

**FRENCH IMMERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 3-2021**

To the Chair and Members

Winnipeg Public School Board:

November 18, 2021

The French Immersion Advisory Committee reports as follows:

**1. Acknowledgement of Indigenous People of Canada**

The Committee was informed that the meeting of the French Immersion District Advisory Committee is taking place on Treaty One Land and the traditional homeland of the Metis Nation.

**2. French Immersion Program Review**

The Committee was informed that at a meeting held May 4, 2021, a five-year analysis report was developed to provide information on student enrollment, including the transition to the International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement programs, and the feasibility of offering these programs in French.

The Committee was informed that WSD has the highest number of French Immersion schools in Manitoba, outside division scolaire franco-manitobaine, with approximately 4,750 students enrolled in the French Immersion Program, currently offered in eighteen schools.

The Committee was informed that the enrollment numbers in the French Immersion Program have been steadily increasing in the past 15 years, from 3,110 in 2005/2006 to 4,750 in 2019/2020. This represents an increase of 1,640 students or 52.7 percent since 2005/2006.

The Committee was informed that on average, the early years (Kindergarten to Grade 3) have the largest number of enrolled students. The lowest numbers occur in the secondary years (Grades 9 to 12), as well as in Nursery. The low numbers in Nursery are due to the fact that the French Immersion Nursery program is only available in the four French Milieu schools in WSD (LaVérendrye, Sacré-Coeur, Lansdowne and Sir William Osler). The numbers also show that there was an increase at each grade level over the last 15 years, with Grades 7 and 9 showing an average retention rate of 74 percent and 71 percent, respectively.

The Committee was informed that since 2005, 84.9 percent French Immersion students remained in the French Immersion Program the following year. Of those who did not remain in the program, 0.3 percent changed to the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program, 4.6 percent switched over to the English Program and the remaining 10.2 percent left the Division. Grade 8 (77.5 percent), and Grade 9 (83.0 percent) showed the lowest percentage of students continuing in French Immersion the following year. This is expected as some schools in the Division only go up to those grades and therefore, students have the opportunity to change school and program. The lowest transition rate was for Grade 8 students, where only 77.5 percent of students moved on to French Immersion in Grade 9. Over 9 percent of students in Grade 8 changed to the English Program in Grade 9 and 13.4 percent of them moved out of Division. In Grade 12, the percentage of students who left the Division (96.4 percent) takes into account students who graduated, as well as those who have left the Division. The Committee was informed that WSD needs to continue strengthening the option courses in French and offer more Advance Placement (AP) courses.

The Committee was informed that the main challenges influencing retention are student learning difficulties in the earlier grades, while attrition during the transition years and limited options account for losses in Grades 8 to 12.

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The Committee was informed that the recommendation is that WSD not pursue the implementation of a French Immersion International Baccalaureate Program given the current recruitment challenges, any additional implementation of French courses and/or programs would further augment the difficulty in recruiting qualified staff. The Committee was encouraged to take back recommendation to the Parent Council for further discussions.

### **3. WSD Budget Consultation 2022/2023**

The Assistant Secretary-Treasurer was in attendance to provide an overview of the 2022/2023 Budget Consultation. The Committee was informed that at a meeting held May 4, 2021, a five-year analysis report was developed to provide information on student enrollment, including the transition to the International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement programs, and the feasibility of offering these programs in French.

The Committee was informed that on March 9, 2021, the Board of Trustees approved a budget for the 2021/2022 school year in the amount of \$421,039,400. Last year, the Provincial Government directed school divisions throughout the province to freeze property tax levies at 2020 levels, leading to a reduction of 0.54 percent on the property tax levy for WSD homeowners, or a decrease of about \$8 a year on the average assessed home value of \$225,700 within WSD. This reduced provincial investment in education resulted in reductions for students of \$4,457,395 in WSD and budget reductions for most divisions across the city.

The Committee was informed that the province made it impossible for WSD to raise revenue through property taxes to be able to fund programs that are unique and valued within the WSD community.

The Committee was informed that it is anticipated that this year, the provincial government will continue to fund education at the same level as last year and freeze property taxes which may result in a significant loss of programs and services for students. As the Board of Trustees begins its discussions and consultations with the public regarding its 2022/2023 budget, several significant factors must be taken into consideration such as a drop in enrollment, rising labour costs, inflation, provincial funding and cap on property taxes.

The Committee was informed that the September 30, 2018, enrollment count totalled 33,093 which reflected a steady trend of enrollment of approximately 33,000 students per year over the previous decade. However, since then, enrollment has dropped since 2019 (1.05 percent), 2020 (9.62 percent), 2021 (2.32 percent). The Committee was informed that the pandemic contributed to the drop in enrollment due to home schooling. The Committee was informed that the drop in enrollment directly results in a reduction of provincial funding which represents about 60 percent of WSD's overall funding.

The Committee was informed that the salary and benefit costs represent approximately 87 percent of the budget. The Committee was informed that due to arbitration rulings in the spring of 2020, significant increases in labour costs have occurred for the 2020/2021 fiscal year and will have a large impact on the 2022/2023 budget. To date there has been no additional funding from the Province to cover these costs however efforts in appealing for more funding will continue.

The Committee was informed that year-over-year inflation in Manitoba as of September 30, 2021 was 4.66 percent. The Committee was informed that excluding the effect of enrollment, provincial funding has increased at the rate of approximately 0.6 percent over the last few years which is less than the rate of inflation in Manitoba including non-pandemic years (2018- 2.53 percent, 2019 – 2.27 percent).

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The Committee was informed that the property tax revenue that represents about 40 percent of WSD's overall funding has been capped at 2 percent for the past few years. WSD's recent overall funding of approximately 1.16 percent is contributing to the funding pressures.

The Committee was informed that these issues are based on the current information prior to the final Provincial funding announcement in early February 2022.

The Committee was informed that the Board is committed to obtaining feedback from school communities, parent councils, residents and staff groups for the 2022/2023 budget. The District Advisory meetings will provide parent representatives with an opportunity to share feedback, ideas and questions with the trustees.

The Committee was informed that the members of the Board are interested in receiving feedback on resources required to fulfill educational mandates, the most important issues for schools and suggestions to address budget challenges.

Parent Representative suggested to have a townhall presentation with all parents in the division and to get their feedback and suggestions for the 2022/2023 budget.

The Committee was informed that WSD financial facts can be found on the WSD website that outlines the funding gaps. The Committee was informed that the French Immersion program is funded by the special levy by 75 percent.

The Committee was informed that a news release from the Manitoba government stated that a new funding model will be developed for the 2022/2023 school year to ensure that educational opportunities for students is equitable throughout the province. The Committee was encouraged to continue discussing options for raising revenue and budget solutions with their respective parent councils.

In response to an inquiry, The Committee was informed that WSD supports the concept of "school of choice" both for student residents within the boundaries of WSD as well for the student residents within other public school divisions in Manitoba. The Committee was informed that a non-resident nursery student will have an access to the WSD Nursery Program by paying the non-resident fee.

The Committee suggested that the Community Consultation information be shared with all parents.

The Committee was informed that feedback may be submitted before February 2022.

#### **4. Education Modernization Act Update**

The Committee was informed that on September 1, 2021, Premier of Manitoba was appointed due to the resignation of the Honorable Brian Pallister. The Premier of Manitoba announced that Bill 64 The Education Modernization Act will be removed from provincial business in the fall due to public concerns expressed regarding various components of Bill 64, namely the proposed governance model.

The Committee was informed that the withdrawal of Bill 64 allows WSD to continue to provide valuable services and programs such as Nutrition programs, Housing assistance, Health connections, Reading Recovery, Math Pathways, Autism programs, Anxiety Programs, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Programs, all of which are vital services to support our students, families and community.

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The Committee was informed that although Bill 64 – The Education Modernization Act has been withdrawn by the provincial government, the Minister of Education has publicly stated that the proposed governance model outlined in Bill 64 appeared to be the most significant concern for parents and stakeholders.

The Committee was informed that the Minister of Education also stated commitment to implementing the three pillars outlined in the “Better Education Starts Today” (B.E.S.T.) strategy; under the headings High Quality Learning and Outcomes, Future Ready Students and Excellence in Teaching and Leadership.

The Committee was informed that while WSD supports some of the key priority actions outlined in the B.E.S.T. strategies to improve student outcomes, any changes to the delivery of education in Manitoba must be piloted by the government to ensure that new initiatives will contribute to the educational success of the student. The outcomes must demonstrate an ability to benefit the unique needs of supporting our students and school communities.

The Committee was informed that as the largest school division in Manitoba, WSD will continue to be engaged in discussions with the Province to maintain programs and services for students. WSD remains committed to putting students, teachers and public education first.

**5. COVID - 19**

The Committee was informed that public health officials announced new public health orders that came into effect on October 5, 2021. While the province has moved to the restricted (orange) level of the Pandemic Response System, schools will remain at caution (yellow). Public health officials will continue to recommend school-specific approaches if increasing risk is identified.

The Committee was provided an overview of the “Restoring Safe Schools” plan outlined by the Provincial government including mask requirements. Hygiene requirements, vaccination and testing requirements, and isolation requirements.

The Committee was informed that currently the province has requested limited access to lockers. The Committee was informed the Division will discuss alternate solutions with the province to provide students with access to lockers.

The Committee was informed that WSD will follow the public health orders regarding student participation in indoor sport activities that requires 12-17 years of age to have at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose or a recent negative COVID-19 test.

**6. School Resource Officer Program**

At a meeting held November 1, 2021, the Board of Trustees approved a motion to distribute the results of the evaluation of the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program to all District Advisory Committees for information.

The Committee was informed that as part of the 2021/2022 Budget discussions, this matter was referred to the Finance/ Personnel Committee for consideration. On March 9, 2021, the Board of trustees removed the SRO program from the budget effective July 1, 2021.

The Committee was informed that the School Resource (SRO) program was initiated in Winnipeg School Division (WSD) in 2002, and was initially called “The North End School Resource Office Partnership Initiative”. In response to concerns raised about the role of police officers in schools across Canada, the Board of Trustees requested a review of the SRO program which was launched in January 2021.

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The Committee was informed that the goal of the survey was to review the merit of the SRO program in school including: support for safe and caring schools; impact of SRO program on safety for students, parents and staff; influence of SROs on student, staff and community ecosystem; program enhancement potentials and provide feedback to the Board of Trustees whether the SRO program should continue.

The Committee was informed that the key findings are based on the total number of possible participants among WSD students, parent/guardians and WSD staff. WSD Students in the group include only Grade 7 to 12.

The Committee was informed that the survey data shows support for the SRO program to continue with 36 percent of students, 57 percent of parents/guardians, 74 percent of staff and 100 percent of SROs. A third of students (35 percent), 47 percent of parents/guardians and 10 percent of staff members were unaware of the program or were not sure if the program existed in their school. The results indicate that the SRO program and objectives require more awareness and understanding by students, staff and parents/guardians.

The Committee was informed that WSD is continuing to have discussions on promoting students and staff safety in schools.

Respectfully Submitted,

JAMIE DUMONT  
Trustee Representative

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French Immersion Advisory Committee Report No. 3-2021**In Attendance:****Voting Representatives:**

Ecole Garden Grove  
Ecole Secondaire Kelvin  
Ecole Lansdowne  
Ecole Laura Secord  
Ecole River Heights  
Ecole Riverview  
Ecole Robert H. Smith  
Ecole Sir William Osler  
Ecole Laverendrye

**Regrets:**

Ecole Waterford Springs  
College Churchill High School  
Ecole Garden Grove  
Ecole George V  
Ecole J.B. Mitchell  
Ecole Luxton  
Ecole Sacre-Coeur  
Ecole Stanley Knowles  
Ecole Victoria Albert  
Ecole Sisler High School

**Administration:**

Fatima Mota, Superintendent  
Navinder Basra, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer  
Brenda Lapointe, Board and Community Liaison Officer  
Ryan Hughes, Principal, College Churchill High School  
Nathan Tocher, Vice-Principal, College Churchill High School  
Nancy Karpinsky, Principal, Ecole Garden Grove  
Paul Ong, Vice-Principal, Ecole Garden Grove  
Matthew Couture, Principal, Ecole George V  
Paullete Huggins, Principal, Ecole J.B. Mitchell  
Nicole Kurtz, Vice-Principal, Ecole J.B. Mitchell  
Timothy Cox, Principal, Ecole Secondaire Kelvin  
Melanie Charbonneau, Vice-Principal, Ecole Secondaire Kelvin  
Ruth Schappert, Principal, Ecole Laverendrye  
Dominic Zagari, Principal, Ecole River Heights  
Adam Dyck, Principal, Ecole Robert H. Smith  
Dominique Ostermann, Principal, Ecole, Sire William Osler  
Amanda Capina, Vice-Principal, Sisler High School  
Andrea Powell, Principal, Ecole Stanley Knowles  
Neila Husack, Principal, Ecole Victoria Albert  
Manuel Silva, Principal, Ecole Waterford Springs  
Elisa Solomon, Recording Secretary

**Trustees:**

Jamie Dumont  
Jennifer Chen (Regrets)