



VSB

**ITEM B1**

2010 February 5

TO: Committee III  
FROM: District Management Team  
RE: **Intensive French Programs**

---

**Background**

Attached is a report written by Daniel Belanger, Modern Languages Consultant, and Wendy Carr, who supports the implementation of Intensive French Programs. The report explored the issues that had arisen in the schools where Intensive French had originally been implemented as pilot programs. The two major issues were identified by staff:

- An unintended effect of streaming of students by ability, and
- A logistical issue where platooning of students was made necessary by the model used.

In order to address the issues, and communication problems that may have been exacerbated the problems, the report recommends a number of actions. The Modern Language Advisory Committee has reviewed the report and its recommendations. There was agreement that the district should plan to offer the program in strategic locations in the district to offer access to greater numbers of students.

District staff located four possible locations that met the criteria of covering four areas of the city and having space enough to allow two additional classes at the school. After consulting with the administration of the four schools, it was determined that only two should be considered for next school year: Sir John Franklin and Sir Sanford Fleming.

In both schools staff have been consulted. At Franklin, parents have also been consulted and there is considerable enthusiasm about implementation of the program. At Fleming, staff expressed interest and further consultation will be undertaken with the staff and with the parent population. We are considering these programs as Neighbourhood Programs, and would plan over time to have locations throughout the district in order to provide access to the maximum numbers of students.

### **Proposal**

For the first two schools, the plan would be, following more meetings with staff and parents at those schools and the surrounding schools, to recruit students into classes for grade six for September 2010. There would need to be sufficient numbers of students overall (29) to allow for a full class and the recruitment of a teacher with Intensive French training. Alternatively, teacher currently on staff would be invited to express interest in taking the Intensive French Training. Recruiting at least twenty students from neighbouring schools would mean an additional position could be posted which would be our goal. For the second year, the goal would be the same so that two trained Intensive French teachers could collaborate to offer the program.

The Modern Languages Committee and the District Management Team believe that this plan would address the issues addressed by staff, while continuing to offer an extremely valuable program for students and their parents. At the same time, we do know that in at least one school, Dr. R.E. McKechnie, parents would like to have the program but the school does not have space to include large numbers of neighbouring students. District Management believes that the plan to have Neighbourhood Programs does not preclude a school program where the staff and parents collectively agree the model would be successful, and space is available.

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT** the Intensive French Program be developed as a Neighbourhood Program model and that implementation begin at Sir Sanford Fleming and Sir John Franklin in September 2010 should sufficient numbers of students apply.

Attachment

# **Intensive French Program Proposal**

## **Vancouver Board of Education**

**Prepared by:  
Daniel Bélanger and Wendy Carr  
Vancouver School Board**

**October 2009**



## **Introduction**

In 2006 Vancouver School Board developed a long term plan for French learning in the district. Models for programming were examined and the Intensive French program (IF) was identified as the best option to enhance core French in the district.

The purpose of the program is to greatly improve French fluency and language skills in a short span of time. It also expands French learning opportunities and choices for students.

The Intensive French program is a pilot program currently in place in three Vancouver schools, McKechnie Elementary, Queen Elizabeth Elementary and Magee Secondary. It is also in place in Surrey, Kimberley, Mission and Windermere. The program in British Columbia is supported by staff from Wendy Carr (IF Consultant) and French Program consultants within each district. More than 10 VSB teachers have received specific training to teach Intensive French.

This new program originated in Newfoundland and Labrador in 1998 and now has more than ten thousand students participating across Canada. It allows students to receive approximately 600 hours of French instruction compared to the 150 hours mandated by the regular curriculum. Students in Intensive French generally develop spontaneous oral communication skills equal to those of a Grade 10 Core French student and written communication skills equivalent to those of a Grade 3 francophone student.

## **Historical background**

All students in the province receive 80 minutes of instruction in French each week between Grade 5 and Grade 8 (mandatory by the Ministry of Education).

The Intensive French program is taught in Grades 6-7 in elementary schools. The Grade 6 program is split into two components; an intensive program of French with a Language Arts base from September to January. Throughout this time, Mathematics (Grade 6) is taught in English for one hour each day. A CONDENSED English Grade 6 equivalent curriculum is taught from February to June, with one hour of instruction in French each day.

During Grade 7, students continue to receive one hour of enriched instruction in French each day. In most schools this is done by the Grade 6 French teacher while the Grade 6 children receive their Math instruction (in English) by a Grade 7 teacher. At the secondary level, an enriched French course is offered to IF students.

## **Implementation of the Intensive French program (IF) in Vancouver**

The Vancouver Board of Education implemented the Intensive French program in September 2007. Vancouver was the second school district to offer this program in the province after Surrey. At this time, three schools are involved in the IF program. After two years of implementation, the IF pilot projects should be reviewed at the Board level. Here is the situation in each school.

### **McKechnie Elementary School**

With the support of parents, staff and administration, the Intensive French program started in September 2007 with a class of 28 students. Another Grade 6 class started in September 2008 with the first cohort being in Grade 7. Testing of all students' oral and written proficiency was conducted in the spring of 2008. In September 2009, there was one Grade 7 Intensive French and none at the Grade 6 level.. A review of the Intensive French program was done in March 2009.

### **Queen Elizabeth Elementary School**

With the support of parents, staff and administration, the Intensive French program started in September 2008 with a class of 28 students. In September 2009, there was one Grade 7 IF class and none at the Grade 6 level.

### **Magee Secondary School**

With the support of parents, staff and administration, the Intensive French program started in September 2009 with many students from the original Grade 6 IF cohort from McKechnie. (Some IF students have moved to other schools, e.g., Prince of Wales Mini.)

## **IF in other BC jurisdictions**

### **Surrey School District**

After extensive study of the Intensive French program in 2003 (including a one-week training institute in Montreal for two administrators, the French coordinator and two teachers, several presentations to the trustees and a series of regionally-held parent meetings, Intensive French was piloted in Surrey from 2004 to 2009 and is now an approved district program. Five elementary schools and three secondary schools have IF programs. Individual testing of oral and written proficiency was conducted for all students in 2005 and repeated at several points between 2006 and 2009.

### **Rocky Mountain School District**

Intensive French was implemented in this school district in 2008-9 with one elementary school; another was added in September 2009.

### **Mission School District**

Intensive French has now been implemented in Mission with one elementary school.

## **Training for teachers**

For the past three years, Vancouver teachers had the opportunity to receive specific Intensive French training through summer institutes held in Vancouver (2007), Winnipeg (2008) and Regina (2009). There were also many workshops held in Surrey School Board where VSB teachers were invited to participate in on a regular basis. UBC Faculty of Education is offering a pre-service teacher education course which includes specific course components and practicum experiences related to Intensive French.

## **Perspective and development of Intensive French in Canada**

Intensive French has grown steadily across Canada since its inception in Newfoundland and Labrador in 1998. Its growth pattern mirrors that of French Immersion in the late 1960s, starting with a few classes and growing exponentially after the first few years. New Brunswick now has approximately 280 IF classes and Newfoundland/Labrador has 85, and in many schools, IF is the only option at Grade 6. This decision has been made because IF produces significantly superior results in language proficiency than core French. The program is now found in every province and territory (with Intensive English in Québec).

## **Current policies**

The Vancouver School Board has a Second Language Learning Policy that provides some guidance. For example, the policy requires that teachers have the necessary linguistic proficiency to teach second language courses.

The Modern Languages Advisory Committee has supported the implementation of this program and will continue to act in an advisory capacity throughout the consultation process.

## **Proposal to consider**

After two years of implementation, the review done at McKechnie Elementary School, and consultation with Queen Elizabeth Elementary personnel, the VSB reviewed the pilot project and explored different options in order to continue to offer and expand the IF program.

As noted in the McKechnie review report, the IF program is an extremely valuable program that receives overwhelming support from parents whose children are in the program as well as from the students. Many of the staff members, while recognizing the value of the program, have reservations about the program's viability, given the size of school and the perceived logistical challenges.

## **Issues to be addressed**

### **Teacher availability and in-service**

Finding teachers with suitable linguistic and methodological preparation is always a challenge in French programs, and there is no exception for Intensive French. The VSB should continue to provide professional development for French teachers if it wishes to provide this valuable program to more students. It would allow more flexibility to have two trained teachers in each IF school. The VSB should continue to provide ongoing Pro-D opportunities for Intensive French teachers and offer the possibility to train new candidates through collaboration with universities, other school districts and CASLT, the Canadian Association of Second Language teachers.

### **IF is a two-year program**

The review indicated that there was misunderstanding about the implications for the Grade 7 teacher in the second year of IF implementation. The VSB should communicate clearly that IF is a two-year program, meaning that the Grade 6 and Grade 7 teachers need to collaborate in order to meet the IF learning outcomes. This would also help to resolve scheduling issues related to the IF delivery model.

### **District program**

Offering a new program at the school level is different from offering a district program. The size of school and effects on the regular English students need to be considered. A small school may find it challenging to operate an IF class given the district mandate of no less than 25 students in an IF class. If the enrolment in the IF school is low, opening the program to students in neighbouring schools could augment numbers, thus providing better opportunities to build a solid IF class. A process similar to the lottery in French Immersion or another formula could be a viable and practical option for opening spaces to neighbouring schools.

**School planning**

In order to meet the challenges related to platooning, class composition, teacher-subject expertise and timetabling, each school should consider having a formal meeting between Grade 6 and 7 teachers and administration to discuss options for the next school year. This meeting should take place as soon as projected numbers are known. Creative problem solving about these different considerations should be done well in advance of the end of the year.

**Communication**

It is clear that parents and students value the IF program. However the consultations with both elementary schools last year revealed that the challenges faced by the teachers involved were not completely understood from the beginning, especially by the Grade 7 teachers. The delivery model used in IF schools requires the support of the entire staff. It is important that teachers and administration share a common understanding of how an IF program is implemented. On a wider basis, teachers, parents, students and administration need to be clearly informed about the benefits and implications of the IF program in a school. Concise and clear information about how the IF program works should be considered at every step of the implementation process.

**Resources**

There are really no issues vis-à-vis resources. The IF program is used in many provinces, and there are many resources available that are appropriate to support the specific outcomes of all grades. There are also specially-identified Ministry funds available for Intensive French implementation through a federal funding grant.

**Facilities**

As suggested in the review, the IF program would benefit by being in a larger school, but it is still manageable in a smaller school if students can be added from others schools. The location of an IF program should take into consideration the proximity of French Immersion schools (so as not to overlap too closely) and a secondary school (to which IF students may go after Grade 7).

**School-level staffing**

In the last two years, the implementation of Intensive French was done on a voluntary basis and required that there be a vacant teacher position. This allowed the hiring of an IF teacher to start the program. It is important to explore options if IF is to be implemented as a two-year program.

## **Recommendations**

1. Identify 4 regions in the Vancouver School District where an IF program could be established, that is, where there is not a French immersion program but where there is likely to be parent/student interest.
2. Hold parent information meetings (in each targeted school and its surrounding schools) to gauge interest in establishing an IF program. Hold concurrent staff information meetings to ensure an open exchange of information about the program, about implications for staffing and scheduling.
3. Offer IF training to any teacher in a targeted school who might be interested in teaching IF in Grade 6 or Post-IF in Grade 7.