

# SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 19 (REVELSTOKE)

TO: Board of School Trustees

FROM: Anne Cooper, Superintendent of Schools

DATE: March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009

INFORMATION: Late French Immersion Information and Enrolment Implications



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There remains interest in having French Immersion in our community so that our students are afforded the opportunities to them upon graduation requiring bilingualism. In September of 2006, subsequent to parent requests, the District began a review of the potential implementation of Early French Immersion. The review of Early French Immersion was complete in April of 2008 with a decision not to proceed. At that time a commitment was made to explore both Late French Immersion and Intensive French as options. I have prepared a summary of Late French Immersion and short term enrolment considerations for Trustees information.

## **Late French Immersion Information**

### A. What is Late French Immersion?

Late Immersion programs usually begin in Grade Six where the French language is used 100% during the first year with no formal English Language Arts Program, decreasing to 80% the second year and subsequent years to include English Language Arts.

A Canadian Parents for French pamphlet entitled What is Late French Immersion? points out: "Late French Immersion is NOT a continuation of Early Immersion. It is a separate program which provides an alternate entry point for students who want to achieve functional bilingualism."

### B. Frequently Asked Questions

The following six questions are most frequently asked by parents when considering Late French Immersion for their child.

#### 1. Will being in the program have any effect on English skills?

Research has shown that English skills do not suffer; they tend to remain as good as those skills incorporated by students in the regular English Track Program. Students are encouraged to continue to read literature in English.

#### 2. How fluent will my child become?

The goal is for the student to be able to function effectively in the French language. It is expected the s/he will acquire a much greater language facility than students in the French as a Second Language (Core) Program.

#### 3. Are the course content areas the same as in the English track?

Courses taught in the French Immersion Program are generally comparable to those taught in English track with the exception that no formal English Language Arts Program exists during the first year of French Immersion. Since students have a limited vocabulary beginning in French Immersion, the program initially stresses vocabulary themes. Researchers point out

that this initial emphasis does not have a long-term detrimental effect on other subject areas such as Math, Social Studies and Science.

#### 4. Are Immersion Programs successful in Anglophone areas?

Immersion Programs can be equally effective in a unilingual English environment. Evaluations have shown quite clearly that Immersion programs can be highly successful anywhere in Canada.

#### 5. Are Immersion Programs for all students?

Research to date has failed to single out any category of students whom Immersion might not be suitable. Three factors in one study are of particular interest: intelligence, motivation; learning disabilities.

- a. Intelligence – Immersion Programs are not only for the bright students and studies have consistently shown this. Many average-ability children have been found to do well in French Immersion Programs.
- b. Motivation – A high level of motivation is probably an important predictor of success in Late Immersion. Late Immersion Programs require concentrated participation and are best suited for children who are motivated to communicate in the language, actively using their language skills.
- c. Learning Disabilities – Research indicates that children with learning disabilities in French do as well as children with learning disabilities in English. Students who have experienced learning disabilities or difficulties in the English Track Program can be expected to experience similar problems in the French Track Program. In other words, the disability or difficulty will probably remain the same. As a result, a student requiring 'support services' available in the English Track Program could be disadvantaged if those same or similar support services are not available in the French Track Program.

In summary, motivation to succeed appears to one of the most important prerequisites for success in the Late Immersion Program and could be as significant as natural ability or intelligence.

#### 6. How can parents assist their child in French Immersion studies?

Support and awareness are the most important aspects of parental involvement. A familiarity with the process and the expectations of the French Immersion Program is essential for the parent to effectively monitor the child's development.

A pamphlet outlining Late French Immersion completed by the Canadian Parents for French is appended to this document.

### **Enrolment Implications – Short Term**

Attrition in French Immersion programs exists at all grade levels. We understand that attrition rates tend to be lower in self-contained French-immersion schools and are high among students with learning disabilities. For the Late French Immersion program, we have forecasted attrition at the rate of 10%. This attrition rate will take into account students leaving the program but remaining in Revelstoke and students in the program who may also leave our community.

In our study of Early French Immersion, we were looking at attrition rates of 5% which was less than the average British Columbia attrition rate of 6.8%. The secondary attrition per grade, per year, in a document published by the Canadian Parents for French indicates that secondary attrition still ranges in the order of 11.4%. I feel that 10% represents a reasonable overall attrition rate to use for modeling considering that our district still is facing a 3% general enrolment decline.

**2009/2010**

The chart below summarizes the impact of beginning Late French Immersion in Grade 6 in the district with a minimum enrolment of 28 students. In the first year, attrition is not a factor and all 28 students would be registered. For modeling purposes, we have estimated that the 28 students would come from each of the elementary schools equally or a seven student reduction per school. Stated differently Mount Begbie Elementary School would normally expect a Grade 6 class of 20 in year one of implementation but we are modeling that their enrolment would be reduced to 13.

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
<b>2009/2010</b>														
RSS									95	98	94	82	97	3 469
AHE	15	19	10	17	22	21	14	24						142
CPE	18	28	24	27	24	24	22	36						203
MBE	13	16	19	13	14	12	13	7						107
MVE	12	15	16	22	14	13	7	11						110
Late French Immersion							28	-						28
Total	58	78	69	79	74	70	84	78	95	98	94	82	97	3 1,059

**2010/2011**

For 2010/2011, we would anticipate another cohort of 28 to enter Grade 6, and with attrition, we would forecast 25 students coming forward into Grade 7. For modeling purposes, the three students who have returned to the English program have been placed at our largest school, Columbia Park Elementary School. Of particular note in 2010/2011, the Grade 6/7 class at Mountain View Elementary School could be reduced to 13 pupils. This would not be sustainable at the school and would necessitate a three-way combined English class being established at Mountain View Elementary School or students in being relocated to another school.

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
<b>2010/2011</b>														
RSS									78	95	98	94	82	3 450
AHE	15	15	19	10	17	22	14	14						126
CPE	18	18	28	24	27	24	17	25						181
MBE	13	13	16	19	13	14	5	13						106
MVE	12	12	15	16	22	14	6	7						104
Late French Immersion							28	25						53
Total	58	58	78	69	79	74	70	84	78	95	98	94	82	3 1,020

I believe we need to give serious consideration to the impact of considering a Late French Immersion program prior to consolidating Mountain View Elementary School and Mount Begbie Elementary School.