

## **Eaglesham School Community Engagement – Tuesday, March 14 @ 7:00 p.m.**

### **Attendees**

- Grandparents
- County Reeve
- Parent of new teacher
- Teacher/school staff
- Former students
- Current students
- Future parents
- Current parents
- Homeschooling parents
- Community members
- Birch Hills County Councilor
- Watino Farm representative

### **Keeping Eaglesham School Status Quo**

- Strong message from everyone at the table to keep the K-12 school open and viable in Eaglesham and is beneficial to all students.
- It is important to have K-12 available in Eaglesham as it gives you a huge sense of community. Students enjoy and appreciate the connections they have to one another.
- In Eaglesham, all students can participate in all sports, regardless of your skill or ability.
- School population is expected to increase as there are 20 kids under the age of 6 who will be registering for Eaglesham School in the coming years.
- Eaglesham has a wonderful building with a shop, home economics classroom and cosmetology space and students communicated their wants to staff and staff made it happen.
- Rather go to school in Eaglesham with screen and teachers aid than transport the students to other areas
- If families want to send their kids to other schools let them, but don't take the option of K-12 away from the rest of us
- Eaglesham School feels the safest it has ever been. It is a positive place with community togetherness.
- Community schools create closer communities and are often the hub of the community.
- Keeps the kids close, keeps families together, is a significant draw to any new families considering the area,
- Families in the areas rely on what is in Eaglesham and this includes the school.
- The smaller class sizes are advantageous as this allows for more one-on-one for students with their teachers.
- Likes the small school mentality, kids all know each other and talk to each other – helps develop a social life

## Concerns:

- Less options available, specifically for High School students – but one student spun this to a positive by sharing how she obtained 16 credits from online courses in Grade 10, in addition to the full Grade 10 curriculum.
- Feeling that it may be difficult to challenge kids academically.
- There is a feeling that the some staff are not working well with parents, the community and some of the students. While this was mentioned multiple times, there was also comments that suggested there have been some noticeable changes lately and is encouraged by this change.
- There is a feeling that some students seem to be treated differently than others – we want to see equal treatment for all the kids.
- Many relationships between parents/teachers/students is unhealthy.
- Some parents do not feel welcome in the school and some shared they feel the school has become a culture of fear, with a lack of trust and transparency. Example was there seems to be too many rules without understanding why the rules are in place or why alternative measures cannot be considered.
- The locked doors implies to many that people are not welcome. One example stated several times was the gym doors being locked and unavailable to students when there is limited options during breaks. How can we collaborate to increase access, rather than limit or deny access?
- Need a welcoming atmosphere – increase the opportunities for community to access the school
- Due to size of the school, students may have the same teacher for multiple years and therefore, the relationships and teacher quality are critical to providing welcoming and quality educational experiences for the students.
- We need to find ways to retain our teachers. Currently it feels like the teachers are no longer part of the community and many seem to leave early because of the long drive home, meaning we don't have teachers coaching after school.
- Fewer amenities results in less access. People cannot get fuel or groceries in the county and there is a feeling there is a lack of access to career counselling and competitive sports
- There is some concern that the students need to complete courses with a teacher in the classroom and preparing their children for post secondary.

### **Ideas to address these concerns:**

- Call out for community coaches for extra-curricular events/other volunteer opportunities.
- Engage community members with school community through regular meetings to see what can be done to enhance the school and community.
- People in the area can teach canning, fleshing a hide, gardening/planning flowers to help beautify the town, erect a building from bottom up to house teachers, tiny houses, etc. – use community expertise.
- SAV / SRRA / RVS / EAG – schedule share.
- Create additional options through other schools such as Flex Fridays for students to be bused for classes at other schools.
- Train students to be leaders.
- Attract quality teachers – let them teach their specialty.
- Partner with locals to recruit and attract and retain staff.
- Support from the Division to find teachers.
- Concern about courses not being offered to HS students – answer: PWEC
- EAs need to spend time with the students they're here for – it seems like hours have been allocated elsewhere and when the students who need EAs don't have them it affects all students.
- Offer hands-on learning, like shop class, in junior high, elementary.
- Community people and volunteering for school trips.
- Career counselling – offer resources for students, i.e. field trips to post-secondary institutions.
- Consider offering online/remote learning to increase opportunities for Eaglesham students.
- Identify local talent (EAs) and support them to become teachers.
- School leadership needs to find additional ways to welcome parents and let them be involved at the school and all staff find additional ways to engage with students beyond the instructional programs. This is happening – just need much more of it and with all staff.
- Put a notice in the community newsletter to advertise for people to go on the school website to sign up for the school newsletter and ask community newsletter if they would add the school newsletter information to their newsletter.
- Establish a school culture of “outstanding” and amazing staff will want to stay.
- Encourage relationships between all K-12 students and mix jr. / sr. and elementary – allow siblings to eat lunch together.
- Provide more training to coaches and more mentoring for teachers.
- While progressing, continue to build connections within the school.
- School culture – address bullying, work together, build relationships, have courage to speak up and address issues.
- Give the kids some freedom, let them own the school.
- School-wide games at recess – use the big field and the gym.
- Offer extra-curricular activities – brainstorm new activities.
- Observing behavioural issues wasn't as helpful as if the problem child was dealt with – three teachers left in one year.
- Leadership mentorship – less rigidity – needs the willingness to truly collaborate.

- Have rules and policies that fit Eaglesham – local context. Consider including or consulting with the school council to better understand how some rules may impact the school community.
- Improve communication. E.g. “We can’t discuss that” doesn’t help – help us understand.
- Need to continue to encourage a welcoming school community to keep teachers here
- Make Eaglesham special, have a niche, this attracts kids and staff.
- We need to clean up the town, get retail, fuel, etc., as this will attract kids and teachers
- If students want to participate on competitive sports teams, let them try out for other school teams without them having to change schools.
- Continue to work closely with School Council
- Eaglesham and Colony kids already have social interactions such as at the arena. Approach the Hutterite Colony to see if there is interest in attending Eaglesham School – Could keep everyone separate but mix for gym days and other extra-curricular events.
- Use the facility – lease some space in the school (like the library) – the school needs to be open to the community.
- Connect with other communities - allow homeschooled kids to come for extra-curricular activities.
- Need unity to keep kids wanting to come to this school and not transfer to neighbouring schools
- Work experience, RAP, Green Certificate – use community to help offer opportunities and stop high school kids from leaving
- Showcase events
- Offer unique programming
- Host community potlucks
- Create community partnerships
- Offer community learning opportunities
- Birch Hills bonus for staff
- Offer housing. Make it possible to live in Eaglesham.
- Continuity – do grade in the grade you are in
- Get our teamwork back
- Population trigger to revisit the conversation

## **Send some Eaglesham School students to another school**

- High school students could be suffering by not having enough variety or extra-curricular opportunities.
- Teachers in other schools would be in person if Eaglesham ended up moving to some blended form that included remote learning and students may be better off attending another school if that was decided.
- Extra-curricular activities, greater student population allowing for more social groups, more variety of option classes and overall, a potentially higher quality of education.
- Programming is a big component, and this could include leadership opportunities, single graded classrooms and all core subjects would likely be in-person.
- Some might think the in-person teaching is worth the long bus ride.

## **Concerns:**

- This is not a reasonable decision due to the long bus ride time, regardless of what can be accomplished on the bus.
- Loss of mentorship and sense of school community – if we make a change, the younger students won't have older kids to look up to and the older students would not be able to mentor or hone their leadership skills with familiar, younger students.
- Lose the feeling of family – everyone knows one another and they look out for each other.
- Lose small community and family morals with bigger schools – too many outside influences including some potential influences that may not align with the culture of those who live in or around Eaglesham.
- Students who struggle in small schools will struggle even more in bigger schools.
- Drop-offs and pick-ups for parents would not be practical if you have to begin late, leave early or miss the bus.
- Splitting the students between two high schools would not be preferable because it even further divides the community.
- The geographic area is too large – all the kids in our county should have stayed in this county – there used to be three schools.
- Could removing JH and/or HS cause further decline? Will they all go? (i.e. homeschool) and once you lose the high school they likely will not come back.
- Could decrease the current community involvement, further impact the local economy, leave students feeling like outsiders and add additional anxiety to the kids.
- As a student and community member, we become the minority.
- Existing bus driver shortage.
- Extra-curricular after school would be very hard on students and families due to the distance away from the community.
- Lack of home life if students spend too much time on the bus and families may eventually move away.

## Ideas to address these concerns:

- Student should be old enough to make the decision to go elsewhere themselves
- Have rules for only certain grades being bused away (i.e. Grade 10-12 only, similar to current feeder schools in PWPSD)
- Some students may want to leave but some may not. Let it remain a choice but limited to 10-12.
- Put a boundary line halfway between Donnelly and Spirit River and have students go in both directions depending on where they live.
- Set up pick-up points with parents to shorten bus ride times.

## Other Comments

- Stated that we should put our efforts towards fixing the situation in Eaglesham rather than running from it. If we lose this (certain grades/the school) we'll never get it back.
- Youth group in town (high school really), which is important. The less connected kids are could negatively impact the community.
- The biggest issue is the lack of staff – are there subsidies? – incentives to retain local talent.
- Recesses are too short, can they be lengthened? – add a longer lunch recess and have extra-curricular events during this break.
- The long recess before school starts – can it be used for exercise for the junior/senior high students or can CSW work here?
- Allow parent volunteers to offer carpooling – is this still an issue? Why can't I give another parent permission to drive my child to events at other schools?
- Losing the kids would affect the arena and the community would never survive.
- Teaching and education is so important and multiple graded classrooms can be a benefit.
- School is the largest employer and the only public school in the County.
- Any conflict can be worked out. We need to heal the relationships.
- More options may reduce those choosing another school.
- Some at a table believed the focus should be on academics
- People are leaning toward the other schools for sports and teachers
- Improve communication – some parents didn't know the meeting was happening
- We are very committed to our school and community
- We have a multi 4H Club, Ag. Society, Youth Group, pond hockey, golf, arena – many opportunities for students
- Don't want to consider moving kids away and would not bus kids away.
- Ensure a way better education would be received before adding busing time
- Two students in two different school divisions would have two different calendars
- Would you move to a place without a school?
- It's hard to talk about transportation, there's no solution
- 10-12 years ago removing the Grade 10-12s was too much of a financial jump, is this still a concern? Want quality experience in Eaglesham – want the school to thrive
- A lot of students drive themselves and friends to far away schools. This is dangerous and a bus option is better, even though the ride is long.
- A viable school is doable no matter the size of the school
- This school used to be active, fun and thriving. Let's get back to that.
- We should be discuss past issues, make a plan to solve them and move forward with K-12.