed in a systematic way over the next few years, sector by sector. Edmonton Public Schools has divided the city into 9 geographic sectors of schools that provide Kindergarten to Grade 9 programming.

The District will begin reviewing schools in the [Central, South Central and West 1](#) sectors in the spring of 2010.

Within each sector, student enrolment and programs offered at the elementary and junior high levels will be reviewed in light of the following questions:

- What programming is required to meet the needs of all students in the sector?
- What school space is required to support this programming?
- What additional program space is required to meet growth projections?
- What community partnerships support student success in the sector?
- What space is required in schools to facilitate these partnerships?
- How might excess school space be used?

Through the sector reviews, input will be gathered from parents, community members and all other interested parties. Public information sessions and consultations will be conducted by an external facilitator, hired by Edmonton Public Schools, who will collect community input.

Through these discussions, stakeholders will have an opportunity to:

- Learn more about Edmonton Public Schools' use of the space in each sector, including the space required for instruction;
- Provide input on the programming needs in the sector; and
- Share their ideas about the use of excess space by district partners and the community.

The input gathered from the public consultation meetings will be compiled by the facilitator and presented to the Board of Trustees.

Information gathered from the sector reviews may result in recommendations such as reconfiguration of schools, redistribution of students, reorganization of programs or closure of some schools. These decisions will be made by the Board of Trustees, based on recommendations from the Administration and information gathered during the sector review and public meetings.

### **What principles are being considered in recommendations made to the Board?**

District staff use a set of principles outlined in the [District's 10-Year Facilities Plan](#) to guide recommendations that are made to the Board of Trustees. The planning principles are designed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Students in all areas of the city will have access to quality learning environments and programs
- School space that is not needed for instruction will be creatively used for other purposes.
- The school space in each sector will be used as efficiently as possible.
- Mature areas of the city will have viable schools.
- Each sector will have a variety of programs for students living in that sector.
- Modernization projects will be directed toward viable schools.
- Environmental awareness and stewardship must be addressed proactively.

### **What are the timelines for the Central, South Central and West 1 sector reviews?**

**Spring 2010:** a facilitator from outside the District will hold meetings with parents, community members and other interested groups to gather input from the public.

When the dates of these meetings and other input opportunities are confirmed, information will be distributed to schools in the sectors and posted online at [epsb.ca](http://epsb.ca).

**Fall 2010:** District staff will use the information gathered during the reviews of the South Central, Central and West 1 sectors to create recommendations on the use of school space, programming distribution and adjustments identified for each sector.

**January 2011:** Recommendations from the sector reviews will be presented to the Board of Trustees.

The timing of reviews for other sectors will be laid out in future annual implementation plans, which are discussed at public board meetings, approved by Trustees and posted on the district website.

### **Is my school involved?**

Starting this spring, Edmonton Public will begin reviewing sectors in the city over the coming years, beginning with schools in the [Central, South Central and West 1](#) sectors. (Click on the link to view a list of schools in these three areas). When reviewing sectors, both schools and programs are considered as part of that sector.

The timing of reviews for other sectors will be laid out in future annual implementation plans, which are discussed at public board meetings, approved by Trustees and posted on the district website.

**What opportunities will I have to get involved?**

Every sector review will provide multiple opportunities for gathering input from parents, community members and all other interested parties. You'll be able to attend community meetings, provide input online and via mail/fax and attend public board meetings.

Information about how to get involved will be available on [www.epsb.ca](http://www.epsb.ca), through schools in each sector and advertised in local newspapers.

**What are the possible outcomes?**

There are several possible outcomes of a sector review. These include school or program consolidation, recommendation for school closure, reassignment of students, and relocation of district sites or alternative programs.

**What enrolment information does the District use to make decisions?**

In addition to input from parents and community members, the District also gathers student enrolment information through our district enrolment system, which is verified by contacting the schools directly. The District also uses a variety of other data sources, such as federal census, municipal census and Alberta Health Care data.

**Who makes decisions about school closures?**

Under the *School Act*, the Board of Trustees has the sole legal authority to decide on school closures. The Board of Trustees votes on recommendations brought forward by the Superintendent.

**How do you use input suggested by citizens in the CCEP/GHA review?**

All feedback and input from the public during these sector reviews is taken into account when making recommendations to the Board of Trustees. District staff also use the six planning principles in the 10-Year Facilities Plan when making recommendations.

**What is the basis for the District's recommendations?**

Recommendations to the Board are based on current and projected student enrolment, school facilities, and programs required within the sector. This approach helps ensure every sector has the range of programming and resources they need now and into the future.

### **Are there factors that make it more likely for a school to be closed?**

There is no one determining factor used to select schools for potential closure. Each school and sector is unique and must be reviewed uniquely.

Overall, recommendations to the Board are made with the goals of:

- Ensuring that educational programs are located and distributed across the city in ways that best meet the needs of students
- Using school space for educational purposes that line up with our funding resources
- Providing opportunity for educational and community partners to share school space with us
- Making sure that District assets (like school buildings) continue to be “Centres of the Community” as they are repurposed

### **What is a school profile?**

A school profile is like a “biography” of a school. It’s a snapshot of what is happening at the school in terms of student enrolment, school capacity and proximity to other schools.

### **How do school viability indicators impact the Superintendent’s recommendations to the Board?**

School viability indicators are one piece of information the District takes into account during a sector review. Other factors to consider include student enrolment, program enrolment, the number of students entering the school, student residency, facility condition, location and accessibility.

### **How does school capacity factor into recommendations to the Board?**

School capacity is one piece of information the District takes into account during a sector review. It is important that buildings have enough space for the students and programs both now and in the future. It is also important to ensure that schools are sufficiently utilized. There are other factors to consider, such as student enrolment, program enrolment, the number of students entering the school, student residency, facility condition, location and accessibility.

### **Where can I find my school profile?**

School profiles are available on the Edmonton Public School Board [website](#).

### **What is the difference between ACU and ACOL student spaces?**

There are 2 methods of calculating the space in a school:

- ACU (Area, Capacity, Utilization) is a measurement used by the Province to determine capacity. It is based on the square footage of a building.
- ACOL (Alberta Commission on Learning) is a measurement developed by the District. It is based on a classroom count using a multiplication factor of the ACOL class size guidelines.

Regardless of the calculation used, the District has too much school space for the number of students served.

### **Why are school profiles being used in sector reviews? Weren't they designed for a different process?**

School profiles were put together with input from parents and community members to provide a snapshot in time of what is going on at a school.

Board policy requires that school profiles are used as part of the [school closure process](#) (See Section B), so it makes sense to consider them during sector reviews.

### **Could adding an alternative program increase enrolment?**

Alternative programs are developed when there is already an existing demand. They are not used to create demand. If numbers and parent requests warrant, additional programs may be an outcome of sector reviews. Alternative programs may shift enrolment patterns from school to school within the District, but do not increase the District's total enrolment.

### **What does research say about single-grade classrooms versus multiple-grade classrooms?**

Research regarding the achievement of students in multiple-grade classrooms indicates that student achievement is not compromised by the experience. Little (2004) reported through UNESCO a summary of worldwide research literature that in Canada and the United States there was no statistically significant difference between the achievement of students in multiple-grade classrooms and those in single-grade classrooms. This was supported in 2009 when the RAND corporation funded Mariano and Kirby to look at urban schools in Los Angeles. They also found no statistically significant difference in student achievement when comparing students in multiple-grade classrooms to those in single-grade classrooms.

### **Why do schools organize multi-grade classes?**

Multiple-grade classrooms may be organized if a school holds an underlying philosophy that finds merit in the idea of having multi-age classes. Combined grades also help schools group students in appropriate class sizes.

**How will sector reviews affect class size?**

More students in a building does not mean larger class sizes, it means more classes in total throughout the school.

**How much will be save by closing schools?**

If a school closes, all money that the school received will be redistributed among other schools in the District based on student enrolment. A school closure will provide greater efficiency by pooling financial resources to fewer sites.

**How will the District ensure students moving to a larger school have a sense of belonging?**

All schools – large and small - work hard to make sure everyone feels included. District survey results indicate students and parents in both large and small schools feel a high level of satisfaction with the quality of education in their school.