

HALIFAX REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD

French Immersion in the Millwood Family of Schools

PURPOSE: To provide the Governing Board with a recommended French Immersion model for the Millwood Family of Schools.

BACKGROUND: French Immersion in the Millwood Family is currently delivered as Late Immersion, beginning in Grade 7. At the June 19th, 2013, Halifax Regional School Board meeting, the following motion was carried:

It was moved and seconded (Arsenault/Jakeman) that the Governing Board approve that the Millwood and Sackville Boundary Review Committee's recommendation to extend Early French Immersion eligibility to the Millwood Family of Schools be deferred.

In Report No. 13-03-1397, staff recommended using the 2013-2014 school year to consult with the community on a preferred model for French Immersion to serve the students within the Millwood Family of Schools. Interest, sustainability and transportation were identified as key issues to address during consultation prior to providing the Governing Board with a final recommendation.

CONTENT: Staff has investigated possible options, in consultation with the community, in order to provide a recommendation. Specifically, the options considered are: (1) offer both early French immersion and late French immersion delivered in the Millwood Family of Schools; (2) Offer eligibility to early French immersion (and deliver it in the Sackville Family of Schools) and deliver Late French Immersion in the Millwood Family; and (3) Offer late French immersion delivered in the Millwood Family of Schools. The third option is status quo.

Appendix 1, French Immersion in the Millwood Family of Schools, outlines the process which was followed to gather community input. Senior Staff has reviewed the feedback and supporting data in order to provide a recommendation to the Governing Board.

COST: N/A

FUNDING: N/A

TIMELINE: Communication and Registration, February-March 2014
Implementation, September 2014

APPENDIX: **Appendix 1 - French Immersion in the Millwood Family of Schools**

RECOMMENDATION: **It is recommended that the Halifax Regional School Board not extend eligibility for Early Immersion to the Millwood Family of Schools.**

COMMUNICATIONS:

AUDIENCE	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE
Governing Board	Gary Adams	February 26, 2014
Millwood Family of Schools Principals	Danielle McNeil-Hessian	February 27, 2014
Millwood Family of Schools Community	Doug Hadley	February-March 2014

From: For further information please contact Gary Adams, Senior Staff Advisor at gadams@hrsbc.ca or 464-2000, ext 2312.

To: Senior Staff, February 17, 2014
Halifax Regional School Board, February 26, 2014

Appendix 1

French Immersion in the Millwood Family of Schools

February 2014

Consultation Process:

In June of 2013, Report No. 13-03-1397 from the Halifax Regional School Board suggested that a decision on extending eligibility to Early Immersion in the Millwood Family of Schools be deferred. It was suggested that staff conduct further consultation during the 2013-14 school year and make a final recommendation to the Governing Board on Early French Immersion in the Millwood Family of Schools.

The following motion was passed on June 19th, 2013:

It was moved and seconded (Arsenault/Jakeman) that the Governing Board approve that the Millwood and Sackville Boundary Review Committee's recommendation to extend Early French Immersion eligibility to the Millwood Family of Schools be deferred.

The consultation process undertaken included a meeting of all School Advisory Councils in the Millwood Family of Schools on December 16, 2013 to hear initial thoughts on extending eligibility to Early French Immersion as well as the best means of gathering community ideas and input.

Public consultation took place during two public meetings. Meetings were held at Sackville Heights Junior High School and Sackville Heights Elementary School. Principals were joined by Central Office Staff to facilitate each meeting and attendees were provided with a brief summary of background information and key points necessary to appreciate the implications of various models. Table discussions explored ideas and identified pros and cons of models while staff circulated the room to answer questions and assist by providing clarity on data and background information. Feedback was gathered by facilitators and individual response sheets collected from all who attended.

Central Office Staff Facilitating:

Gary Adams, Senior Staff Advisor
Alison Leverman, Director of Program
Marlene Johns, Supervisor, School Administration

In addition, an online survey was conducted during the month of February. This survey was promoted through newsletters, advertisements distributed by schools, school-based webpages and the HRSB web page. Parents registering for 2014-15 were also advised of both the public meetings and the survey in order to hear from as many parents of primary students as possible.

Enrollment Data:

Data reviewed to inform this recommendation included the following:

- Enrollment patterns of Late Immersion at Sackville Heights Junior High
- French Immersion program enrollment at Millwood High School
- French Immersion enrollment trends in other Families of Schools
- Data on Out-of-Area Early Immersion students from Millwood Family of Schools currently in the Sackville Family of Schools
- Online Survey responses

Millwood Family of Schools – Historical French Immersion Enrollment

Year	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	High School	Total
2004-05	60	53	42	67	222
2005-06	68	49	46	78	241
2006-07	70	60	49	82	261
2007-08	42	53	56	97	248
2008-09	52	40	47	90	229
2009-10	42	51	33	82	208
2010-11	59	40	49	61	209
2011-12	55	60	35	64	214
2012-13	65	50	53	54	222
2013-14	71	59	48	67	245

Observations:

- French Immersion Program enrollment numbers in the Millwood Family of Schools demonstrate the lowest fluctuation from year to year when compared to other Families in the Halifax Regional School Board
- While the program enrollment is relatively small, class sizes have been viable from year to year.

Out-of-Area Early Immersion Students from Millwood Catchment in Sackville High Family of Schools

Gr. P	Gr. 1	Gr. 2	Gr. 3	Gr. 4	Gr. 5	Gr. 6	Gr. 7	Gr. 8	Gr. 9	Gr. 10	Gr. 11	Gr. 12
6	4	4	2	4	2	6	2	7	5	1	3	5

- 61 students from the Millwood Catchment access Early Immersion elsewhere in the HRSB.
- Of those 61 students, 51 (84%) accessed Early Immersion in the Sackville High Family of Schools.
- All families requesting access to Early Immersion from the Millwood Family to Sackville High Family have accepted.

Survey Findings:

The online survey was accessed a total of 142 times during the month of February. Research and Data staff analyzed the responses, identified any duplicate submissions, deleted submission with less than half of the questions answered, and processed the results from Millwood and Sackville Family of School residents. The final data set included 103 records.

The following results were compiled from this data:

- Overall satisfaction with French Immersion Program was high for respondents experiencing both Early Immersion and Late Immersion.
- 70% of Millwood Family respondents with a child in an Early Immersion program (7 of 10) are satisfied with the current location.
- 80% of those families with children currently in an Early Immersion program express a strong likelihood of remaining.
- Respondents of children in the Late Immersion program at Sackville Heights Junior High expressed a very HIGH likelihood of remaining in the program. (no LOW responses, 18.2% MEDIUM likelihood and 81.8% HIGH likelihood)
- Only 31% of respondents said that location of the Early Immersion program would be the main determining factor in their decision to enroll. (44% said it was one of many factors and 25% said it was not a factor)
- More parents expressed a HIGH likelihood of enrolling a child in Late Immersion when compared to Early Immersion responses. (39 versus 21)
- More respondents expressed support for the concept of eligibility for Early Immersion than those that would actually consider enrollment.
- Of the respondents with pre-school aged children, only 3 of 6 (50%) stated that there would be an increased likelihood of enrollment if eligibility was extended.

Cost Implications:

If eligibility for Early Immersion was extended to the students of the Millwood Family of Schools the board would incur the following cost:

Transportation: 1 – 2 busses (\$ 64,000 – 128,000 annually)

Staffing: There is no anticipated short term impact on staffing. It should be noted that over time, if French Immersion class sizes diminish due to students leaving for access through eligibility, the potential exists for a need to add staff in order to address English classes that would become disproportionately large.

Consultation Findings:

The following themes emerged as points for consideration from the consultation process:

- strong support was expressed for the current French Immersion model
- support for Early Immersion as an option for members of the Millwood Family of Schools was expressed
- some participants wished for access to Early Immersion within their Family of Schools
- of those expressing the desire to receive transportation to an Early Immersion program, most already have students enrolled in Early Immersion through the Out-of-Area process (Sackville Family or elsewhere)
- there is significant concern for a potentially negative impact to both the Late Immersion program at Sackville Heights Junior High and the course selection offerings at high school if overall enrollment numbers decline. (when enrollment drops due to students leaving the family, class sizes fall and course selections at the high school become more difficult to offer and staff)
- participants spoke to concerns regarding the potential imbalance in program and class size numbers that may result from expanded access to two program entry levels
- there were strong views expressed on the use of limited funds to add additional transportation for another program, questioning where the money would come from and at what impact to other educational priorities
- some parents expressed a need for more clear communication on how parents can access Early Immersion within the current model
- some participants expressed understanding that resources are limited – preferred focus on a single, vibrant program versus multiple programs that compete

Summary:

The current Late Immersion Program in the Millwood Family is well established. This program has consistently been accessed by approximately 1/3 of all students at the Junior High level with limited attrition during the Junior High years. The Millwood Family of Schools has a relatively small student population with only five schools (1 Junior High) and experience elsewhere in the Halifax Regional School Board makes it clear that any attempt to implement both levels of Immersion within the family would not be sustainable.

Eligibility for Early Immersion outside of the Millwood Family of Schools effectively reduces the student population. This will impact enrollment numbers in Late Immersion at the junior high level and lead to increased challenges at the high school level related to course offerings. Recognizing that the enrollment numbers in either Immersion program within the family are relatively low, the long-term effect of extending eligibility could lead to removal of any Immersion program within the family if the program enrollment declines and delivery is no longer viable.

Currently any requests for access to Early Immersion from families residing in the Millwood Family of Schools have been accommodated through the Out-of-Area Request process.