

THE WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION
FRENCH IMMERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS – Thursday, December 17, 2020

1. INTRODUCTIONS

The Committee members were informed that at the Inaugural meeting of the Board held on September 14, 2020, Trustee Jamie Dumont was appointed as the Board's representative and Trustee Yijie (Jennifer) Chen was appointed as the Board's alternate representative to this Committee. Trustee Jamie Dumont and Trustee Yijie (Jennifer) Chen welcomed everyone to the first French Immersion Advisory Committee meeting for the 2020/2021 school year.

2. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

The parent representative from Sisler High School volunteered to Chair the meeting.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Committee members approved the Agenda of December 17, 2020, as distributed.

4. 2021/2022 DRAFT BUDGET

Committee members received an overview on the Budget Consultation for the 2021/2022 school year.

Committee members were informed that the Budget is developed based on the WSD Strategic Plan that aligns with the vision to be engaged, confident, inspired and successful learners. The Committee members were informed that the budget includes:

- Students being provided a comprehensive education with equitable access and diverse opportunities and programs.
- Learning Outcomes to further improve schools attendance and achievements.
- Addressing Barriers to Learning developing initiatives and innovative approaches to address needs and accessibility of students.
- Employing qualified caring and competent staff who are dedicated to the vision, purpose and values of Winnipeg School Division.
- Practicing sustainable development addressing environmental social and economic issues.
- Building relationships with our community by communicating and collaborating with a variety of organizations. Managing tax dollars responsibly to ensure long-term fiscal sustainability.

Committee members were informed that the Board is committed to obtaining budget feedback from school communities, parent councils, residents and staff. The District Advisory meetings will provide parent representatives with an opportunity to share feedback, ideas and questions with the trustees in their local area.

The Committee was informed that this year, the members of the Board are interested in receiving feedback on the following areas:

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- Does your school have the resources it requires to fulfil its educational mandate? If not, what additional resources are needed?
- What is the most important issue for your school?
- Would the parent council favour an increase in property taxes if required to support programming?

In response to an enquiry, Trustee Dumont informed Committee members that WSD's budget represents 87 percent salaries and without an increase in property taxes or provincial funding, a reduction to the budget would need to be considered. Committee members expressed concern that WSD has made reductions to administrative staff, while other administrative staff have received an increase in salary.

In response to an enquiry, Committee members were informed that Bill 64 – Public School Modernization Act, amends the Public Schools Act to enable the Minister of Education to implement regulations once school divisions and districts have been amalgamated. Bill 64 establishes a process for resolving issues regarding the transfer of assets, liabilities and employees from former divisions to new ones. Committee members were informed that Bill 64 is awaiting second reading by the Manitoba Legislation Assembly.

In response to an enquiry, regarding consultants, the Superintendent of Education Services informed Committee members that WSD has established a Professional Support Services (PSS) team, which is comprised of Program Teacher heads and Program Support Teachers to provide support to schools by working across curriculum areas using a coordinated job-embedded approach across the Division.

In response to an enquiry, regarding the by-election, Trustee Dumont informed Committee members that it is anticipated that the by-election will be held in the spring of 2021. Committee members were informed that although Trustees are elected to certain wards, Trustees serve all the schools in WSD.

Trustee Chen informed Committee members that WSD provides programming beyond what is mandated by the province such as Nursery, nutrition programs, full-day kindergarten classes etc. Trustee Chen suggested Committee members review the list of non-mandated programs offered by WSD on the website while considering recommendations on the budget cuts.

(Information can be found at:

<https://www.winnipegssd.ca/About%20WSD/WSD%20Financial%20Facts/Documents/WSD%20Financial%20Facts.pdf>)

In response to an enquiry, regarding provincial and federal funding for Covid, Committee members were informed that the province is requiring school boards to spend their entire budget for the year before the additional funding would be made available. All school boards are responsible for tracking Covid specific expenditures and if a school board is in a deficit the province will evaluate whether or not it will be eligible for additional funds. WSD has currently spent approximately \$1 million dollars on technology and continues to consult with schools on what additional needs are required, for example hand-washing stations. Committee members stated that the challenge is less about the budget and more about the shortage of technology available.

In response to an enquiry regarding the Strategic Plan 2016-2020, Trustee Dumont informed Committee members that the Board will provide an updated Strategic Plan in the near future.

In response to an enquiry, Committee members were informed that the WSD's French Language Program expenditures are approximately \$45 million. WSD received approximately \$1 million in revenue from the Province and equalization represent approximately \$6.3 million resulting in a shortfall of \$37 million. Committee members expressed concern that French Immersion programming is mainly covered by special levy and not core provincial funding. Trustee Dumont informed Committee members that WSD also provides programming vital to the community such as language programs, nursery, and full day kindergarten which are largely funded through the special levy as these programs are not mandated by the Province.

In response to an enquiry, regarding the Build from Within Program, Committee members were informed that the Build from Within program has partnered with the Faculty of Education at University of Winnipeg and inspire Canada as well as other service providers, to assist in developing a path for Indigenous High School Students to become teachers. Trustee Dumont informed Committee members that the program has had great results and this model may potentially assist in recruiting French Immersion teachers.

In response to an enquiry, regarding provincial funding, Trustee Dumont informed Committee members that the province does not release provincial funding until late January/February and school boards are required to submit their budget to the Province by March 15, 2021.

Trustee Dumont recommended that parent representative share the budget information with their respective parent councils and provide feedback to the Board on the three questions outlined in the budget brochure.

5. RENAMING OF CECIL RHODES SCHOOL

Committee members were informed that the Board of Trustees approved a motion on October 5, 2020, that the administration begin a consultation process to engage students, parents/guardians and members of the community on the interest of renaming of Cecil Rhodes School and that the results of the consultation be provided to the Board of Trustees no later than March 15th, 2021.

Trustee Chen informed Committee members the request to review the name of Cecil Rhodes School was in response to a petition with 1,700 signatures requesting that the Board of Trustees consider a name change. Trustee Chen informed Committee members that while the history of Cecil Rhodes includes an acknowledgement of business contributions and achievements, he is also known for his involvement and support in politics which upheld segregationist policies against non-white citizens of South Africa.

Committee members were informed that the administration is in the process of obtaining feedback from a variety of stakeholders. The consultation process will include current students attending Cecil Rhodes School as well as former students. The students will receive the history of Cecil Rhodes and have an opportunity to discuss the name of the school and share different perspectives.

The administration will also be consulting with staff, parents, and the community to obtain feedback. The WSD website will provide an opportunity for people to complete and provide feedback.

Trustee Chen informed Committee members that she is pleased that the school communities are giving consideration to the renaming of Cecil Rhodes School, as this matter has resulted in some inappropriate comments being directed towards her for raising this issue. Trustee Chen stated that her experiences validates the importance of this matter and that these discussions will also serve as an educational opportunity.

A parent representative expressed an interest in renaming Greenway School based on the history of Thomas Greenway. Trustee Dumont informed Committee members that WSD guidelines outline the process to consider a name change and would require a request from the school or community members.

Following a discussion the Committee agreed to forward materials to Principal and students of Greenway School to consider whether there is interest to pursue a name change for the school.

That the History of Thomas Green be forwarded to principal and students of Greenway School to determine whether there is an interest to consider a name change for the school.

Trustee Chen encouraged parent representatives to discuss this matter with their respective parent councils and submit feedback to the Board for consideration. The Committee was also informed that the administration will establish a Cecil Rhodes School - Renaming Committee consisting of the Superintendent of Education Services, two parents, two students, the principal and the Director of Buildings, based on the results of the school and community feedback.

6. SCHOOL RESOURCES OFFICER PROGRAM

Committee were informed that the Board of Trustees received presentations, petitions and correspondence from individuals requesting the removal of SRO's in schools mainly due to their role, and interactions with students.

As a result, the Board of Trustees approved a motion that the School Resource Officer Program (SRO) be referred to the Finance/Personnel Committee for discussion. On November 16, 2020, the Board of Trustees gave direction to the administration to develop a comprehensive consultation process to evaluate the SRO program.

Committee members were informed that the administration is in the process of developing a survey to obtain feedback from students, staff and parents/guardians. A third party will be retained to consult with WSD community members and organizations to collect and compile feedback on the SRO Program.

Committee members felt that having police officers at schools can be problematic for newcomers and refugees and discussed whether the funding could be redirected to support other programs/services in schools.

7. FRENCH IMMERSION STATUS OF TEACHER & RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

The Committee requested that Recruitment Efforts be added to the agenda for discussion.

In response to an enquiry, Committee members were informed that the Board of Trustees granted an additional ten positions to assist schools. This is above and beyond what schools receive with their enrollment allocations.

In response to an enquiry, regarding recruitment, Committee members were informed that WSD has been continuing to recruit and hire more French Immersion staff; however, there is a shortage of staff available including substitute teachers and support staff in the Province and across Canada. Committee members were informed that WSD is making certain the French competencies are present when recruiting teachers. WSD is also considering teachers who are in term positions. The principals have completed performance assessments and candidates participate in an interview process. WSD is taking aggressive measures to recruit the best teachers early in the school year.

The Committee was informed that WSD and St. Boniface University will be hosting recruitment fairs in the near future. Principals and Vice-Principals will be attending to provide assistance.

8. FRENCH IMMERSION ENROLMENT UPDATE

The Committee requested that French Immersion Enrolment be added to the agenda for discussion.

In response to an enquiry, Committee members were informed that French Immersion Enrolment has been increasing on a regular basis. In 2018-2019 over 4,700 students were enrolled in French Immersion Program. This year, enrolment has decreased due to Covid with many students having the option to be homeschooled.

In response to an enquiry, regarding the fluctuation of enrolment, Committee members were informed that enrolment in the early years remains stable. WSD has noted a decrease in French Immersion enrolment once students enter grade six and continues to decrease into high school as students look for more variety in programming, as well as the desire to remain with school friends who may have moved out of the program.

Trustee Dumont informed Committee members that the Board approved the following motion to conduct:

a) a five year analysis on student enrollment in French Immersion Programs per grade/per school; including students who chose to exit the French Immersion program and transition to the International Baccalaureate and the Advanced Placement Programs, which are not currently offered in French Immersion;

b) an analysis on the feasibility of offering the French Immersion International Baccalaureate and/or Advanced Placement Programming to students;

c) the retention and teacher recruitment strategies for French Immersion programs, including the resources and financial requirements to establish a Build From Within Teacher Development Program for French Immersion teachers as a means to enhance recruitment and retention and to encourage the development of French Immersion teachers; and

d) that these items be referred to the Policy/Program for review.

However, due to Covid meetings have been delayed. It is anticipated that a report will be provided to the Board in the near future and the information will be shared with the French Immersion Committee. Committee members were informed that this may result in the development of a Strategic Plan for French Immersion.

A parent representative suggested that WSD encourage students to continue in French Immersion Program and suggested exit surveys be conducted to identify reasons for transferring out of the program.

9. REMOTE LEARNING

The Committee requested that Remote Learning be added to the agenda for discussion.

In response to an enquiry, Committee members were informed that virtual school was put in place to support students with medical conditions. French Immersion virtual learning programs were delayed due to the difficulty in hiring French Teachers.

A Committee member commented that remote/virtual learning has been challenging for teachers. Committee members expressed concern for the mental health of the teaching staff who may be experiencing burn out due to the additional responsibility associated with remote learning.

Committee members were informed that the province recently made an announcement that all Grade 7-12 students will transition to remote learning for the period January 4th – January 15th. Nursery to Grade 6 schools may continue to offer in class learning where social distancing requirements can be made.

Committee members expressed concern for the mental health of the teaching staff who may be experiencing burn out due to the additional responsibility associated with remote learning.

10. TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

The Committee requested that Transportation Update be added to the agenda for discussion.

In response to an enquiry regarding transportation and the lack of communication from WSD, the Committee was informed that transportation services has resumed for students based on a reduced capacity (one child per seat unless from same household or same in-school cohort). Parents and caregivers are strongly encouraged to transport students if they are able to minimize the number of students riding on the bus. To ensure safety and adherence to the Public Health Orders, WSD is not able to provide transportation services for Grade 5/6 students, including non-eligible and fee for service students.

Student Transportation Services may operate at normal capacity with enhanced sanitization and other measures as advised by public health. WSD will transport students who qualify for bussing in accordance with the Public Schools Act.

If WSD is unable to transport a child under Level Yellow or Level Orange, who under normal circumstances would qualify for transportation, WSD will provide compensation to parents/guardians at the rate of \$29 per month per child if you are able to assist in transporting

your child(ren) to school. In addition, WSD will provide options such as Before and After School care, Winnipeg Transit Peggo passes and support remote learning.

11. ENQUIRIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SCHOOL REPORTS

School Reports

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

- École Victoria-Albert School

12. GUIDELINES FOR BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Committee members reviewed a copy of the Guidelines for Board Advisory Committees for information. Committee members were encouraged to direct any questions to the Board and Community Liaison Officer.

13. NEXT MEETING DATE

Committee members were informed the French District Advisory Committee meeting will be held in February (T.B.D.) to continue discussions on the 2021-2022 Budget to provide feedback to the Board of Trustees before March 15, 2021

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IN ATTENDANCE:

Voting Representatives

Collège Churchill
École George V School
École J.B. Mitchell School
École Secondaire Kelvin High School
École Landsdowne
École Laura Secord School

École LaVerendrye
École River Heights School
École Riverview School
École Robert H. Smith School
École Sisler High School
École Sir William Osler

Regrets:

École Garden Grove School
École Luxton School
École Sacré Coeur
École Stanley Knowles School
École Victoria-Albert School
École Waterford Springs School

Administration

Fatima Mota, Superintendent, Education Services
Paulette Huggins, Principal, École J.B. Mitchell School
Ruth Schappert, Principal, École LaVerendrye
Brad Burns, Principal, École River Heights School
Nadia De Luca, Vice-Principal, École River Heights School
Andrea, Powell, Principal, École Robert H. Smith School
Warren Nickerson, Vice-Principal, École River Heights School
Dominique Ostermann, Principal, École Sir William Osler
Stephanie Helander, Recording secretary

Trustees:

Jamie Dumont
Jennifer Chen

École Victoria-Albert School
January 5, 2021
School Report for French Immersion Advisory Committee

École Victoria-Albert School is a dual track English and French Immersion elementary school located in the Inner City Area of the Winnipeg School Division. Our school enrollment of 350 students from Nursery to Grade 6 has approximately 250 students in the English Program and 100 students in the French Immersion Program. Our student population reflects the rich cultural diversity of our city.

We have seven French Immersion classes: Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3^¼, Grade 4^¾, Grade 5 and Grade 6.

Priorities for 2020-2021

*To provide robust and comprehensive education, equitable access, diverse opportunity, and a supportive learning environment for all students.

*To further improve school attendance and achievements through the exploration of additional programs and strategies.

*To further develop initiatives and innovative approaches addressing individual needs and accessibility requirements, mental health issues, and nutritional needs.

*To continue with the high standard of French and English Literacy and math instruction in order to provide students with solid academic foundations.

*To continue to address barriers to learning and explore innovative teaching practices (including virtual on-line platforms).

*To strengthen and enhance sustainable development initiatives that address environmental, social, and economic issues.

Due to the pandemic and all the health restrictions, our staff and students have been very creative in finding ways to meet and connect. We have weekly virtual announcements and monthly virtual assemblies. We also had a very powerful virtual Winter Concert where all the students shared their wishes for the New Year!

Communication with parents is critical, therefore we send out monthly newsletters via email and we send paper copies home as well. Our *Meet the Staff* and *Tri-Conferences* were done virtually as well. As always, parents are encouraged to email or call the school/teacher whenever they have questions or concerns.