

DATE: June 9, 2015

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Language Programs in Central Edmonton (Response to Request for Information #092)

ORIGINATOR: Dr. Lorne Parker, Acting Executive Director, Infrastructure

RESOURCE STAFF: Constantine Kastrinos, Christopher Wright

REFERENCE: March 17, 2015 Board Meeting (former Trustee Hoffman)

ISSUE

The following information was requested: Provide information outlining:

1. The criteria for determining viability of a K-6 Language program;
2. How parents can formally communicate interest/demand to Edmonton Public Schools; and
3. If there is demand in Central Edmonton, possible schools where a K-6 program could be accommodated.

BACKGROUND

The establishment of a Kindergarten to Grade 6 language program is the same as it is for the establishment of all alternative programs. Programs staff identify a need for the establishment of an alternative program based on a request from a school principal, senior administration, and/or internal data. In addition to these traditional sources, demand for an alternative program may also be established as follows:

- Parents can communicate demand by contacting the District;
- Demand is gauged through the random selection process; and
- Demand is gauged by observing enrolment pressures on neighbouring sites.

Along with the aforementioned markers, Programs staff must consider the following:

- Impact of establishing the alternative program on the prospective school – space, dynamics with other programs, community appetite;
- Potential impacts on neighbouring schools;
- Impacts on other schools that offer the program;
- In conjunction with Student Transportation, assess transportation challenges; and
- In conjunction with Human Resources, assess any staffing challenges.

Once these factors are considered, a recommendation report will be presented to the Superintendent. If approved, Programs staff will remain in constant contact to support affected stakeholders and principals.

CURRENT SITUATION

The following table depicts district schools that are near the centre of Edmonton and offer bilingual programming.

Program	School	Program Enrolment for	Conducted a Random Selection in	Surplus Space to Accommodate
French Immersion	Delwood	128	NO	YES
French Immersion	Holyrood	344	NO	YES
French Immersion	Laurier Heights	322	NO	YES
French Immersion	McKernan	271	YES	NO
Spanish Bilingual	Mill Creek	280	NO	YES

Of the schools listed above, only McKernan School conducted a random selection for its bilingual program in 2014-2015 – meaning that surplus space exists for new families who wish to enrol in the other schools. All of the aforementioned schools are supported by district transportation at the K-6 grades.

In order to establish a new bilingual language site in Central Edmonton, sufficient demand must be present; demand that will support one full kindergarten class. The new program site would begin with Kindergarten programming, and potentially grade one, if the aforementioned demand is established. Demand is measured by requests for programming that the District receives and by gauging the number of surplus spaces available in neighbouring program sites.

KEY POINTS

- To this point, there has been little demand for an additional language program in or near central Edmonton.
- More recently, a group of interested parents proposed that a bilingual language program be established at Oliver School – based on the preliminary results of a community survey.
- It was determined that Oliver School has the surplus space needed to establish the program but the demand has yet to be established.
- Referencing the data provided by the interest group, 25 families have communicated that they would consider pre-enrolling their children in a French Immersion Kindergarten program for the 2016-2017 school year.
- As experienced with the attempted expansion of other existing alternative programs, such as Sakinah Circle, even if some local demand exists, it may not translate to enrolment numbers.
- Establishing an additional bilingual program site in central Edmonton may have a negative impact on neighbouring schools with existing sites that have surplus space to accommodate new demand, such as Delwood School.

ATTACHMENTS & APPENDICES

N/A

CK:gm