

NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BUSINESS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING
ACTION SHEET

DATE: December 11, 2024
TO: Business Committee
FROM: Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer
SUBJECT: Late French Immersion

Recommendation:

The Business Committee recommends that the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) approve the recommendation of staff to discontinue intake for Late-French Immersion in the District for grade 6 for the 2025-26 school year and that late French Immersion will be discontinued for the 2026-27 school year.

Background:

This action sheet will provide background information on late-French Immersion and the reasoning for staff's recommendation to phase out the program in the District.

Discussion:

Late French Immersion was instituted approximately 10 years ago in the District. The program provides a later opportunity for students to begin their journey with Immersion. At the time the program started, the District had high demand for early Immersion leading to some families not being able to access Immersion and this program offered families a second opportunity to access secondary French Immersion.

Since that time the District has both expanded access to early Immersion and seen low uptake on late French Immersion in addition to consistent attrition from grade 6 to 7. This demand shift has been particularly pronounced since COVID, with spaces remaining available in both early and late French Immersion. From the beginning of Late French Immersion through to this year, neither the grade 6 or grade 7 classes has been at full capacity. There has never been a waitlist for Late French Immersion. For the 2024-25 school year, late French Immersion at Quarterway has two classes: grade 6 - 20 students; and grade 7 - 25 students. In addition, the complexity of the classrooms in late French Immersion has typically been lower than in the regular program.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
LFI - Grade 6	23	18	27	26	19	16	27	20	26	26	20
LFI - Grade 7	0	20	19	25	22	18	17	28	17	25	25
Total	23	38	46	51	41	34	44	48	43	51	45

In addition to declining demand there are four operational considerations for the Board to consider:

1. Financial

Based on the numbers, after 2026-27 the financial impact to the District is up to \$420,722 as follows:

French Immersion Program Costing Synopsis

November 25, 2024

1) FI Program Costs (Budgeted)

Costs/Site	HB	NOE	PH	QW
AO	369,113	98,315	196,630	369,113
Teaching	2,635,605	1,110,058	1,576,365	2,609,094
Clerical	98,153	39,902	71,100	98,153
X-Guard	-	7,346	-	-
Supervision	17,847	5,949	17,847	17,847
Subtotal	3,120,718	1,261,570	1,861,942	3,094,207
EA's	136,548	46,310	133,587	181,077
Operating Budget	38,482	17,100	23,939	37,826
Total Costs	3,295,748	1,324,980	2,019,468	3,313,110

2) FI Program Costs without Late FI (Budgeted)

Costs/Site	HB	NOE	PH	QW
AO	369,113	98,315	196,630	196,630
Teaching	2,635,605	1,110,058	1,576,365	2,373,125
Clerical	98,153	39,902	71,100	89,450
X-Guard	-	7,346	-	-
Supervision	17,847	5,949	17,847	17,847
Subtotal	3,120,718	1,261,570	1,861,942	2,677,052
EA's	136,548	46,310	133,587	181,077
Operating Budget	38,482	17,100	23,939	34,259
Total Costs	3,295,748	1,324,980	2,019,468	2,892,388

Variance	-	-	-	(420,722)
Total Cost(Savings)				(420,722)

NOTE 1: Costs above are best estimates

NOTE 2: Custodial, Transportation, Maintenance and District Overhead Costs not included

NOTE 3: Future costs have not been incremented for GWI's and/or inflation

Essentially, the savings would stem from two divisions being folded in addition to the school population dropping below the ratio to have a vice principal. Note that if increased enrollment occurs, the school may continue to be entitled to a vice principal. Further, the students not attending late French Immersion could lead to another school requiring an additional classroom. The

classroom would be organized in a similar fashion to other schools and class size would be more equitable. However, there is little doubt that the late French Immersion program is costlier than the regular program on a per student basis. Notably, the drop in early French Immersion demand and attrition of students from the program also indicates there is a subsidy for this program. However, staff continue to monitor and are not making any recommended changes at this time with respect to early French Immersion.

2. Impact on NDSS

As staff have previously reported, the year prior to the opening of École Hammond Bay's expansion, the District allowed enrollment in a 3rd cohort of kindergarteners in the school. As these students pass grade 7, they will attend NDSS. Without any other change over a period of 5 years they would add a minimum of 100 additional students to the school. By removing late French Immersion from Quarterway, the impact will be muted. It should be noted that some of the late French Immersion students would attend NDSS in any event due to their regular program catchments. However, as the District continues to advocate for NDSS it will be able to show that between potentially moving some students to Wellington it is also lessening NDSS' potential growth.

3. No Impact on Current Students

The recommendation is intended to limit the impact on current students. The students currently in grade 6 would be able to continue to grade seven, despite the extremely small class size (compared to other grade 6 classes across the District). They would also be able to move onto NDSS as in the past. However, it should be recognized that there will be parents who were interested in late French Immersion who will no longer have access to the program.

4. Consultation

While the decision would not impact current students enrolled in late French Immersion, there are likely parents who are anticipating enrolling in this program. However, given enrollment begins in January setting an extensive consultation period would put a decision outside of the enrollment window and would result in some students being enrolled and then required to go back to their home schools. This would create uncertainty at Quarterway, impacted catchment schools, for enrollment forecasts and budgeting and most importantly for families. Further, delaying the decision for a year means postponing the reallocation of the savings to other District priorities and/or using the money to prevent service cuts depending on the District's preliminary budget presumptions.

Conclusion

The proposal before the Board is a difficult decision. It will impact educational choices for approximately 22 prospective students (based on the 10-year average enrollment) immediately and up to 45 over two years. However, the short-term impacts on equity and the finances of the District, consistent attrition, declining demand in early French Immersion and the longer term impact on NDSS enrollment make the decision timely as we attempt to focus our resources on the priorities of the strategic plan.