

Memorandum

vancouver school board



ITEM 2

TO: Committee III – Education and Student Services

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

RE: French Immersion Program Review

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

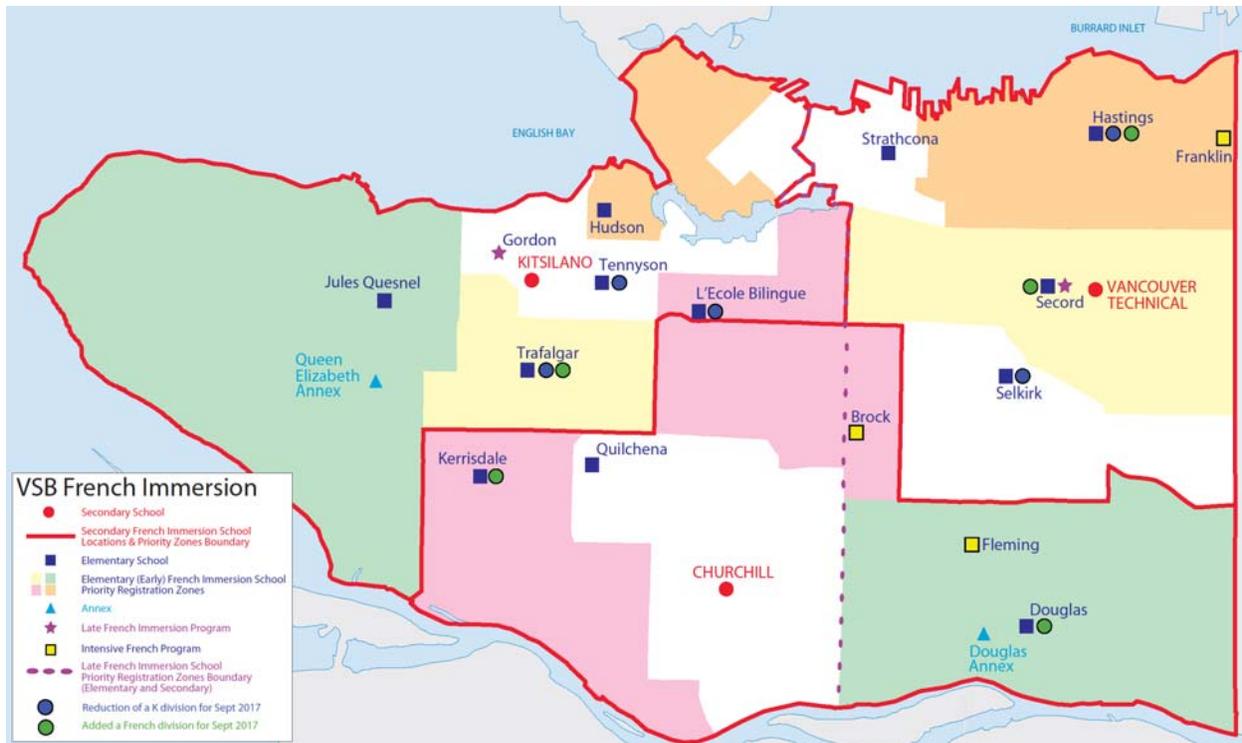
Objective 4: Effectively use school district resources and facilities

INTRODUCTION

The Vancouver School District has a strong 40 year history of French Immersion (FI) as a Program of Choice. The French Immersion program has seen continued growth and interest over this time. However, during the last few years the District has been unable to meet demand for French Immersion and has continued to add spaces and sites where possible. Since the 2016 Supreme Court decision and 2017 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), the District decreased the number of Kindergarten French immersion (KFI) spaces primarily due to a shortage of qualified teachers. In addition, changing demographics across the City have resulted in an imbalance in accessibility to French Immersion programs. For example, one area in the District has waitlists of more than 100 K FI applicants while other areas have waitlists of less than 10 K applicants with FI as their first choice.

In September of 2017 the Board asked District Staff to create a French Immersion Working Group comprised of stakeholder representatives in order to conduct a French Immersion Program Review.

This report outlines the French Immersion Working Group (FIWG) process and provides an overview of findings from this process. This report contains a recommendation.



BACKGROUND / HISTORY

In January of 2004, a report ‘Local Area Review of French Immersion Programs and Catchments’ was presented at Committee II and a related motion was approved by the Board on January 14, 2004. One of the recommendations arising from this motion was the creation of a specific French Immersion catchment (this term was changed to Priority Registration Zone or PRZ) for the Kerrisdale Elementary French Immersion program. Since 2004 three additional Early French Immersion (EFI) programs have been added: Lord Selkirk Elementary in 2005, Henry Hudson in 2006 and Lord Strathcona Elementary in 2008.

In May of 2016 the Board approved its [Strategic Plan](#) containing plans to conduct several program reviews including VSB’s ‘Programs of Choice’. FI is one of these Choice programs.

A [May 2017 Committee III](#) report outlined specific changes to FI including the reduction of five EFI K divisions in five different schools. It is important to note that while there were fewer K FI students and divisions in 2017-18, five additional divisions of various grades of EFI were added to comply with the restored class size and composition language, meaning therefore that the total number of French Immersion divisions or classes across the District did not actually decrease although there were fewer students in EFI K.

The May 2017 report stated: “As part of the VSB 2021 Strategic Plan, a review of Programs of Choice (including French Immersion) was already scheduled to take place. This review will include an analysis of the locations of existing programs, as well as whether there are

opportunities for expansion or a need to reduce certain programs in certain areas. In addition, and also part of the VSB 2021 Strategic Plan, staff will complete a catchment area review to analyze any boundary changes that may need to occur. It may be necessary to do a more in-depth school by school facilities review as well, in order to look more closely at how space is allocated within each school. There may also be the need to review and revise certain VBE policies related to catchment areas, programs of choice, etc.”

A [September 13, 2017 Committee III](#) report stated that the FI program review would be completed with the Programs of Choice review in the 2017-18 school year, beginning with an exploration of the K registration process. Given the scope of Choice programs within the District (45 schools host one or more Program of Choice), it was decided to address the French Immersion program review first.

A stakeholder group was struck to review the challenges in meeting demand for K FI and specifically in how the demand relates to the distribution of programs. A committee comprised of VSB stakeholder group representatives met three times between September and November. A report including a recommendation went to the [December 6, 2017 Committee III](#) meeting. The motion to suspend “priority registration zones” as outlined in section 11 of Board Regulation JECC-R for French Immersion for the 2018-19 school year was adopted by the Board on [December 18, 2017](#). During this suspension, families can choose to apply to K FI in any of the schools as their first choice.

One action that came out of this motion was to provide families with more information about anticipated number of available K FI spaces in each school site for the 2018-2019 school year.

Families of elementary FI students were polled in December 2017 to determine if they were planning to apply for K FI for any siblings who would be entering K in September 2018. The estimated number of available spaces for K FI was then shared on the VSB K Choice application website in an effort to inform potential families of spaces at each FI site. This process revealed that the temporary suspension of FI PRZs resulted in only a limited change in the pattern of applications at each FI site (see chart below).

The [February 7, 2018 Committee III](#) report showed the number of siblings anticipated to apply for EFI K for the 2018-19 year. The following table shows the FI K application data for the past five years.

2014-2018 FI K Application Totals

School	Program Type	First Choice Applicants 2014	First Choice Applicants 2015	First Choice Applicants 2016	First Choice Applicants 2017	First Choice Applicants 2018
Jules Quesnel/QE	Early FI	77	100	91	90	86
Tennyson	Early FI	77	71	109	100	60
Hudson	Early FI	56	57	64	64	65
Trafalgar	Early FI	59	39	43	33	29
L'Ecole Bilingue	Early FI	128	121	161	165	172
Kerrisdale	Early FI	46	43	50	30	55
Quilchena	Early FI	38	34	22	33	25
Douglas Annex	Early FI	71	61	75	69	59
Selkirk	Early FI	70	88	67	67	64
Hastings	Early FI	89	93	91	79	49
Laura Secord	Early FI	79	78	90	79	89
Strathcona	Early FI	29	39	32	32	34
EFI Totals		819	824	895	841	787

FRENCH IMMERSION WORKING GROUP PROCESS AND CONSULTATIONS

An additional action from the December 6th Committee III motion was to undertake a French Immersion Program Review as detailed below. The French Immersion Working Group's mandate for the review was: 'Given current challenges facing the VSB French Immersion program, the French Immersion Review will consider enrolment issues, potential alternative delivery models, and program distribution in an effort to assist the VSB in better meeting demand for this very popular choice program'.

The French Immersion Working Group (FIWG) was comprised of:

- VSB Director of Instruction – Education Programs
- Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association (VSTA)

- VSB Employee Services – Manager of Recruitment
- Trustee
- District Parent Advisory Council (2-5) (DPAC)
- Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association (VESTA)
- Vancouver Elementary Principals' and Vice Principals' Association (VEPVPA)
- Vancouver Association of Secondary School Administrators (VASSA)
- VSB Planner in Facilities
- Vancouver District Student Council (VDSC)

The French Immersion Program Review discussions focused on the following questions:

- Key Question: Thinking about the VSB French Immersion program and the issues it faces today, what options could ensure a strong and sustainable French Immersion program?
- Question #1 – What considerations are important to support a successful French Immersion program?
- Question #2 – What delivery models/configuration alternatives would best address these needs and concerns?
- Question #3 – What general criteria should be used to determine the distribution / location of French Immersion sites within the VSB?

The Working Group engaged in four facilitated planning sessions (January 18, February 15, March 15, and May 14, 2018) to:

- Review information regarding the current French Immersion Program
 - Identify draft measures of success
 - Consider potential French Immersion delivery models/configuration alternatives, and
 - Identify and discuss criteria for distribution of French Immersion sites in the District.
1. During the first session on January 18th, 2018 the Working Group reviewed the proposed context for the French Immersion Program Review. A preliminary draft list of measures of success for a successful French Immersion Program was developed as a reference point for the Program Review. The list was later finalized:
 - Student Success – FI Program strengthens fluency and ease with French (oral and written)
 - Access to FI program – FI Program is accessible to all potential students irrespective of individual learning needs, and/or economic or geographic differences
 - Choice program – Students may choose to start or leave the French Immersion program.
 - Qualified teachers – FI Program is delivered by qualified teachers with native-like fluency
 - Strong cohort – FI Program allocates space in each elementary location for sufficient number of students to ensure a strong cohort through to the beginning of high school.
 - Respect for neighbourhood schools and communities – FI Program is located and delivered in a manner that considers and respects neighbourhood schools and communities
 2. During the second session on February 15th, 2018 guest speakers from the UBC Faculty of Education shared current developments and practice regarding French Immersion education and the training of French Immersion teachers, including provisions to assess language proficiency. Following the guest speakers' presentations, the group revised the draft measures of success and conducted a very preliminary review of French Immersion Delivery

Models across Canada. A summary of research regarding French Immersion Program Models was shared with the Working Group during this session (below). Finally, the group discussed preliminary issues and questions to be addressed during consultations with stakeholder groups scheduled for April 2018.

French Immersion Program Models Research (February 2018)

Program Model	Aspects of note
Two year Bilingual Kindergarten	Offered in the Ottawa/Carleton District; <u>all</u> K programs are two year, in which 50% of instruction is in French and the other 50% is in English.
EFI K Start	Students are entirely immersed in French from K-2/3; as they continue their education, the amount of instruction provided in French decreases; this program is found across the country.
EFI Grade 1 Start	In Anglophone East School District in New Brunswick. K is in English and French starts in grade 1
Middle French Immersion starting in grade 3	Offered in New Brunswick, from grades 3-5; 80% instruction is in French. In grade 3, the first 12 weeks are designed to introduce the French language. Math and English Language Arts instruction begin in September. Science, Social Studies and Health instruction begin formally in December in French.
Middle French Immersion starting in grade 4	Manitoba: grades 4-6 all subjects are taught in French except English; grades 7-8 50% of instruction is in French. Ottawa grades 4-6 all subjects taught in French except Math and English, grades 7-8 50% in French.
Late French Immersion starting in grade 6	Offered in many jurisdictions: all subjects taught in French except English.
Late French Immersion starting in grade 7	Offered in the Calgary school district, from gr. 7-9 français, Mathematics, Science, and Socials are taught in French; from grades 10-12 français, Mathematics, and Socials are taught in French.
Decrease % of French taught in each grade.	Calgary: grades 1-2, 100% French; grade 3, 80% French; grades 4-6, 70% French. Ottawa/Carleton: grade 1- 80% in French (Math is taught in English); grades 2-6, 60% in French; grade 7-8, 50% is French.
EFI Single track	An entirely immersive environment. All staff in the building speak French.
Dual track	French Immersion and English tracks share a school. The administrator and support staff do not all necessarily speak French.
Triple Track	Early and Late French Immersion in the same school as well as an English program. The administrator and support staff do not all necessarily speak French.

The following documents were circulated after the February 15th 2018 FIWG meeting:

- An overview of [French Programs in BC](#)
 - Ministry of Education [French Immersion Policy](#)
3. The FIWG spent the majority of the third planning session on March 15th, 2018 discussing a variety of French Immersion Delivery Models, noting the pros and cons of each model in relation to the measures of success. They also discussed considerations related to the distribution of French Immersion sites within the District. Finally, the group discussed options for additional stakeholder consultations for April and or May, 2018.

Working Group members were requested to keep their stakeholder groups informed regarding discussions and progress. FIWG members provided feedback from their respective stakeholder group during the Working Group meetings. Following the third session, the Working Group did not feel that additional broad public consultations was warranted during April 2018. However, they agreed that stakeholder groups could request assistance with focus groups or a survey of members during that time.

Following the third session, an “*Interim Summary of Findings*” was drafted and circulated to the Working Group and stakeholder groups. During late April and early May, 2018, the VSB supported additional stakeholder consultations including focus groups with VASSA, VEPVA and DPAC, and a student survey of secondary students in the three secondary schools that host French Immersion programs. VESTA emailed an “*Interim Summary of Findings*” to members and held a meeting to solicit feedback on those options.

4. The Working Group reconvened on May 14th, 2018 to review and consider feedback and input from the April stakeholder consultation sessions. The group identified additional pros and cons regarding seven preliminary draft options for the reconfiguration of the District’s French Immersion programming.

As a result of the potential for overlapping recommendations from the French Immersion Program Review and the District Catchment Review Process, the FIWG supported a decision to present the FIWG findings and staff recommendations stemming from this work at the June 6th, Committee III meeting rather than October 2018 as originally planned.

The measures of success (listed earlier in the report) were used to analyze the following program delivery models and structures including:

- Early French Immersion – starting in Kindergarten
- Early French Immersion – starting in Grade 1
- Middle French Immersion – starting in Grade 4
- Late French Immersion – starting in Grade 6
- Single Track Schools – only French Immersion in the school
- Dual Track Schools – French Immersion and English in the school
- Triple Track Schools – Early, Late French Immersion and English

FRENCH IMMERSION WORKING GROUP FINDINGS

Table of Options for French Immersion

Note: While there is strong support for certain options over others, the support is not unanimous among all stakeholder representatives. The options are listed in order of support from highest to lowest from both the Working Group as well as the stakeholder consultations.

Option #	Description	Pros	Cons
Endeavour to locate at least two K cohorts at each EFI site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodate at least two Kindergarten cohorts at each site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen size of FI student cohorts through the elementary school years and strengthen teacher cohorts at each FI site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some FI sites don't have room for 2nd cohort through Grade 7 Number of teachers required would increase
Improve access to EFI through reconfiguration of existing sites to better meet demand (this could mean consolidation, relocation and/or adding new schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same number of students as now Reduce number of Early French Immersion sites Reconfigure some sites to address staffing shortages More evenly distribute EFI sites around the District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FI sites distributed more evenly so that all families who want access have a more equal opportunity given current demographics. Endeavour to match the supply of FI sites with levels of demand around the city Consolidates and allocates resources more efficiently (e.g., librarians, resource teachers, and other non-human resources, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some neighbourhood schools and students would be impacted by movement of FI program locations
Explore opportunities to increase number of Late French Immersion sites	Assume that additional LFI sites would be placed in sites with EFI program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong student outcomes and success Students benefit from strength of skills, tools and strategies gained in learning during K-6 Strengthens teacher cohort Students choose LFI Option for families or students who did not choose or were not able to access EFI Opportunity to increase access and demand by adding LFI to current EFI sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less diversity due to self-selection "Streaming" within public system Lower levels of interest in LFI historically Increased enrolment in LFI may require more teachers
Temporarily change entry point for Early FI to Grade 1 from Kindergarten	Assumption: This delivery model would result in students being accepted into EFI Grade 1 before starting Kindergarten in English,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses teacher shortage (saves 19 teachers positions) Removes need to move students after K 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not increase number of spaces in EFI Would lose Federal funding for affected K students because

Option #	Description	Pros	Cons
	They would begin school in English with the same cohort that would continue in French Grade 1 in the same school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps students in the public system • High success rates with EFI Grade 1 ○ Students ease with learning at that age ○ Students read in English before Grade 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% instruction in French is required under current agreement for these additional funds • Teachers (FI) have a choice whether or not they want to teach a grade besides K • May lose students to private schools • This option would require additional discussions between VTF and VSB • Would impact the five single track FI schools as the K program would be in English and the rest of the school is FI
Add Middle French Immersion to current suite of FI programs	Middle French Immersion program begins in Grade 4 with an option to have a model similar to Late French Immersion; gradual introduction of English after an immersive French experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would provide another option to families who were not able to access KFI • Self-selection could lead to a higher retention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 4 students have not received French as a second language as core French begins in grade 5 • Therefore not possible to teach grade 4 curriculum in an immersion setting as students don't have necessary French vocabulary • Reduced diversity of learners due to streaming (Only those students who are successful in the English cohort would likely apply) • Reluctance by families to move students • There was very little support for Middle FI

The following options were proposed during the last stakeholder consultation sessions. As a result, there was limited feedback on these options.

1. 50/50 French/English in Intermediate grades – this option would not meet the province's criteria for additional funding due to the amount of instruction in French being too low
2. Revisit French Immersion Priority Registration Zones so that families in each zone has an equal likelihood of acceptance to the program

CONCLUSION

The Vancouver School District continues to be committed to offering a vibrant French Immersion program. While the current situation of not being able to meet the demand of families interested in French Immersion Kindergarten is unlikely to change in the near future, since the teacher shortage is not expected to end soon, the District will continue to explore opportunities to provide viable program locations and the possible addition of classes. District staff will also continue the aggressive recruitment campaign.

Long term recommended options:

1. Endeavor to provide at least two K cohorts at each EFI site (this will involve school information sessions and include the possibility of consolidating, relocating or adding programs).
2. Explore more Late French Immersion locations.
3. Keep priority registration zones suspended for one more year (while District staff look into consolidation, changes in Priority Registration Zones and/or adding programs).

PLAN MOVING FORWARD

1. Identify potential sites for FI program consolidation, relocation or addition.

Timing	Next Steps
June 6th, 2018	Presentation of report at Committee III meeting
June 25th, 2018	Discussion re report recommendations at Board meeting
July- August*	District staff to research and prepare materials for information sessions / consultation
September-October*	School based information sessions / consultation in various sites
November, 2018*	District staff to review and analyze data
November, 2018*	Committee III / Board recommendations regarding French Immersion programming for 2019-2020 school year
January 2019*	Application process opens for September 2019

*subject to Board approval on June 25, 2018

2. Continue the current and explore French Immersion recruitment strategies: a comprehensive report was presented on [April 18, 2018 Committee III IV](#)
3. Follow the developments of the Vancouver School District [Catchment Boundary Review](#)

RECOMMENDATION

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the VSB endeavor to enroll two Kindergarten French Immersion divisions in each of the Early French Immersion sites which could involve a combination of consolidating, relocating or adding programs.