



**French Immersion Program Review
Public Meeting #1
Thursday, May 19, 2011, 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm
Lockerby Composite School Auditorium**

MINUTES

Lesleigh Dye, Superintendent of Schools and Facilitator
Michèle Smethurst, Recording Secretary

Senior Administration in attendance:

Norm Blaseg, Director of Education, Diane Cayen-Arnold, Superintendent of Business, Sharon Speir, Superintendent of Schools, and Ada Della Penta, Superintendent of Schools

Trustees in attendance:

Tyler Campbell, Chair, Doreen Dewar, Vice-chair, Judy Hunda, Robert Kirwan, and Dena Morrison

Welcome

Superintendent Lesleigh Dye welcomed everyone to the first of two French Immersion Program Review public consultation sessions. As the Superintendent responsible for French Immersion K to 12, she served as the facilitator.

Trustees and members of the Executive Council who were in attendance were introduced. The purpose of the meeting and agenda were reviewed.

Superintendent Dye delivered a PowerPoint presentation. She outlined the membership and mandate of the program review committee; provided an overview of French Immersion in Rainbow Schools, including enrolment; reviewed the process, including timelines and important dates; and outlined options from the French Immersion Program Review Committee, including the rationale.

The following key messages were shared:

Rainbow District School Board's French Immersion Program has grown over the years and the Board wants to build on its success.

The goal is to continue to offer the best French Immersion Program possible so students have every opportunity to become bilingual and gain the skills to communicate effectively in both official languages.

A greater number of families are choosing French Immersion for their children when they start school. There continues to be strong support for learning a second language.

The review will enable the Board to strengthen the program, ensuring that schools continue to meet the needs of French Immersion students as they progress from Junior Kindergarten through to secondary school graduation.

The presentation is available on the Board website:

<http://www.rainbowschools.ca/boardroom/accommodation/FIreview/commConsult.php>

Following the presentation, members of the public were invited to ask questions.

Questions

Q. Two classes are not sufficient to learn French. If there are not enough students enrolled in the program to offer certain French Immersion courses, as is the case for Sudbury Secondary School, can a (itinerant) teacher travel from school to school in order to accommodate these students? (S. Peloquin)

A. This has not been explored at this time, but the committee will meet again following the community consultations and public input will be discussed. We did look at a similar situation where not all co-op teachers speak French. One idea was to offer the placement in French and deliver the integration and pre-placement components in English.

Q. As a retired teacher, I introduced Extended French at Lockerby in the early 90s before French Immersion was implemented in 1994. Would it be possible to have an Extended French certificate offered in lieu of French Immersion for students who earn seven credits in French? (A. Molino-Presello)

A. The Committee's mandate is to look at the current French Immersion program and make it stronger. Some schools do offer enriched programs in French, but not extended programs. At Espanola High School, for instance, students can take Français in Grades 9 to 12.

Q. Do schools still have the extended certificate program for students who earn seven French credits? Students who cannot fully commit themselves to the French Immersion Program could still receive something. (A. Molino-Presello)

A. This program no longer exists, but the Committee can certainly look at this.

Q. The extended program would be beneficial to those who leave the French Immersion Program and want to return. Some students at Confederation, who had left the program in Grade 10 and missed it, may have returned if such a program were still in existence. (H. Berthiaume)

A. Secondary students will be invited to participate in focus groups to explore what can be done to retain students in the French Immersion Program.

Q. It is best when a French Immersion school is 100 per cent total immersion. The board should prioritize hiring bilingual staff. If 40 to 50 per cent of staff do not speak French, it does not make for a strong program. (S. Peloquin)

A. In French Immersion schools, 80 to 90 per cent of staff members are bilingual. Some staff teach English only in French Immersion schools.

Q. In the past, teachers had to pass a university administered competency test. Does this still exist? Teachers should be able to satisfy a high standard. (A. Molino-Presello)

A. This was recently discussed. Interviews are conducted in French with principals who are fluent in French. FSL part 1 includes a proficiency test. Some tests are more difficult than others.

Following questions, Lesleigh Dye thanked everyone for attending. She invited the audience to ask further questions after the meeting or email frenchimmersion@rainbowschools.ca at any time.

Next Public Meeting:

Tuesday, June 14, 2011

6:30 pm to 8:00 pm

Lockerby Composite School (Auditorium)

Requests for presentations at the June 14th meeting must be made in writing prior to the meeting by contacting:

Superintendent Lesleigh Dye

Fax: 705-674-3167

Email: frenchimmersion@rainbowschools.ca

For further information, please visit the board's website:

<http://www.rainbowschools.ca/boardroom/accommodation/Flreview/commConsult.php>