
Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2013

To: Superintendent Mike Hooker & School Board Trustees

From: Concerned parents in SD19

Regarding: Planning for French Immersion in 2013

We are writing to express our concern that the School District is not taking appropriate planning measures to prepare for the possible implementation of Early French Immersion in September 2013. Although there is still some confusion around how many families are fully committed to enrolling their children in Kindergarten and Grade 1 there are also other issues that require some attention in the interim.

One concern that has been raised by the past Superintendent concerns staffing. Between retirements, maternity leaves and the current number of temporary contracts, it doesn't seem likely that any teachers would lose their jobs due to a requirement for French Immersion teachers throughout the years. Further, there are a number of new Educational Assistants in training who may have a bilingual background but have not had a chance to use it yet.

Another concern is around school and classroom organization. This issue is always a challenge in a small district, regardless of the presence of French Immersion, and will continue to be a challenge as kindergarten enrolment is projected to increase significantly in the next five years. However we are not unique in these challenges and Revelstoke parents are confident that with some creativity and a *genuine attempt to make this work*, these challenges can be overcome. Stephanie Melnyk and Vanessa Morrow, working with Canadian Parents for French, have some suggestions and are prepared to assist the superintendent in arriving at a functional solution.

Delaying the start of FI until 2014 will not result in any more time for implementation. By the time surveys are sent out, results are compiled, a few families are contacted directly and the Trustees have a look at the results, we're into February again. A further complication is the number of interested parents whose children are currently in kindergarten. Many of these parents are fully prepared to hold their children back a year to be included in the program. This would only complicate the logistics of class size for both the initial FI year and the preceding English year, which would lose a significant number of students.

Now is the time to really try and make this work. Canadian Parents for French has stated *"...in order to have enough time to create a program for the following school year, the survey should go out around January – February, roughly 9 months before the program is intended to open."* We are currently on schedule, so if there is genuine goodwill on the part of the SD19 to look into this beneficial program, let's not lose any momentum.

Regards,