

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 19 (REVELSTOKE)

TO: All Trustees

FROM: Mike Hooker, Superintendent of Schools

DATE: March 27th, 2013

INFORMATION: Early French Immersion Update



Trustees will recall that on January 16th, 2013, at the regular board meeting I advised that subsequent to a comprehensive interest survey process the implementation of an Early French Immersion program was not viable.

Following that meeting, Stephanie Melnyk and Vanessa Morrow, on behalf of interested parents, asked for a further effort to reach families who may not have expressed interest. They also requested a special board meeting to make a presentation on Early French Immersion. The information on the value of French Immersion presented at that meeting was well received, and was consistent with the views of district staff and trustees. The cohort numbers and the attrition data presented could not be validated.

I have continued to update our database of families interested and committed to Early French Immersion. I have responded to 31 email messages from parents of children ranging in age from 1 to 8 years old who are in favour of Early French Immersion (and a few community members with no children). I have responded to 4 messages from parents of school-aged children who were concerned that Early French Immersion may impact the quality of our current programs.

The table below summarizes the information submitted from parents through email, paper surveys and phone contact.

Birth Year (Entry Year)	Fully knowledgeable about French Immersion and committed to enrolling my child in whatever school would be selected.	Fully knowledgeable about French Immersion and committed to enrolling my child as long as it is in my neighbourhood school which is:		
		AHE	BVE	CPE
2008 (K 2013)	15*	2	3	1
2009 (K 2014)	14	2	6	1
2010 (K 2015)	11	-	-	2
Gr 1 2013	7	-	6	2

*The committed numbers include students cross enrolled in Ecole des Glacier, the Conseil Scolaire Francophone school, students who are not yet registered for Kindergarten but have submitted surveys, students who are currently enrolled in Kindergarten but whose parents indicated they would have their children repeat Kindergarten should Early French Immersion be offered.

The benefits of a sustainable Early French Immersion program have been clearly defined and are uncontested. The challenge continues to be our capacity to sustain a french language program such as Early French Immersion.

Projected Revelstoke Enrolment

As Trustees are aware, Ministry funding levels are driven by overall enrolment. Our decisions around programs and services are made in the context of that enrolment and the corresponding budget implications.

PROJECTED ENROLMENT 2013/2014 – as of March 13 th , 2013														
SCHOOL	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
REVELSTOKE SECONDARY									68	68	82	87	92	397
ARROW HEIGHTS	10	17	17	8	11	17	10	18						108
COLUMBIA PARK	21	30	34	30	16	25	22	26						204
BEGBIE VIEW	28	29	34	37	27	28	35	29						247
TOTAL	59	76	85	75	54	70	67	73	68	68	81	86	92	954

Enrolment for 2013/14 is currently much lower than our projections, with an overall decline of 60 students. Our enrolment has continued to decline annually at rates between 2.5% to 6%. Based on overall district enrolment, Arrow Heights Elementary School is the only facility that could provide space for additional programs.

Attrition

The following information from the document “Addressing Attrition in French Immersion” describes secondary student attrition:

“All French Immersion and Francophone programs face attrition. With only two entry points and many potential points of departure, this is simply inevitable. The following table details the grade-by-grade average attrition rates for BC French Immersion programs.”

French Immersion Secondary Attrition - 1999-2004 (Percentage)

Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
12.4	12.1	13.4	14	12

Source - Canadian Parents for French - BC & Yukon Branch

“While BC's attrition rate is not bad comparatively, secondary attrition is a serious problem for French Immersion programs. On average only 55% of Grade 7 FI students get their Bilingual Dogwood. 35% of students leave in either Grade 10, 11 or 12. While these students have benefited substantially from French Immersion and may well be functionally bilingual, the loss in learning momentum is considerable.”

The following chart indicates projected enrolment in French Immersion taking into consideration our declining enrolment and average French immersion attrition rates. As Arrow Heights Elementary School is the only facility with space, the projected enrolment chart reflects the cohorts for that site.

Entry Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
K	17.0	16.0	11.0										
1		15.6	14.7	10.1									
2			14.4	13.5	9.3								
3				13.2	12.5	8.6							
4					12.2	11.5	7.9						
5						11.2	10.5	7.2					
6							10.3	9.7	6.7				
7								9.5	8.9	6.1			
8									8.3	7.8	5.3		
9										7.0	6.6	4.5	
10											6.0	5.6	3.9
11												5.1	4.8
12													4.3

Enrolment decline rate	3%
Attrition rate for K - 6	5%
Attrition rate for 7 - 8	10%
Attrition rate for 9 - 12	12%

Provincial Picture

The following small school districts with total enrolment of less than 1500 in 2012/13 report no Early French Immersion programs.

		Enrolment 2012/13
SD #87	Stikine	200
SD #49	Central Coast	226
SD #92	Nisga'a	371
SD #84	Vancouver Island West	389
SD #50	Haida Gwaii	624
SD #10	Arrow Lakes	785
SD #81	Fort Nelson	878
SD #74	Gold Trail	1209
SD #51	Boundary	1317
SD #85	Vancouver Island North	1386
SD #78	Fraser-Cascade	1471

There are no districts comparable to our size or context currently offering Early French Immersion. However, the community of Golden, in Rocky Mountain School District #6, was

used as a reference for Revelstoke during the last French Immersion feasibility study in 2008. Golden's elementary and secondary school organizations were similar to Revelstoke, and the Early French Immersion program had been in place for over 20 years.

In response to declining enrolment and associated pressures, School District #6 engaged an external team to review their Early French Immersion program, and to make recommendations moving forward. The report concluded that there was significant support for French language instruction; however, Early French Immersion was not a sustainable delivery method with a Kindergarten cohort entry of 22 students. The following excerpt summarizes the study teams findings:

“At the highest level of generality the Study Team has concluded that the status quo is neither effective for all students nor sustainable in the long term given declining enrolment and shrinking resources. The Report presents alternatives to the status quo and some explanation for each recommendation. The recommendations are curricular in nature, and have as their aim, increasing levels of competence. They speak, primarily, to strengthening the efficacy of current programs, enhancing their sustainability, and developing greater interdependence and collaboration between and among students, teachers and parents.”

School District #6 has started the process of phasing out the Early French Immersion entry and is now focusing on other methods of providing French Language instruction. This is a twelve-year process, ending in 2022 as the last Kindergarten entry of Early French Immersion progresses through to grade 12.

Summary

Revelstoke School District has been, and continues to be is in a declining enrolment environment. Our priorities remain focused on students through successful early identification and intervention programs, high levels of individualized student services, and a breadth of program choices at the secondary level.

Our small system meets and exceeds expectations for student success. This achievement has required that we be thoughtful in our resource allocation and priority setting activities to ensure we protect the strength and quality of our programs.

Within the context of our small total population, the implementation of an Early French Immersion program is not feasible.