

Let Your Light Shine Forth



Walking Together Towards A
Glorious Future

2023-2024

Introduction

Since 2018, Educational Planning has worked to improve school viability across the Edmonton Catholic School Division through the project initiative *Walking Together Towards a Glorious Future (WTTGF)*. The project serves as an innovative guide to evaluate schools and program offerings within the Division and develop plans to:

- Balance Utilization
- Enhance Learning Environments
- Improve Operating Costs
- Develop a Continuum of Programs

In alignment with the expectations from Alberta Education, Educational Planning reviews data and engages with schools/communities to seek effective solutions to achieve high-quality learning environments. To meet the ever-changing needs of our students, Ed. Planning must continually assess school viability and seek opportunities for improvements. Through the WTTGF program, Ed. Planning takes a holistic approach to school/program planning to best allocate Division resources and support evidence-based decision making. The program includes analysis that is Division-wide, as well as based on planning sector and individual schools.

The Walking Together initiative includes an annual review of school viability. This review ranks and flags schools based on student enrolment and utilization, program offerings, and facility condition. If a school is deemed non-viable, Ed. Planning will implement an action plan for improvements, also known as the Viability Improvement Process (VIP). Once initiated, Ed. Planning will continue to monitor and analyze the school over time to track the success of the intervention. Throughout the process, Ed. Planning may consider additional measures to address school viability. If no improvements are made at the end of the Viability Improvement Process, a school closure may be considered.

A focal point for the Walking Together program in 2023-2024 is to address the significant enrolment pressures impacting newer schools on the outskirts of Anthony Henday Drive. Many of these schools were built recently, but are already substantially over-utilized, with mounting enrolment pressure that will only increase as newer communities are built out. The influx of students at these schools has led to large classroom sizes, limited space for programming, and additional traffic congestion and over-crowding. Until new schools are built, WTTGF is the primary resource to mitigate these pressures and develop creative solutions to balance utilization so that these schools can operate more effectively. Planning measures such as the addition of modulars, attendance boundaries, and program removal/addition may be used to reduce enrolment pressures. While some of the options may be difficult to implement, ECSD will utilize best practices in public engagement to consult with staff, parents, students, and other stakeholders on potential WTTGF solutions for schools.

2022-2023 Success Stories

- Division-wide utilization increased to 88% this year (up 5% from last year), largely due to the many new students (over 2000 students) that enrolled at ECSD in the 2022-2023 school year.
- ECSD has accommodated a large influx of displaced newcomers settling in Edmonton (with many coming from Ukraine). The Ukrainian Bilingual program has seen significant enrolment growth (over 500 students).
- ECSD expanded Kindergarten with Full-Day Programming to four schools for the 2022-2023 school year (Bishop Savaryn, St. Phillip, St. Augustine, and Our Lady of the Prairies). Schools with Full-Day Kindergarten Programming gained 82 students compared to the previous year.
- ECSD retained 85% of the 100 Voices (Pre-K) students in Kindergarten for the 2022-2023 school year, up 17% from the previous year.
- Utilization increased by 14% at St. Joseph Catholic High school, due to the addition of the 4th and 5th year high school, online high school, creation of catchment area, reintroduced traditional classroom instruction, and increased grade 10-12 enrollment.
- Although the STEAM program at St. Boniface will not be implemented until the 2023-2024 school year, over 40 new students have already enrolled at the school since September 2022.
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel has successfully rebranded as a K-6 STEM and Sports Academy school. Initial indications show promise as enrolment has been increasing throughout the year with much interest for the 2023-2024 school year.
- The Junior High Hockey Academy at Louis St. Laurent was very popular in its first year and will be doubled next year (48 students for each grade). The Soccer Program has over 60 students and is also growing.
- Two new schools opened in September 2022 (Joan Carr K-9 School and Ben Calf Robe K-9 School). Ben Calf Robe offers Nehiyaw Pimatisiwin Cree, 100 Voices and Kindergarten with Full-Day Programming.
- ECSD staff moved to a new administrative building (Our Common Home), consolidating six buildings into one, providing significant cost savings.
- ECSD worked with the City of Edmonton to secure larger building sites for future schools, in line with other school boards. These larger sites will accommodate better school layouts with additional space for parking.
- ECSD implemented marketing strategies for five schools including professional [School Tour Videos](#) to attract new students (St. Timothy, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Lady of Victories, St. Gerard, and Anne Fitzgerald).
- ECSD retained nearly all students that previously were enrolled in the St. Basil Polish program at ECSD community schools, providing significant transportation cost savings and increased Division Utilization.
- ECSD built 6 (six) playground and 12 (twelve) outdoor classrooms last summer to improve access to outdoor learning and recreational amenities for students across the Division.

