

Foster Northwest Newcastle K-12 School

Summary of Design Meeting Feedback - June 2026

At a Design and Visioning Meeting on February 26, 2026, school board administration from Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board and architectural design company Salter Pilon shared a preview of the initial stages of the Foster Northwest school design and welcomed the school community's input in the following areas:

- Overall Design,
- Secondary Program and Learning Opportunities,
- Interior Finishes and School Identity,
- Outdoor Play and Landscape Design,
- Site-specific Needs (Traffic and Pedestrian Flow), and
- Environmental and Sustainability Priorities.

The feedback gathered at the meeting is summarized below.

Overall Design Feedback

- There was strong appreciation for the modern, open design with natural light, high corridor ceilings, and community-oriented spaces (e.g., community stair), plus sound-dampening materials.
- In terms of having K-12 model in one building: many want stronger separation between elementary and secondary (physical division, controlled access, fencing, separate circulation, staggered schedules).
- Requests for controlled access between wings: access controls so only staff (or supervised groups like co-op placements) can move between elementary and secondary areas.
- Lockdown/secure-by-design concerns: questions about how the building supports lockdowns, especially for the gym as a "securable space."
- Interior glazing/glass walls & sliding doors (safety + distraction): concern about floor-to-ceiling glass for security, breakage, bullet resistance, blinds/coverings, and visual distraction.
- Stage/theatre functionality and placement: strong push to make the gym stage a production-ready stage (lights/curtains/sound, staging/backstage), and questions about whether the smaller staged gym can function as a theatre venue.

- Cafeteria as convening space (including flexible seating): general interest in cafeteria as a gathering space, plus feedback to move away from fixed bench-style seating toward flexible options; also mentions of affordable/hot food.
- Gym design + capacity for secondary programming/events: calls for a triple gym to avoid program disruption during events and to support community permits.
- Library model and location: debate about distributed “mini learning commons” vs a traditional library; concerns about elementary access if the library is in the secondary zone, plus management of circulation/sign-out across multiple spaces.
- Supervision of learning commons/open collaboration areas: who supervises hallway commons, do they create sensory overwhelm, and how will they be used (whole-class vs small groups)?
- Noise / acoustics management: strong interest in sound-dampening materials; concerns that commons/open areas could amplify noise and affect focus.
- Age-appropriate washroom design: strong support for individual washrooms, but questions about how elementary students navigate them and safety/privacy.
- Adequacy and placement of doors to the elementary yard: concern that there are too few doors for recess flow for grades 1–8; requests for more access points.
- Accessibility and universal design details: concerns about carpet for wheelchair mobility, lack of ramps, elevator/stair configuration safety, and requests that people with disabilities be included in planning.
- Capacity planning and future growth: questions about whether the building can support projected growth/new developments; concerns about overcrowding; suggestions to build larger (e.g., additional floor) and plan for expansion.
- Portables and infrastructure readiness: questions about where portables would go and whether washroom capacity supports them. Are there designated staff washrooms in proximity for staff use; requests for separate elementary/secondary staff spaces.
- Requests to ensure the design supports capacity/growth (future enrolment, potential portables) and includes practical supports (e.g., staff washrooms, adequate doors to yard, supervision-friendly layouts).

Secondary Program and Learning Opportunities

- There was a strong push for robust specialty and skilled-trades programming with properly designed spaces to accommodate skilled-trades learning (including shop/garage doors, storage, ventilation).
- Many respondents said, “all trades,” “focus on trades,” or request “trade classes” generally. The most requested programming includes:

1. Automotive
2. Welding/manufacturing
3. Construction/carpentry/woodworking
4. Culinary/foods/kitchen program

Also requested frequently in the feedback:

- Robotics / STEM / engineering / technology / 3D printing
- Electrical and plumbing
- Performing arts / theatre (more than a stage—proper theatre capabilities)
- Music program spaces (dedicated music room, storage, practice/recording) as well as visual arts, fashion and design
- Photography / communications tech / media arts
- Hairstyling/cosmetology
- Requests for a plan that is sufficiently progressive for a tech-driven future (science labs like chemistry, robotics, and more trades and specialty rooms).
- Programming balance: some suggest the building must support both academic pathways (including French immersion) and vocational/trades without forcing students to choose another school due to limited space.

Interior Finishes and School Identify

- Desire for interiors that balance welcoming, student-friendly colour with sensory considerations (avoid overstimulation; include calmer/muted areas for regulation and special education needs).
- Many suggest differentiated finish palettes by age group (brighter/fun in elementary; more mature/neutral or cohesive tones in secondary).
- School identity should be reinforced through student voice and displays: spaces for showcasing student work (digital and physical), murals, multilingual welcome elements, arts/sports/music/culinary showcases.
- Practicality/durability concerns: some feel that overly vibrant permanent finishes may date quickly or be harder to maintain/repair if damaged.
- Specific accessibility/inclusion ideas: sensory paths/walks, high-contrast stair edges, quiet spaces, and design choices supportive of diverse learners.

Outdoor Play Areas

- Key themes are age-appropriate, variety and adequate space: multiple play structures (primary vs. intermediate needs), gross motor options, and both structured and unstructured play areas.
- Strong calls for naturalized play (logs/rocks/trees, uneven terrain) alongside traditional equipment; also interest in features like zipline, painted games (4-square, hopscotch), mini track, etc.
- High emphasis on shade (trees, shade structures), year-round usability, and good sightlines for supervision.
- Repeated concern about separation from secondary students outdoors (fencing/gates/landscape barriers) and avoiding proximity of play areas to parking/kiss-and-ride zones.
- Sports/activity amenities requested: basketball nets/courts, soccer, volleyball, baseball/diamond; plus accessible design and safe surfacing preferences.

Site-specific Needs and Traffic/Pedestrian Flow

- Broad consensus on designing for separated flows: distinct areas/entrances for buses, parent drop-off (kiss-and-ride), staff, and secondary student drivers.
- Parking: concerns about insufficient parking (including for events) and need to plan for population growth and student drivers.
- Specific safety ideas include: crossing guards, strong signage/markings, speed-control measures, protected pedestrian routes, barriers/balusters between drop-off lanes and sidewalks, illuminated crossings, and avoiding kiss-and-ride routing through active parking aisles.
- Operational/scheduling strategies: suggestions for staggered start/end times to reduce congestion and limit elementary/secondary mixing (while acknowledging family logistics).

Environmental and Sustainability Priorities

- Strong interest in learning-connected sustainability: gardens/community gardens, greenhouse space, composting, pollinator plantings, and using these to support programs (e.g., culinary, science).

- Landscape priorities include more trees for shade/cooling, habitat support (birds/insects), native plants/grasses, biodiversity, and naturalized areas.
- Concerns about stormwater management and drainage (avoid flooding/low-lying fields; learn from existing sites with poor drainage).
- Suggested building/operations features: water-bottle filling stations, comprehensive recycling/zero-waste programs, potential solar panels, living walls/green roofs, and maximizing natural light.
- Preference for sustainability features that are durable and maintainable, and that create comfortable outdoor spaces (e.g., shaded seating/lunch areas).