

**DATE:** January 23, 2018

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** French Immersion Programming Within Edmonton Public Schools  
(Response to Request for Information #007)

**ORIGINATOR:** Dr. Lorne Parker, Assistant Superintendent

**RESOURCE  
STAFF:** David Evans, Scott Humphrey, Valerie Leclair

**REFERENCE:** November 28, 2017, Board meeting (Trustee Estabrooks)

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**ISSUE**

The following information was requested:

1. How many early entry, middle entry and late French Immersion programs are currently offered within Edmonton Public?
2. What is the current enrolment numbers for these programs?
3. How many students was the District unable to accommodate within a French Immersion program during the 2017–2018 school year and at which school?
4. Does the District know how many students who currently live within Ward D travel outside of the Ward to attend a French Immersion Program?
5. Does the District maintain a wait list of students who would like to attend French Immersion and if so, how many students are on that wait list?
6. What is the projected enrolment for French Immersion programs within Edmonton Public Schools for the next five years?

**BACKGROUND**

The French Immersion program is a unique learning environment where French is used as the language of instruction for subjects such as mathematics, science, social studies and physical education for a significant part of the day, other than English Language Arts. In Edmonton Public Schools, French Immersion (Early and Continuing) and Late French Immersion programs are offered as programs of choice or alternative programs to interested students. Currently, the French Immersion program begins in Kindergarten (Early) and continues through to Grade 12 (Continuing). The District also offers the Late French Immersion program which begins in Grade 7 and continues through to Grade 12. Edmonton Public Schools does not offer a middle entry French Immersion program. The goal of French Immersion is to support students in their learning as they develop functional fluency in French by the end of Grade 12.

In 2002, as part of the French Language Renewal Project, the District worked with an external consultant to research the viability of offering either Middle or Late French Immersion to allow further opportunities for District students to access French-language programming. Many avenues of research were undertaken such as a survey of parents and visits to Late French Immersion sites within the province.

The findings were as follows:

- Students who enter in the French Immersion program with a later start tend to show a more solid grounding in their English language skills eliminating most of the concerns about a student's English language development.
- Older children develop strong learning skills and strategies that enable them to transfer these skills easily from one language to another.
- Finally, there appear to be few differences in proficiency between Early French Immersion and Late French Immersion students who have continued through to Grade 12, with the exception of oral fluency.

With these findings, a decision was made to offer the Late French Immersion program at four sites.

The Late French Immersion program allows students to enter at the Grade 7 level to learn French. By the end of Grade 12, students will have practiced the language skills and will have developed a high level of knowledge and skills in French while completing the Alberta programs of study. Late French Immersion was first introduced in the District in September 2003 at four District sites: Laurier Heights, Kenilworth, Dickinsfield and McKernan schools. Within seven years, Kenilworth School was the first site deactivated due to low enrolment, and one year later, the program was deactivated at Dickinsfield School. Laurier Heights School continued to offer the Late French Immersion program until it was also deactivated in 2012. At the three deactivated sites, the remaining students were grandfathered out of the program.

#### **CURRENT SITUATION**

Edmonton Public Schools offers the French Immersion program in 17 schools. These schools consist of 10 elementary schools, two elementary-junior high schools, three junior high schools and two senior high schools. All French Immersion programs are offered in dual or triple track schools. Dual track schools have both French Immersion and English programs, with the exception of Rio Terrace which offers French Immersion and German Bilingual programming only. Late French Immersion is offered at one site, McKernan School.

Each year, families pre-enrol in their program of choice. Pre-enrolment enables families to plan for the upcoming school year and allows schools to prepare for the number of students they can expect in the fall. As with other alternative programs, requests for French Immersion occur during the pre-enrolment process. However, if the number of students who want to attend a school or program exceeds the space available, new applicants from outside the school's designated attendance area (but within the City of Edmonton) are chosen by a random selection. The random selection process is conducted by Administration to ensure that all students are provided equal opportunity to attend the school or program. Although the District does not have a waitlist of students requesting French Immersion, since 2015, Administration has maintained information obtained from the random selection, and has used this information as one of the measures to inform the establishment of future alternative program sites. To note, in 2015, there were two Early French Immersion schools (Richard Secord and Rio Terrace schools) that went to random selection at the Kindergarten level. There is no indication of how many students this involved. School Administration at Greenview School also shared that they have been going to random selection since 2013.

In 2016, the following schools went to random selection for the 2016–2017 school year:

- Greenview School:
  - Kindergarten – 10 of 35 students were not provided French Immersion programming.
- Lendrum School:
  - Kindergarten – five of 11 students were not provided French Immersion programming.
- McKernan School:
  - Kindergarten – five of 14 students were not provided French Immersion programming.
  - Grade 1 – six of eight students were not provided French Immersion programming.
  - Grade 7 – five of 13 students were not provided Late French Immersion programming.

The following schools went to random selection for the 2017–2018 school year:

- Greenview School:
  - Kindergarten – four of 26 students were not provided French Immersion programming.
- McKernan School:
  - Kindergarten – four of seven students were not provided French Immersion programming.
  - Grade 1 – There were 10 students in all requesting French Immersion programming at the school. Seven out of attendance area students were not entered into the random selection as they were out of the attendance area. One of three attendance area students was not provided French Immersion programming.

To meet the increased demand for elementary French Immersion programming in the southeast and central Edmonton, the District has approved the establishment of two sites. Effective September 2018, Crawford Plains and Oliver schools will be offering the French Immersion program at the Kindergarten and/or Grade 1 level, dependent upon sufficient pre-enrolment numbers for the 2018–2019 school year.

The current total enrolment in the French Immersion program for the 2017–2018 school year is 3,921 students, 3.96 per cent of the total District population. The current total enrolment in the Late French Immersion program for the 2017–2018 school year is 73 students. From Ward D, there are currently 275 students attending a French Immersion program in the District and eight students attending the Late French Immersion program at McKernan School.

The following table shows the four-year projected enrolment for the French Immersion Program:

<b>French Immersion Projected Enrolment</b>	<b>2018–2019</b>	<b>2019–2020</b>	<b>2020–2021</b>	<b>2021–2022</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,990</b>	<b>4,071</b>	<b>4,106</b>	<b>4,181</b>

### KEY POINTS

- Edmonton Public Schools offers the Early French Immersion program in 17 schools. These schools consist of 10 elementary schools, two elementary-junior high schools, three junior high schools and two senior high schools. The District also offers the Late French Immersion program in one school, McKernan School.

- From Ward D there are currently 275 students attending a French Immersion program in the District and eight students attending the Late French Immersion program at McKernan School.
- During the 2017–2018 school year, Greenview School was unable to accommodate four of 26 Kindergarten students in their French Immersion program. McKernan School was unable to accommodate four of seven Kindergarten students and one of three attendance area Grade 1 students. Seven out of attendance area Grade 1 students were not entered into the random selection as they were out of the attendance area and there were not enough spaces offered through the random selection.
- The District does not maintain a wait list of students who would like to attend the French Immersion program. However, phone calls and emails are tracked and this information is used for future establishments.
- To meet the increased demand for elementary French Immersion programming in the southeast and central Edmonton, the District has approved the establishment of two sites. Effective September 2018, Crawford Plains and Oliver schools will be offering the French Immersion program at the Kindergarten and/or Grade 1 level, dependent upon sufficient pre-enrolment numbers for the 2018–2019 school year.
- The projected enrolment indicates an increase of approximately 260 students across the District in the next five years, should all factors remain the same.

**ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES**

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