



Memorandum

vancouver school board



ITEM 2

February 7, 2018

TO: Committee III, Education and Student Services

FROM: Adrian Keough, Director of Instruction, Learning Services (Educational Programs)

RE: **French Immersion Update**

Reference to Strategic Plan:

Goal 1: Engage our learners through innovative teaching and learning practices

Objective 1: Provide increased opportunities to connect students to their learning

Goal 4: Provide effective leadership, governance and stewardship

Objective 4: Effectively use school district resources and facilities

INTRODUCTION:

In December of 2017, the Vancouver Board of Education approved the following recommendation:

That the Board approve the suspension of “priority registration zones” for French immersion as outlined in section 11 of Board Regulation JECC-R for the 2018-2019 school year.

This report outlines the processes that have been implemented since that Board approval and provides the information that was made available on the District website regarding the number of FI Kindergarten classes offered in 2018-19 at each of the 13 elementary French Immersion school sites, as well as anticipated sibling registrations. Finally, this report will outline next steps, including providing the terms of reference for the upcoming French Immersion Program Review. This report is provided for information.

BACKGROUND:

As noted in the report provided to Committee III on December 6, 2017, ([FI K Application](#)), approximately 10% of all VSB students are enrolled in French Immersion ([MOE Policy](#)) at a total of 18 elementary and secondary school sites. For a number of years, the District has had waitlists for entry into Early French Immersion Kindergarten ([Program Definition](#)), as is common in most Lower Mainland school districts that offer French Immersion.

The Vancouver School District has 14 elementary French immersion schools, 13 of which host at least one Early French Immersion Kindergarten class. The number of Kindergarten classes that can be placed at each one of these schools is analyzed annually by district staff (Learning Services, Planning and Facilities, Employee Services) and has always been dependent on a variety of factors including physical space availability, program viability and availability of qualified staffing. The total number of EFI K classes available across the District in recent years (prior to the 2017-2018 school year) has been between 22 and 25. In 2017-18 it was 19.

The November 2016 Supreme Court ruling regarding the restored collective agreement language significantly impacted the number of K classes that the District was able to offer, given that the same number of students in a school now required more physical classroom space. As a result of the restored class size language, the maximum number of students in any K class decreased from 22 to 20 spaces and Kindergarten/Grade 1 combined classes are no longer permitted. This therefore restricted the District in its ability to maintain the previous number of spaces available for incoming K students.

In the fall of 2017, a Stakeholder Representational Committee (with representatives from VSTA, VESTA, VASSA, VEPVPA, DPAC, Employee Services, Planning and Facilities and Learning Services) was struck to look at what, if anything, could be done regarding the decrease in available FI Kindergarten spaces as well as the large number of students who are waitlisted each year. The committee met three times (September 27, October 18 and November 14) and looked at models in other jurisdictions and at the history of EFI Kindergarten intake in this district.

In reviewing over 30 years of processes around Kindergarten intake into the Early French Immersion process, it became apparent that there have been a variety of systems in place over that time. Most of these process changes arose as a result of parent concerns regarding equity of access to the EFI program across the district.

The Committee reviewed several years of data regarding numbers of applicants and waitlists for Early French Immersion. After much discussion of a variety of different options, it was agreed that suspending the French Immersion priority registration zones for the 2018-2019 school year be considered as this would answer some parent concerns about their perceived inability to access to any French Immersion Kindergarten class in Vancouver. It was also felt to be a feasible option to accomplish in time for the January 2018 application process. While this does not increase the number of available FI K spaces, it would give parents more choices in their selection of a school site. District staff also committed to providing families with information that could help them in their decision as to where to apply.

It was noted that permanently suspending priority zones could lead to the same situation (parents frustrated that their child could not attend their closest FI school) that led the VSB to adopt FI zones in the first place in 2001. The plan to suspend zones or catchments for the 2018-2019 school year only is to allow the necessary time for District Staff to complete a comprehensive and thorough review of French Immersion across the Vancouver School District.

CURRENT STATUS

The schedule for general Kindergarten registration as well as application to all elementary Choice Programs in the Vancouver School District for the 2018-2019 school year is as follows:

November 1	Kindergarten Registration Process Opens
January 15	K-Choice Online Application Opens
January 31	Priority K Registration Closes

February 1	Cross boundary Applications process opens
February 5	K Choice Online Application closes
February 20	Offers of placement at catchment schools and K Choice program offers are e-mailed to parents - 48 hours to respond
February 22	Deadline for accepting K Choice Program Placement
February 28	Deadline for cross boundary applications
November 1- March 31	Grade 1 applications to Early French Immersion Program accepted
June 30	Waitlist of students for the 2017-2018 French Immersion Kindergarten expires (students must reapply for Grade 1)

To provide parents with information that may factor into their decisions regarding which EFI schools to select for application, the following grid was provided on the District website. This information was embedded into the online Choice Program application process; in other words, parents had to see and read this information before being able to complete their application. Included in the grid is:

- The anticipated number of siblings who will be entering the Early French Immersion Program for the 2018-2019 school year. These are siblings of students who are already attending French Immersion at the same school site (as per VSB regulation JECC-R).
- The maximum number of Kindergarten classes/spaces that the District anticipates being able to offer at each EFI school site for the 2018-2019 school year.
- The anticipated number of available spaces for the 2018-2019 school year once siblings are placed

Elementary French Immersion School	anticipated # siblings applying for K FI for 2018-19	anticipated maximum # of K spaces/ classes for 2018-19	approximate # of available FI K spaces after siblings have been placed
Douglas Annex	20-25 siblings	40 (2 classes)	between 15 and 20
Hastings	10-15 siblings	20 (1 class)	between 5 and 10
Hudson	5-10 siblings	20 (1 class)	between 10 and 15
Kerrisdale	0-5 siblings	40 (2 classes)	between 30 and 35
L'Ecole Bilingue	25-30 siblings	40 (2 classes)	between 10 and 15
Queen Elizabeth Annex	5-10 siblings	20 (1 class)	between 10 and 15
Quilchena	0-5 siblings	20 (1 class)	between 15 and 20
Quesnel	10-15 siblings	40 (2 classes)	between 25 and 30
Secord	5-10 siblings	40 (2 classes)	between 30 and 35
Selkirk	10-15 siblings	20 (1 class)	between 5 and 10
Strathcona	5-10 siblings	20 (1 class)	between 10 and 15
Tennyson	20-25 siblings	40 (2 classes)	between 15 and 20
Trafalgar	15-20 siblings	20 (1 class)	between 0 and 5
<i>Total</i>	120-185 siblings	380 (19 classes)	between 190 and 255 available spaces

As noted above, the closing date for all Choice Program applications is Monday, February 5, 2018. As of Friday, February 2nd when this report was submitted, there were 710 applications received through the online application process that listed Early French Immersion Kindergarten as the first choice.

PLAN MOVING FORWARD

As noted earlier in this report, the suspension of French Immersion Priority Registration Zones for the 2018-2019 school year was not implemented with the intention of increasing district capacity in terms of K FI placements. The District is not able to reinstate the 5 French K classes in the 2018-2019 school year for the same reasons that existed last year and continue to be an issue this year (physical space and most importantly, a lack of qualified staffing). In order to resolve this problem, it has been recognized that the entire issue will require further in-depth analysis that will take the form of a French Immersion Program Review. This process has already begun.

The objectives for the French immersion Program Review are:

- **Overall goal:** Maintain/ sustain the French Immersion Program
- Confirm context for this review
- Engage stakeholder groups (staff, students, parents and partners) in meaningful consultation to inform the review process and final recommendations to be submitted to Senior Management, Committee III and the Board of Trustees
- Identify, consider and respond to information collected regarding delivery of French Immersion (FI) as well as issues and concerns identified by stakeholders
 - Delivery models in other jurisdictions
 - Potential program delivery / reconfiguration alternatives for VSD
- Seek consensus recommendations regarding the delivery of French Immersion in VSD.

The review began in January 2018 and is being led by an external reviewer and facilitator with support from District Staff. The Working Group associated with this review is comprised of a Trustee Representative as well as:

District staff:

- Direction of Instruction – Educational Programs
- Employee Services – Manager of Recruitment
- Facilities – Planner

and Stakeholder Representatives from the following groups:

- District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC)
- Vancouver District Student Council (VDSC)
- Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association (VESTA)
- Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association (VSTA)
- Vancouver Elementary Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (VEPVPA)
- Vancouver Association of Secondary School Administrators (VASSA)
- Other PAC representatives from French Immersion elementary schools

The Terms of Reference for this Working Group are:

Mandate:

- Provide input on the future of elementary French Immersion in Vancouver School District (VSD)

- Identify needs, concerns and potential impacts associated with a variety of delivery models/ reconfiguration alternatives to address questions of placement and number of FI programs
- Provide feedback regarding possible delivery model for the 2019-2020 calendar year (or later), including possibilities for phased implementation

Role:

- Consider information collected to date regarding issues (needs and constraints) associated with delivery of French Immersion in VSD
- Identify additional operational considerations, needs and issues associated with delivery of French Immersion in VSD
- Identify measures to address considerations, needs and issues
- Make recommendations to Senior Management and Committee III (Education and Student Services) regarding delivery of French Immersion in the VSD

Responsibilities:

- Attend Working Group meetings
- Represent the membership of your organization or constituency
- Keep your constituency informed of Working Group discussions
- Gather input from your constituency and bring this input to Working Group meetings.
- Strive to be inclusive of the array of perspectives within your constituency when participating in Working Group discussions.

Expected Outcomes:

- Recommendations regarding possible reconfiguration alternative(s), placement and number of programs for French Immersion in VSD
- A list of needs, issues and concerns associated with the new/revised delivery model, and placement/ process
- Suggested measures to address needs, issues and concerns associated with the delivery of French Immersion in VSD
- Timeline and budget implications

Communications:

- A meeting summary will be generated after each Working Group meeting. Meeting summaries will be distributed through email contacts.
- A Draft French Immersion Program Review Working Group Report will incorporate findings and recommendations for consideration by Senior Management, Committee III, and the Board, as needed.

Timeline:

- Working Group meetings (proposing up to five 2-3 hour evening meetings):
- Focus groups and/or survey of teachers, parents and partners regarding potential delivery models and configuration alternatives, etc.
- Draft French Immersion Working Group Report submitted to Senior Management and Committee III, and the Board, as needed.

The timeline for this Working Group and Reports to the Board and District Senior Management is as follows:

Working Group Meeting	Dates	Objectives
#1	Jan 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm context and terms of reference • Preliminary review and discussion of information gathered to date • Identify additional needs/ concerns, impacts, considerations and objectives for this process • (Possible discussion re: potential delivery models and configuration alternatives in relation to identified needs and concerns – time permitting)
#2	Feb 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further discussion of information, needs, concerns, impacts and considerations for this process • Discussion of potential delivery models/ configuration alternatives in relation to identified needs and concerns • Confirmation re: broader consultation process (survey, focus groups, scope, questions and numbers confirmed)
#3	Mar 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing analysis of potential delivery models/ configuration alternatives in relation to identified needs and concerns • Confirm questions for survey/ focus groups
	April 3 - 20	Survey and Focus Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Survey and focus groups of teachers, parents and partners regarding potential delivery models/ configuration alternatives
#4	April 26	Optional meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss preliminary focus group/ survey results
#5	May 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review full focus group/ survey results • Develop preliminary findings and recommendations for consideration by Senior Management and Committee III
#6	Sept 13 or 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm findings and recommendations regarding delivery of French Immersion in VSD for consideration by Senior Management and Committee III
	Oct 3	Committee III meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FI Working Group findings and recommendations presented at Committee III meeting.

Updates on this Review will be provided to Trustees and Senior Staff as appropriate.

While the focus of the review is to provide longer-term and perhaps larger-scale recommendations regarding the provision of French Immersion programming in the Vancouver School District, there are also shorter term, more immediate actions that have already been implemented in order to deal with the lack of qualified teachers which continues to impact the District's French Immersion programming. These ongoing recruitment strategies have been reported at several Board Committee Meetings and other public venues, but do bear repeating, as a significant amount of staff time and energy has been and continues to be devoted to this area. Examples of current recruiting and retention practices include:

- Recruitment visits to local and national career fairs and universities
- Continuing to encourage close relationships with UBC and SFU which offer French Immersion teacher training; prioritizing their student teacher placements in VSB schools, visiting students in their university courses to promote the VSB as a desirable employer
- Advertising locally and nationally

- Using third party organizations such as Make A Future to represent the VSB and recruit on the District's behalf at national or international venues when District staff are unable to attend
- The 'early hiring' of French Immersion teacher candidates in order to secure them before they accept employment in other metro Vancouver districts
- Offering continuing contracts to French Immersion teachers in order to encourage candidates to select the VSB
- Supporting teachers' participation in various French pedagogical programs and events in order to enhance their French language skills and allow them to apply for FI teaching positions.
- Providing moving allowances to out of province teacher candidate
- Agreements between the VSB and the VTF to enable the hiring of continuing TTOCs and to allow part time teachers to increase their teaching time if desired

Another factor which will impact the findings and recommendations of the French Immersion Program Review is the upcoming Catchment Review. Trustees and Stakeholder representatives were presented with two introductory reports on this review at the December 13, 2017 ([Catchment Review1](#)) and January 17, 2018 ([Catchment Review2](#)) Committee II (Planning and Facilities) meetings.

This catchment review is relevant to the future of French Immersion programming within the VSB because of the need to look both at the totality of space usage in the district and at the impact of Choice Programs in all schools that host an additional program to the regular neighbourhood catchment program. The catchment review will make recommendations regarding not only the realignment of catchment boundaries to better meet the needs of the neighbourhood student population but will also make recommendations regarding possible moves or amalgamations of Choice Program locations, including French immersion. This review will be completed by the District's Facilities and Planning Department and as outlined in their January report to Committee II, will be making recommendations to the Board in May or June of 2018.

CONCLUSION

This report is provided for information.