



**School District No. 40
(New Westminister)
1001 Columbia Square
New Westminister, BC
V3M 1C4**

Review of District Programs, Late French Immersion

September 13, 2011

**Prepared by:
Sandra F. Pace
Director,
Learning Services**

Table of Contents

Review of District Programs, Late French Immersion	2
Introduction	2
Enrolment	2
Program Description	3
Goals/Objectives of Program (Academic/Social-emotional).....	4
Entrance Criteria	5
Evidence of Goal Attainment (Academic)	5
Exit Criteria.....	8
Cost of Program Delivery.....	9
Conclusion.....	9

Review of District Programs, Late French Immersion

Introduction

Our District now offers one Late French Immersion program for grades 6-8 at École Glenbrook Middle School (ÉGMS). Students proceed from ÉGMS to New Westminster Secondary School (NWSS) for grades 9-12. At ÉGMS, the Late French Immersion program has typically enrolled three classrooms of students (approximately 90 students). In two of the past years, there were only two classes or about 60 students. It was anticipated that as the Early French Immersion program absorbed students, that the Late French Immersion program would decline in numbers. Though this was true for the 2010-2011 school year, when LFI enrolled only two classes of students, in the current year (2011-2012) there has been ample demand for three classes. We have one more student on the list as of the August 30, 2011 than we have spaces to accommodate. As demand for Early French Immersion is growing and we are unable to meet that demand for reasons of space, it seems that there will continue to be a substantial number of students seeking to enrol in Late French Immersion.

The Late French Immersion program began in our District in 1988, with one class at Richard McBride Elementary School. This first class reached NWSS in the fall of 1990 and graduated in the spring of 1995. In 1997, two Late French Immersion classes were taken in at grade 6 at McBride. In 2000, the program was moved to École Glenbrook Middle School with the opening of the middle school. There were two classes of grade 6s at that time. The next year, three classes were taken in for grade 6. The EGMS program has always had three classes since that time, except for 2010/2011, when there was only demand for two classes.

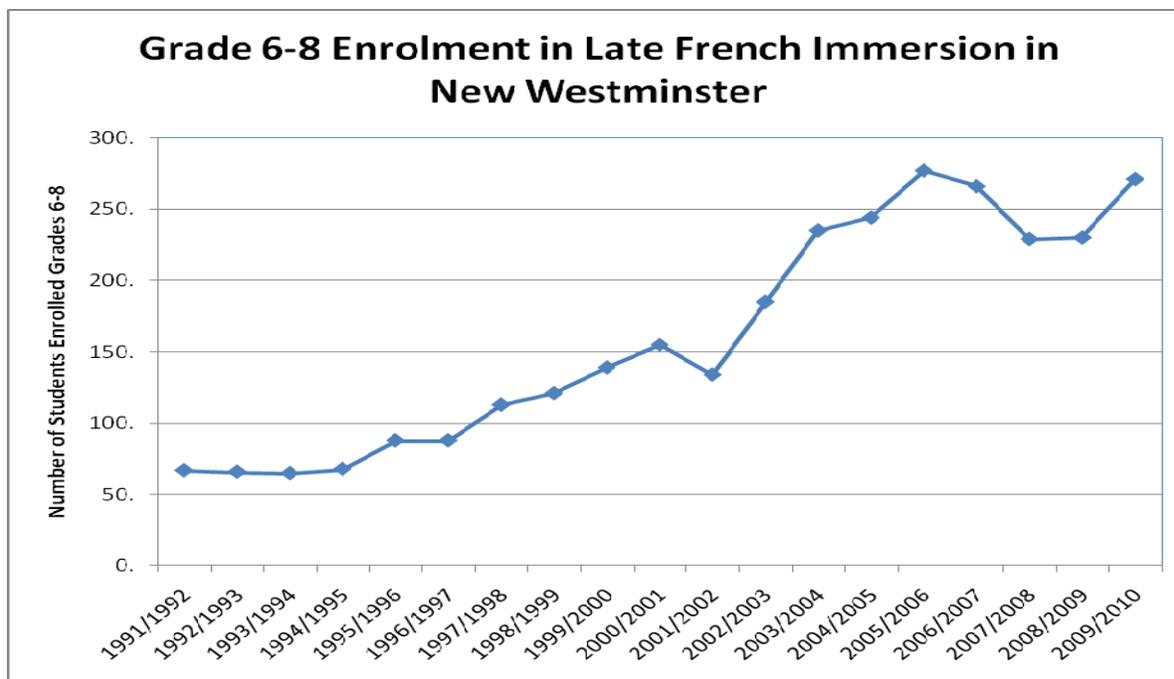
In 2005, a Late French Immersion program was begun at Queensborough Middle School, however, registration did not flourish, and the program at Queensborough was discontinued when the last grade 8 class left the school for NWSS in the spring of 2008. Currently, based on the Review of Programs of Choice, it is anticipated that the Late French Immersion Program will continue to be located at Ecole Glenbrook Middle School, and that neither of the other middle schools will have a Late French Immersion Program, though the new middle school will have Early Immersion.

Enrolment

Students enter through the continuous registration process, whereby parents can apply for their child to enter the program at any time after birth. Parents largely apply for their child to enter Late French Immersion at two main points, either early in their school careers, at the time they also apply for Early French Immersion or Montessori programs, or else after the spring recruitments in grade 5. In about February each year, a few students and a teacher from the Late French Immersion program visit each elementary school to present the program to grade 5s. In this way, all grade 5s are aware of the program. Typically, a number of applications are made at this point. It has been suggested that this recruitment could be advanced to the fall, allowing families to make a reasoned decision about application to the

program earlier in the school year. This would also benefit the District in firming up program numbers sooner in the school year.

Enrolment in Late French Immersion has been strong at École Glenbrook Middle School and seems to have stabilized at about three classes of grade 6s each year.



For a number of years, students in our District’s Late French Immersion program have gone through to grade 12 and graduated. This 2010-2011 school year was the first year that the Early and Late French Immersion streams were mixed at the grade 8 level. This evolution went smoothly—teachers report that, like other districts, it is an appropriate time for the students to mix, and allows the students to come together as a group prior to going on to the high school.

Program Description

The Late French Immersion program provides students with an education equivalent to that which is available in the English language program, while providing opportunities to acquire a high level of proficiency in French. Students enter Late French Immersion in Grade 6 and, on graduation from the program in Grade 12, should be able to participate easily in French conversations, take post-secondary courses with French as the language of instruction, and accept employment with French as the language of work. The first year of the program (grade 6) is entirely in French, except for their Exploratory (optional) classes and Health and Career Education. In grade 7, English Language Arts is re-introduced and English instruction is 20%. At the high school level, 50% of the courses across grades 10-12 must be in French. Typically, more of these are completed at the grade 10 level, fewer at grade 11 and sometimes only one French Language Arts (*arts langagiers*) is taken at the grade 12 level. Completion of this

program entitles the student to a *British Columbia Certificate of Graduation* (Dogwood Diploma) and a *Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires en Colombie-Britannique*.

Goals/Objectives of Program (Academic/Social-emotional)

The British Columbia Ministry of Education recognizes that French Immersion programming benefits the cognitive and social development of students, as well as their opportunities for career advancement. Research demonstrates that students who successfully complete a French Immersion program attain functional bilingualism while doing as well as, or better than, their unilingual peers in the content areas of curriculum, including English Language Arts.

It is the policy of the Ministry to support the establishment of French Immersion programs within the public school system. French Immersion programs parallel the regular English program in structure and content (see Ministerial Order 295/95 the *Required Areas of Study in an Educational Program Order*). The major goal of French Immersion is to provide the opportunity for non-francophone students to become bilingual in English and French.

British Columbia Ministry of Education,
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/french_immersion.htm

The goal of the French immersion program is to graduate students who are functionally bilingual. This means graduates are able to communicate effectively in French as well as in English.

Canadian Parents for French
<http://www.cpf.bc.ca/site3/index.php/faq/what-is-late-french-immersion>

The primary goal for all French Immersion programming is to graduate students who are functionally bilingual in English and French, who are able to undertake further studies and work in French and English. Having said this, when French Immersion programming became supported by federal and provincial governments, a secondary goal was to assist young people to understand and develop positive attitudes towards both official language groups in Canada.

Parents' reasons for placing children into French Immersion programs centre around two clusters of reasons: *instrumental* and *personal growth*. Instrumental reasons include increasing opportunities for employment and travel. Personal growth opportunities are those related to the cultural enrichment of knowing two languages and the relative ease of learning third and subsequent languages once bilingualism is attained.

Research has shown that bilingual individuals build strong critical and creative thinking skills and increased problem-solving and coping skills. They also develop stronger emotional intelligence skills in comparison with unilingual peers. An interesting new set of research

suggests that bilinguals have a slower progression of Alzheimer's dementia if they continue to use both languages. Learning and using a second language has lifetime benefits!

Entrance Criteria

There are no entrance criteria for this program. While the only selection criterion is student and parent interest, at the grade 5 level, parents frequently have discussions with their children's teachers and/or resource teachers and administrators in their schools about the suitability of the program for their particular child. Students who have experienced difficulties in school, particularly if those difficulties are language-centred, are less likely to enrol, though some still do so. Similar methods for differentiating instruction are used to assist these students to learn, as would occur in any class.

Evidence of Goal Attainment (Academic)

Even as early as 1992, the Canadian Education Association could say "No educational program has been so extensively researched and evaluated in Canada as has French Immersion. The effects of the program on the acquisition of French-language as well as English-language skills and the academic achievement of French Immersion students have been well documented and research has shown that the program works."

Most research on French Immersion combines the various types of French Immersion (Early, Middle and Late) by high school. Since the majority of students across Canada are in Early Immersion programs, there is less research specifically on the achievement of Late French Immersion students. However, Fred Genessee, a noted expert in French Immersion states that

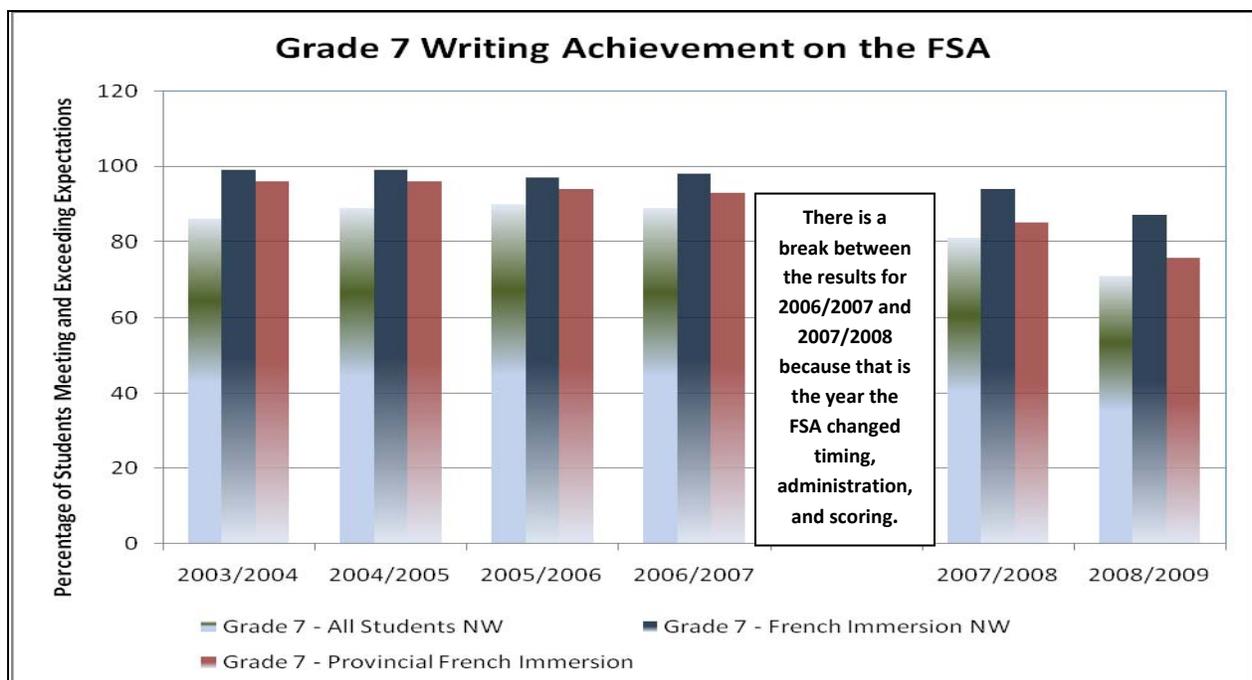
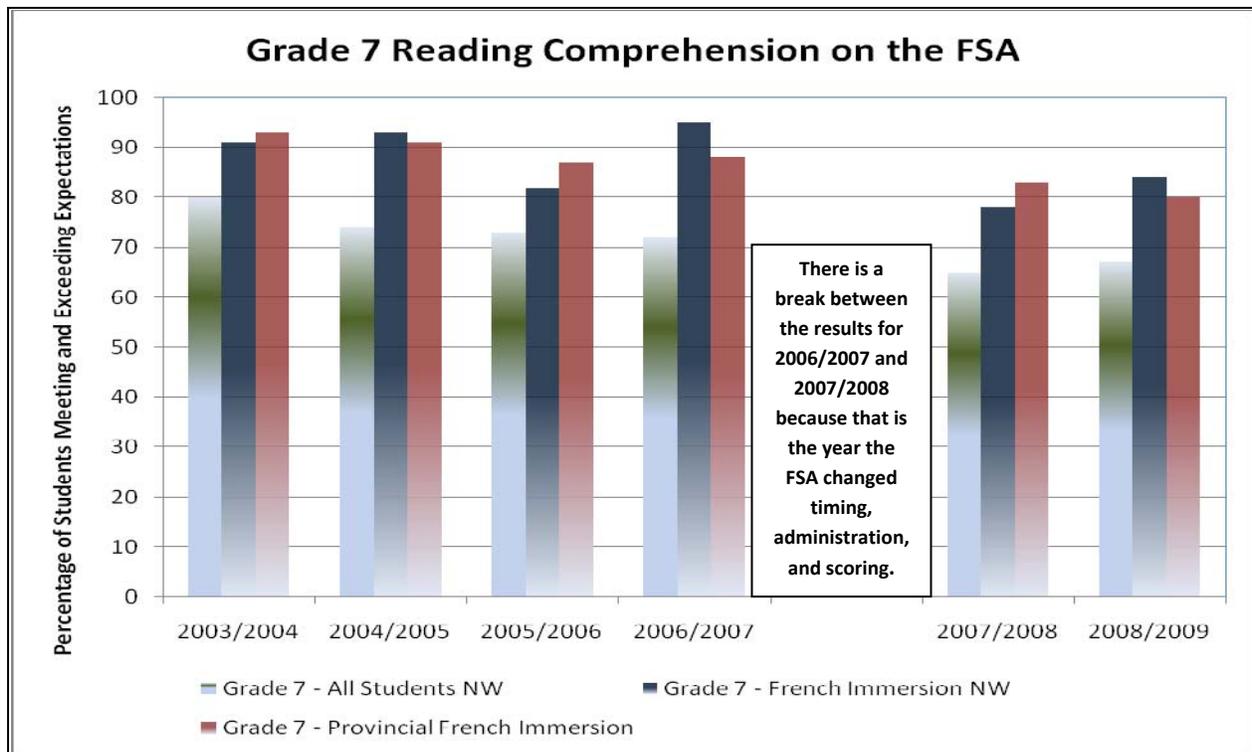
Evaluations of middle and Late French Immersion have reported that students in these programs exhibit levels of reading and writing ability in English that are comparable to those of control students at every grade level (see Genessee, 1981, 1987, and Swain & Lapkin, 1982, for general summaries of these findings; and Genessee, 1976a, and Genessee, Polich & Stanley, 1977, for results from writing assessments).

Genessee, 2008

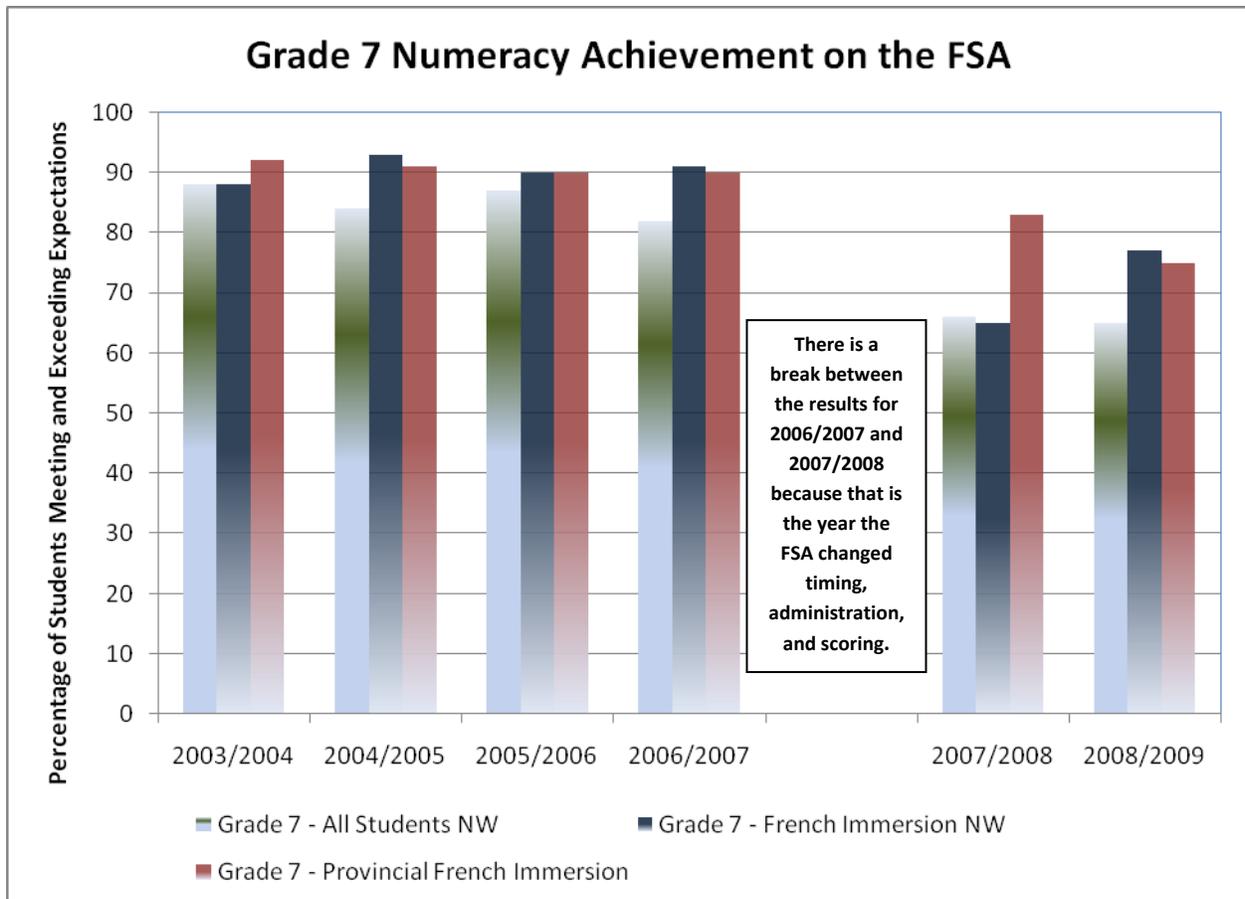
http://docs.cllrnet.ca/NSEL/Current/NSEL_FrenchImmersion08.pdf

The graphs on the next page show FSA achievement for SD 40 Late French Immersion students, because until 2009-2010, the Early French Immersion students in our District had not yet arrived at grade 7 to take the middle years Foundation Skills Assessment. Since the Ministry does not separate data for Early and Late French Immersion students, all District FSA scores after 2009-2010 include both Early and Late French Immersion students. The break in the data between 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 indicates the change in the timing, administration, and scoring/statistical calculations which make it impossible to compare scores before and after this break.

Students in our Late French Immersion program demonstrate very good performance on the Foundation Skills Assessments for Reading Comprehension, Writing, and Numeracy, consistently scoring above their peers in the regular program. In the last year for which we have data separating our Early and Late French Immersion groups, 2008-2009, the French Immersion students also achieved above the levels of the provincial French Immersion groups.



In writing, our French Immersion students have consistently out-performed both their peers in the regular program in our District, and their peers in French Immersion programs in the province generally. In the provincial statistics for all three areas, including writing, Early and Late French Immersion students are combined. We are able to separate out our Late Immersion students only before 2010.



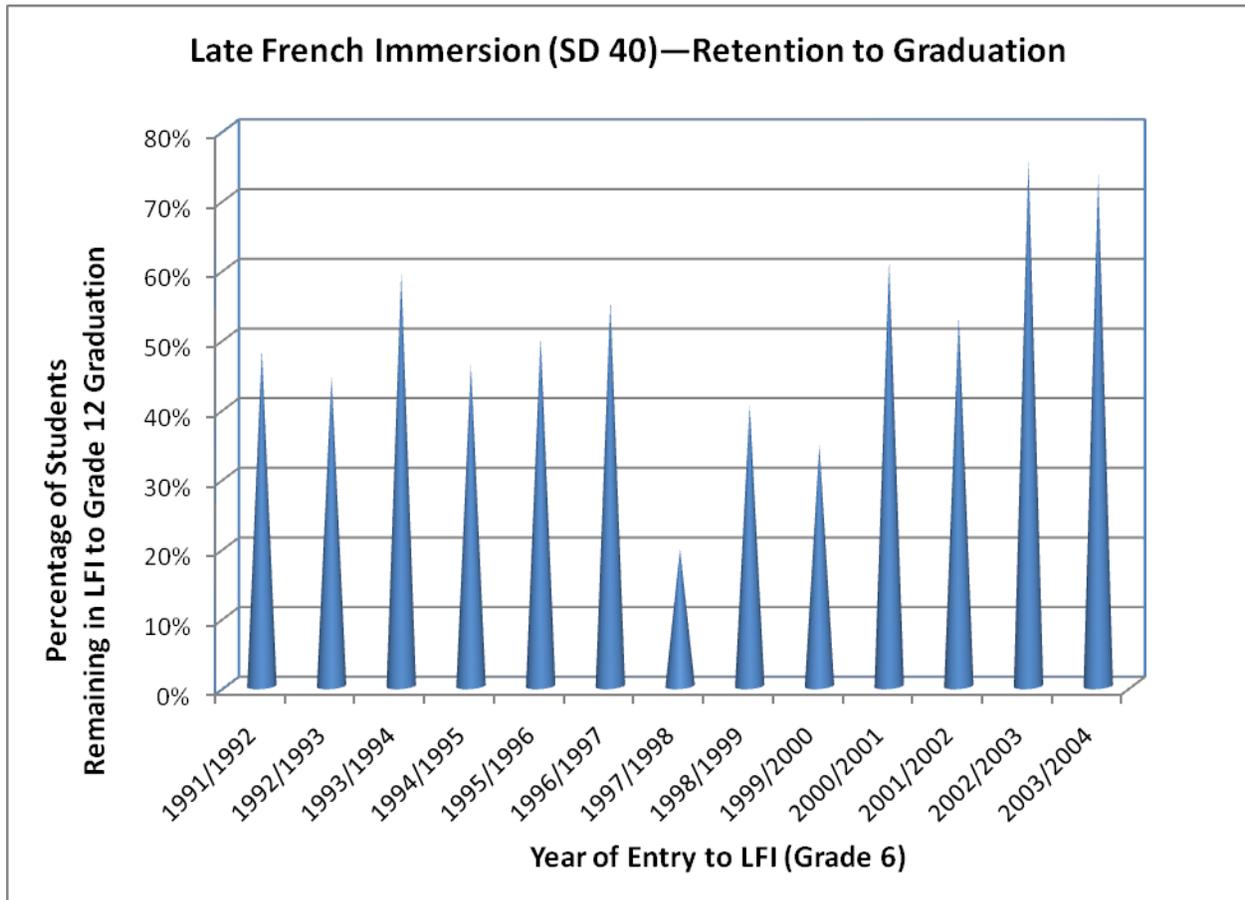
In numeracy, the Late French Immersion students in our District consistently meet or exceed the achievement of their peers in the regular program. Except for the one school year in 2007-2008, they have also met and exceeded expectations at levels similar to or above provincial levels.

Parents frequently worry about students' English language skills. Comparison of provincial results on achievement testing in Alberta and BC confirm that students in French Immersion programs equal or exceed the achievement of students in the regular programs in reading and writing. It should be noted that students in French Immersion programs have about twice as much Language Arts instructional time as students in the regular program, split across English and French Language Arts. Since skills transfer across languages, this provides time for additional instruction in Language Arts. For example, once taught to organize an essay in

either language, the student can do so in both languages. That leaves time to go on to something else in the other Language Arts period.

Exit Criteria

The sole exit criterion for Early French Immersion is graduation with a ‘Double Dogwood,’ which is a diploma indicating attainment of functional bilingualism along with all other requirements for a Dogwood Grade 12 Diploma.



Some students choose to leave the program prior to grade 12 for a variety of reasons. This often occurs at the transition point between middle school and high school, or else with the transition to the credit system in grades 10-12. Besides moving to another district, students may feel that the program takes more work, or that their marks in the regular program will be higher with an equivalent amount of work. This does not usually turn out to be the case, but by the time this is determined, they have left the program. Some students leave the program because they have difficulty scheduling options or other courses they wish to take.

Some students leave the program for reasons of learning difficulties. Each of these cases is handled individually through school-based teams in the normal way that all student learning difficulties are handled. Students would follow the normal sequence that any child with learning difficulties follows in our District, with classroom adaptations occurring before referral to school-based team, and then expanded school-based team as appropriate. The

parents/guardians of the child make this decision after much discussion and consultation with school and District staff.

Cost of Program Delivery

Staffing costs for Late French Immersion are similar to those for the regular program. At Glenbrook, class sizes in Late French Immersion match or exceed those in the regular program in grade 6 and 7. At grade 8, now that the students are mixed with the Early Immersion students, class sizes remain similar to or in excess of those for the regular program. We do have a few students moving into the program from Immersion schools in other districts. In most cases, the students are engaged in a conversation with a teacher or the Director of Learning Services to assure that their level of French is sufficient to be successful in the program. Typically, Francophone students moving into our province or country attend the Conseil Scolaire Francophone (Francophone School District) rather than the Immersion schools.

In most programs of choice, attrition increases as the students go through the grades. Therefore typically, the older classes are smaller than those in the regular program. In New Westminister Secondary School, class averages for French Immersion are 26.4 for grade 9, 25 in grade 10, 23.3 in grade 11 and 20.7 in grade 12. As increasing numbers of students come through from Early Immersion, these class averages will increase.

The District is grateful for the assistance of federal funds for the French Immersion program. The French federal funds provided through the provincial government cover the incremental cost of French resources (that is, where an English text might cost \$50, and the comparable French text costs \$70, the difference, \$20, would be covered by the federal funding). These funds also supplement costs for the cultural component of the program, such as attendance at French events. The District receives approximately \$154,000 from federal funding for both French Immersion and Core French Programs. This funding ensures that the French Immersion programs are not more costly to run than would be comparable regular programs.

Conclusion

Our Late French Immersion program is a popular program among our parents and students. Students in this program do well on provincial and District assessments. While there is some attrition as students move through the high school grades, combining the Early and Late French Immersion streams at grade 8 ensures that the program remains cost effective while meeting its goals.