

March 2, 2026

French Immersion Advisory Committee Report No. 1-2026

FRENCH IMMERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 1-2026

To the Chair and Members
Winnipeg Public School Board:

February 4, 2026

The French Immersion Advisory Committee reports as follows:

1. Land Acknowledgement

The Committee stated that the students, staff and communities of Winnipeg School Division are committed to truth and reconciliation through building relationships with Mother Earth, the original peoples of this land and the stories that bring us together. We acknowledge the place in which we gather is on Treaty 1 territory, the homeland of the Red River Métis and the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe, Ininiwak and Dakota Oyate peoples.

2. WSD 2026/2027 Budget Update

The Committee was informed that the Board of Trustees is preparing the draft budget for the 2026/2027 school year.

Last year, WSD committed to smaller classroom sizes, increasing positions for teachers, educational assistants and clinical support staff. WSD has been working to reduce financial barriers for families by providing no-fee lunch programs and field trips, expanding childcare facilities and after-school programming in schools, and installing new school play structures that are funded by WSD. The implementation of a Universal Nutrition Program and installation of kitchens in some schools has also assisted in reducing financial barriers for families. WSD has also been working toward the renewal of school libraries, enriched programming in Math, Literacy, STEM, and the Arts and Music, updating IT network and classroom technology and developing a teacher professional development fund.

For the 2026/2027 school year, WSD is proposing to implement full-day Kindergarten in six schools, expanding childcare spaces in schools, investing more in school repairs and infrastructure, planning for a new high school in northwest Winnipeg, building additional tracks and playing fields at schools, using consistent early reading checks to support young learners, strengthening math learning through JUMP Math teacher training, expanding hands-on land-based and project-based learning, adding more 'Global Issues' programming to Senior years schools, upgrading more IT network and school technology and keeping school taxes responsible while meeting employee wage increases.

The Committee was informed that since 2023, WSD has added 134.1 teacher positions, 275.2 educational assistant positions and 5 clinician positions. WSD is proposing to maintain staffing levels for the 2026/2027 school year.

The Committee was informed that due to recently negotiated contracts and increased wages for teachers, expenditures for the 2026/2027 school year are anticipated to be approximately 4.9% more than the previous year. WSD anticipates a 2% increase in provincial funding over last year and is proposing to increase the Mill Rate to 1.067. The average house in WSD is valued at approximately \$269,900, this increase would result in the average homeowner in WSD paying an additional \$8 per month (or \$95 annually) in property tax.

March 2, 2026

French Immersion Advisory Committee Report No. 1-2026

The Committee was informed that a mill rate increase helps WSD maintain stable public education by addressing rising costs from collective agreements, such as wage harmonization, teacher preparation time, and provincial requirements for smaller class sizes.

The Committee stated that WSD funding for lunch programs and field trips has assisted in reducing the financial strain for families, however, Committee members noted that for some schools there has been a decline in the number of field trip opportunities. The Committee was informed that each school is provided with a budget and that principals have autonomy to distribute the funds available. The Committee was also informed that principals are encouraged to utilize the entirety of their budget and not to carry over a surplus.

The Committee was informed that WSD will be distributing a survey to all families to provide feedback to assist the Board of Trustees and WSD Administration in understanding where future funding should be focused to best meet the needs of school communities. A QR code and a link to the survey will be emailed to parents and will also be available on the WSD website.

The Committee was also informed that WSD will be hosting a budget meeting Tuesday, February 24, in the Board Room at 1577 Wall Street at 5:00 p.m. Families who would like to appear as a delegation regarding the budget can register by contacting the Board and Community Liaison Office by emailing board@wsd1.org no later than Thursday, February 19.

3. On-Boarding in WSD

At a meeting held November 13, 2025, the Committee requested information be provided regarding how many teachers and educational assistants are being on-boarded in WSD.

Aaron Benarroch, Director of Recruitment and International Education, was in attendance and provided an update recruitment and retainment efforts.

The Committee was informed that since the beginning of the school year WSD has on-boarded approximately 14 French Immersion teachers to fill vacancies as well as an additional 25 French Immersion educational assistants. The Committee was informed that WSD has been diligent in commencing recruitment efforts earlier and participating in a variety of initiatives such as collaborating with the Canadian Embassy in Paris France to recruit teachers. WSD has also been participating in a multitude of job fairs at universities throughout the province and has been utilizing strategic marketing through social media to engage new graduates and potential candidates.

The Committee was also informed that WSD has been working to streamline on-boarding processes to make them more efficient. The Communications Team has also updated the WSD Careers page to make it user-friendly.

The Committee was informed that recruitment of French Immersion teachers has been an ongoing struggle nation-wide. WSD has been focusing on early years teachers and developing recruitment efforts such as increasing WSD engagement in French publications and on social media, developing youth leadership programs, looking internationally and developing partnerships with outside organizations to assist in recruitment efforts.

The Committee suggested exploring options for recruiting teachers from the U.S. The Committee was informed that there has been interest from the Spanish-speaking community in the U.S.

March 2, 2026

French Immersion Advisory Committee Report No. 1-2026

regarding employment in WSD, however there has not been any French-speaking interest from south of the border to date.

4. Childcare, Nursery and Kindergarten

The Committee received an update on the survey results regarding Childcare, Nursery and Kindergarten.

Feedback was received from 18 schools. Families indicated that key barriers include lack of available spaces, insufficient available hours of operation, affordability, long waitlists and unclear communication, infrastructure and regulatory barriers, program design and developmental gaps, operational instability and quality concerns, transportation challenges, equity and systemic impact.

Families suggested re-establishing and expanding school-based childcare, expanding full day kindergarten and nursery options, increasing wrap around and after school programming, strengthening partnerships and system coordination, increasing capacity through strategic funding, improving quality and developmental supports, providing clear communication and family engagement opportunities, supporting families with multiple children, providing more affordability and access and providing opportunities for community to contribute.

Families also suggested learning from existing models and pilot programs, improving transportation and accessibility, strengthening community partnerships and utilizing community spaces. The Board of Trustees will review the feedback as part of the 2026/2027 budget discussions.

5. 2026 New Ward Boundaries

The Committee received the new Ward Boundaries effective the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election for information.

At a meeting held September 15, 2025, the Board of Trustees approved a by-law to amend the existing ward boundaries. After a thorough review of possible revisions to the ward boundaries that would provide the best outcome to serve our families, the Board of Trustees approved new ward boundaries that provided an equitable distribution of trustee representation per school.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Heppner
Trustee Representative

March 2, 2026

French Immersion Advisory Committee Report No. 1-2026

In Attendance:

Voting Representatives:

École Lansdowne
École LaVénrendrye
École Luxton
École River Heights

Administration:

Matthew Henderson, Superintendent
Cheryl Chuckry, Assistant Superintendent
Shelley Warkentin, Assistant Superintendent
Aaron Benarroch, Director of Recruitment and International Education
Ashley Morrison, Principal, École Victoria Albert
Andrea Hinthier-Janus, Vice-Principal, École Sisler High School
Tarin Howard, Administrative Assistant

Regrets:

École J.B. Mitchell
École Laura Secord
École Sacre-Coeur
École Secondaire Kelvin
École Sir William Osler
École Sisler High School
College Churchill High School
École Garden Grove
École George V
École Riverview
École Robert H. Smith
École Stanley Knowles
École Victoria Albert
École Waterford Springs

Trustees:

Kathy Heppner
Tamara Kuly (regrets)
Jamie Dumont (regrets)