

THE WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION
FRENCH IMMERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS – Tuesday, February 20, 2024

1. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Committee members 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. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

The parent representative from École Sir William Osler volunteered to chair the meeting.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Committee members approved the agenda as distributed.

4. WSD 2024/2025 BUDGET CONSULTATION

At the previous meeting, Committee members were requested to consult with their school communities to identify priorities for consideration as part of the upcoming budget process.

At a meeting held January 15, 2024, the Board of Trustees received the feedback from parents/guardians which included; smaller class sizes, improved classroom instruction, greater academic engagement, increase attendance and graduation rates, improve maths and literacy achievement, additional learning support for teachers in school, provide universal nutrition program, phase-in no-fee lunch supervision, replace three school playgrounds annually, build powerful neighbourhood schools, enhance school safety, improve settlement services for newcomers and expand adult EAL to the Shaughnessy Park area and develop the R.B. Russell career lab.

On February 1, 2024, the provincial government announced funding for education in the amount of \$104.2 million. WSD received an increase of 1% (\$2.6 million) over last year's budget. Committee members were informed that the 1% increase in funding does not cover the costs related to inflation and operations maintaining staffing, programs and services. The government also invested \$30 million to expand the nutrition program and \$3 million to assist school divisions in reducing class size. The Division currently spends \$5 million on the nutrition program. Committee members were informed that a 3.4% increase, which equates to approximately \$51 per average household (2024 average home value in WSD \$246,700) would allow WSD to maintain current programs, services and provide for fully funded nutrition and food programs as well as provide \$2.6 million to be allocated to budget priorities outlined by the school community. An education tax increase of 3% would allow for a budget that maintains current programs and services as well as a fully funded nutrition program, but would reduce allocations towards budget priorities brought forward by school communities.

Committee members were informed that the priorities were identified by the Board of Trustees based on feedback from parents/guardians. The priorities were placed into three categories; Improve student success, create “sticky” schools and community supports. Committee members held round table discussions to identify priorities under the three categories. Overall, Committee members were in favour of smaller class sizes and the addition of learning support teachers to classrooms, however, there was concern about the number of positions available for educational assistants (EA’s).

Committee members were informed that the smaller class structure would not be eliminating the need for EA’s, but rather putting staff in places where they can be more effective and to maximize the support available. Committee members also suggested opening up specialized training for French Speaking EA’s, as there is currently still a shortage of French Speaking substitute teachers. In response to an enquiry, Committee members were informed that smaller classes will be for kindergarten through Grade 8 students.

Committee members expressed support for lunch and nutrition programs and suggested the support be extended to middle years programs as well. In response to an enquiry regarding Occupational and Physical Therapy, Committee members were informed that the draft budget maintains the current services and programs. Committee members enquired about the possibility of implementing a French Immersion International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Committee members were informed that at this time the funds and teaching staff required to offer the IB program in French is not available. Committee members also expressed support for improving transportation for French Immersion students.

Committee members were informed that the Board of Trustees is hosting a budget consultation meeting open to the public on February 26th at 7:00 p.m. at Tec Voc High School. Input on the draft budget can be submitted by email to board@wsd1.org or by registering at 204-755-0231 no later than February 22nd to appear as a delegation at the February 26th meeting. Committee members were informed the Board of Trustees will be submitting the budget to the province by March 15, 2024.

5. WSD 123 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Committee members received a copy of the WSD 123 Continuous Improvement report for review and information. The Committee was informed that the report provides an overview on WSD programs and services during the 2023/2024 school year. As part of the educational mandate in Manitoba, WSD addresses high levels of academic achievement in literacy and numeracy through planning with the Kindergarten to Grade 12 Framework for Continuous Improvement. These divisional plans outline clear outcomes, comprehensive monitoring processes, baseline data, and measurable targets for all students across diverse languages of instruction. The plan also includes strategic utilization of grants, the emphasis on enhancing instructional leadership, and the essential role of stakeholder involvement in developing school division plans.

Committee members were encouraged to share the report with their respective parent councils.

6. LUNCH PROGRAM PILOT

At a previous meeting, Committee members were informed WSD has launched the lunch

program pilot to address the financial strain on families by eliminating fees for lunch supervision in five elementary schools; École Sacré-Coeur, Shaughnessy Park School, Carpathia School, Isaac Brock School and École LaVérendrye. Committee members were informed that the hours for educational assistants has been extended to supervise the lunch hour, as well as hiring people who were previously employed by their Parent Councils, where appropriate.

Committee members were informed that the cost to implement the program Division-wide would be approximately \$5 million. The Division resources for the pilot is limited to \$2.6 million. It is anticipated the program will be phased in gradually, starting with schools that already have the infrastructure to implement the new program.

In response to an enquiry, Committee members were informed that offering the lunch program will not be at the expense of other programs/services. Committee members were informed the implementation of the program is to reduce the stress put on parents/parent councils.

Committee members were informed the lunch program pilot will be reassessed in May to determine the possibility of expanding the program for the next school year.

7. STAGGERED START TIMES

On January 17, 2024, Committee members were informed that many WSD high schools will be implementing either a late start or early dismissal each week beginning in February.

Committee members were informed that one day per week, (mainly Wednesdays), classes will either begin an hour later or end an hour earlier. The purpose of the amended class schedules is to eliminate barriers for approximately 2,500 students who are struggling to get to school for a variety of reasons while also providing staff with time to come together, determine who they are missing, make phone calls, organize home visits and to strategize about how to make schools rich, deep and welcoming.

Committee members were informed that to accommodate for the loss of an hour per week, June exams will be pushed back to add additional instructional days to the calendar, so students will receive the same amount, if not more, instructional time.

Committee members were informed that seven schools have already implemented the amended schedules. Administration will assess the success of the amended schedules to determine if it will be implemented on a division-wide basis.

8. TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Committee members were informed that recruitment efforts have been successful and WSD already has a number of French Immersion teachers lined up to start in the next school year. Committee members were informed that opportunities for French professional development has been opened up to EA's and clerks in WSD.

Committee members were also informed that L'Équipe Jeunesse de Leadership WSD (WSD French Immersion Leadership Team) is a free program where students can develop their French language and leadership skills in collaboration with peers and teacher mentors from all WSD French immersion high schools. Students who join will have the opportunity to

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strengthen French language and leadership skills, participate in fun and educational monthly French activities (i.e. Outings to a theatre/museum, cooking workshops, paint afternoons etc.), they will participate in the local francophone community, and make new French speaking friends and mentors from across the Division. Support is available for students who desire to pursue a career in French Immersion education starting in high school through to post-secondary studies. It is anticipated many of the students who take part in the program will be hired in the Division when they have completed their studies. Committee members were informed that 36 students have already signed up for the program as well as 6 mentor teachers from high schools.

9. ENQUIRIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SCHOOL REPORTS

Committee members were informed that School Reports are submitted in writing and attached to the Summary of Discussion for the meeting.

SCHOOL REPORTS

Parent representatives from the following schools provided a written report on school activities: (attached):

- NIL

Attendance:

Voting Representatives:

École Laura Secord
École Luxton
École River Heights
École Robert H. Smith
École Sir William Osler
École Stanley Knowles

Administration:

Shelley Warkentin, Assistant Superintendent
Amanda Capina, Principal, École LaVèrendrye
Shannon Unrau, Vice-Principal, École J.B. Mitchell
Matt Couture, Principal, École J.B. Mitchell
Dominic Zagari, Principal, École River Heights
Warren Nickerson, Principal, École Luxton
Tarin Howard, Recording Secretary

Regrets:

College Churchill High School
École Garden Grove
École George V
École J.B. Mitchell
École Lansdowne
École LaVèrendrye
École Sacre-Coeur
École Secondaire Kelvin
École Sisler High School
École Victoria Albert
École Waterford Springs

Trustees:

Jamie Dumont
Ann Evangelista

French Immersion Advisory Committee Round Table Discussions

Table 1

- Concerns about OT/PT being a target of budget cuts
- Support no lunch program fees
- Questions about which schools would be having universal nutrition programs
- Support smaller class sizes
 - Support teachers are a priority, are EA's as well?
- Clarification regarding the R.B. Russell Career Lab hub
- Enhancing the French program, adding IB for French Immersion

Table 2

- Support smaller class size, would like to see it extended past grade 8
- EA job security
- More specialized training for EA's
- Support no fee lunch program
 - Concern about other programs losing funding to support lunch program
- Support for raising property tax 3.4%
- Hire more French speaking EA's/learning supports

Table 3

- Funding for nutrition programs in middle school as well (especially in schools with no canteen)