



NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BUSINESS COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING

ACTION SHEET

DATE: April 12, 2023
TO: Business Committee
FROM: Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer
SUBJECT: International Student Elementary School Program

Recommendation:

The Business Committee recommends that the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) approve the expansion of the International Student Elementary School Program.

Background:

The District has a robust secondary international education program. The program provides an excellent cultural experience for both visiting and domestic students. The program subsidizes the district with additional revenue that fluctuates year over year per student enrolment but over the last two years has averaged at approximately \$6.5 million dollars per year. However, this includes revenue collected for direct homestay payments so retained revenue is approximately \$4.5 million dollars per year. This provides not only extra blocks in schools, outdoor education opportunities for all but also general revenue to pay District operating expenses.

The District has a very small k-7 ISE program. The K-7 program focuses on students who are not eligible for free tuition as their parents are not residents. These students, while requiring ELL supports do not require homestay parents or the District resources associated with that aspect of the program. Further, these students tend to enroll for multiple years.

This Action Sheet is seeking Board direction on the expansion of the K-7 ISE program.

Discussion:

As staff prepare the final Rutherford re-opening report it has become clear that the near term population of the North End continues to grow but likely due to interest rates and affordability the family growth is not quite as fast as anticipated. However, we are seeing continued pressure at Randerson and Departure Bay and any minor miss on enrollment projections could limit our ability to find spaces for students in those schools.

At the same time, re-opening Rutherford would alleviate the need for portables at Rutherford, McGirr, and with the right boundary Departure Bay and still have space for future growth. However, merely shuffling existing students into Rutherford would see Rutherford under enrolled. Further, preliminarily Hammond Bay is not seeing the demand anticipated at the time of its build further some of the growth appears to be coming from Quarterway and/or Pauline Haarer (note this is preliminary at this time). These trends will impact the economical timing of opening of Rutherford.

If the District could expand our K-7 ISE program this may be a solution to this issue. The demand for ISE is in the North End. Providing spaces at McGirr, Frank Ney and Rutherford (and Randerson) once its catchment is shrunk would defray the costs of the operational impact of a reopening. It would also ensure (if successful) robust enrollments as the programming grew.

Increased international student enrollment at the K-7 level will require Central Registration and the ISE Program to work closely together to ensure that the needs of local students are met while we endeavor to place fee paying international students in available spaces. Staff have begun the conversation with other school districts on the lower mainland, who have historically enrolled sizable numbers of international students at the elementary level, regarding best practices, timing of school transfer request, completion of school orgs, to best facilitate the accommodation of an expansion of the international elementary enrollment. More conversations with other districts will occur to develop a plan that works for our program and district.

There is risk in expanding elementary ISE. Specifically, if the Board was expecting the program to subsidize the opening of a school if the numbers fail to appear then there is a financial impact. Further, when spaces are used by international students there may be instances where domestic parents may not be able to access the school of their choice. Finally, we note that these students will require ELL supports which are difficult to fill positions.

However, staff require the Board's direction on this issue which will influence other recommendations. Specifically, staff is completing its recommendation on the re-opening of Rutherford and more specifically the year in which it should occur. A memo will be coming in the May Business Committee that the Board's direction on the expansion of international students will directly influence.

