



Date: October 25, 2021
To: Board of Trustees
From: Director of Education
Subject: Secondary French Immersion Site Selection and Evaluation of Transportation Alternatives

Type of Report: Decision-Making
 Monitoring
 Incidental Information concerning day-to-day operations

Type of Information: Information for Board of Trustees Decision-Making
 Monitoring Information of Board Policy **XX XXX**
 Information only of day-to-day operational matters delegated to the CEO

Origin: (cite Education Act and/or Board Policy or other legislation)

The [2020/21 French Immersion Review – Final Report](#) was presented to the Board of Trustees on Monday, May 31, 2021. On June 14, 2021, the Board of Trustees approved:

That the Waterloo Catholic District School Board assess the impacts of offering transportation to French Immersion students living outside a secondary school’s English boundary, and that a decision on providing transportation to these students be made prior to November 2021.

Further, based on the site selection criteria identified by the Committee for secondary French Immersion (FI) locations, staff had committed to present information to the Board prior to January 2022 identifying the preferred location(s) of secondary French Immersion. The information will support communication to the first cohort of FI students who will enter high school in September 2023 and ensure that the secondary FI school has adequate time to prepare to deliver new programming.

Policy Statement and/or Education Act/other Legislation citation:

IV 010 - Facilities/Accommodations

The CEO shall not permit the establishment of facilities that lack physical signs of our Catholic faith and allowance for sacred space; limit students from fully experiencing the curriculum and do not have relationship with the community.

Alignment to the MYSP:

Nurturing our Catholic Community

Promote a culture of belonging and respect, that supports success for all
 Equitable access to learning opportunities

Student Engagement, Achievement & Innovation

Nurture a Culture of Innovation
 Continue to seek and support reciprocal partnerships with Community/ educational partners and leverage the mutual learning



BACKGROUND/COMMENTS:

The [2020/21 French Immersion Review – Final Report](#) was presented to the Board of Trustees on Monday, May 31, 2021. The final report identified site selection criteria to guide staff in the designation of future French Immersion sites and the need to assess the potential to transport secondary FI students.

Site Selection

The French Immersion Review Committee identified four key priorities for the selection of French Immersion secondary schools (Figure 1); availability of empty space, feeder school relationship, equity / range of neighbourhoods, long term enrolment patterns. The site selection criteria need to balance the objectives of each element when recommending a site to start the program.

Figure 1 - Secondary French Immersion Site Selection Criteria



The following subsections provide an overview of the evaluation of the board's secondary schools by staff to identify a suitable location to begin offering secondary FI.

Availability of Empty Space

The 2021 Abridged Long Term Accommodation Plan presented in May 2021, provided a summary of secondary school enrolment and utilization to 2030/31 (Figure 2).

To maximize use of available board resources and support course selection for English students, the selection criteria prioritize future secondary FI sites in schools with surplus space.

St. David CSS is currently one of two schools with a utilization rate less than 100%. By 2025/26, St. David is the only high school remaining under 100% utilization.

Figure 2 - 2021 Abridged Long Term Accommodation Plan Projections

Secondary School	OTG	20/21	20/21 Util.	20/21 Avail. PP	21/22	21/22 Util.	21/22 Avail. PP	25/26	25/26 Util.	25/26 Avail. PP	30/31	30/31 Util.	30/31 Avail. PP
Resurrection	1,245	1,548	124%	0	1,647	132%	0	2,006	161%	0	2,737	220%	0
St. David	1,050	949	90%	101	932	89%	118	997	95%	53	1,505	143%	0
St. Mary's	1,530	2,107	138%	0	2,198	144%	0	2,628	172%	0	3,549	232%	0
St. Benedict	1,458	1,617	111%	0	1,607	110%	0	1,720	118%	0	2,205	151%	0
Monsignor Doyle	1,029	1,020	99%	9	1,098	107%	0	1,032	100%	0	1,457	142%	0
TOTAL	6,312	7,241	115%	0	7,482	119%	0	8,384	133%	0	11,453	181%	0



Feeder School Relationship

The first cohorts of students will graduate from Sir Edgar Bauer CES and St. Anne CES (K) in June 2023. Sir Edgar Bauer is part of the St. David family of schools, while St. Anne (K) is in the St. Mary's family of schools.

Given the relatively small cohorts of students in the first FI classes graduating into high school, offering FI in each possible home high school may present issues with program viability.

Equity / Range of Neighbourhoods

Selecting a single location for secondary French Immersion presents a challenge to meet the equity of access and opportunity objective. The St. David family of schools' relationship with Sir Edgar Bauer does reduce potential barriers to participation for that school community given proximity between home and school. Providing transportation to students from St Anne (K) would reduce potential barriers to participation for that school community if the program were not offered within their home secondary school.

Just as the elementary program has expanded to provide more opportunities to participate in FI, as additional schools begin to graduate elementary FI students, future secondary sites will provide the opportunity to address the access and opportunity priority.

Long Term Enrolment Patterns

As shown in Figure 2, the projected enrolment in most high schools would preclude prioritizing them for hosting an FI program. St. David has the lowest utilization rate today and in the next five years.

2023/24 Secondary French Immersion Site Selection

Based on the secondary French Immersion site selection criteria, staff have determined that St. David CSS will accommodate the first cohorts of high school FI students starting in September 2023.

Secondary French Immersion Transportation

Retaining students in French Immersion from Grade 8 to Grade 9 is an issue faced by boards with new and long established programs. The increased distance to school, expanded pathway options, and specialized programs all mean that students have more choices to make, which may not include continuing in FI. Looking to a nearby board to our east, the 4-year average retention rate Grade 8 FI to Grade 9 FI was 77% for a city high school where transportation was provided. To our west, the calculated retention rate between elementary FI and secondary FI was 80%. Transportation is also provided to those students.

The French Immersion Review undertaken in 2020/21 outlined a strategic selection of FI courses to be offered in Grades 9-12. These courses are intended to limit potential issues with staffing, provide predictability with FI course availability, reduce timetabling conflicts, and provide opportunities for students to explore a breadth of pathway options in Grades 11 and 12 to support retention of students to complete their 10-credit FI certificate.

The small cohort sizes of the first few graduating classes of elementary FI students, as evidenced by Table 1, reinforces how important retention is from elementary to secondary school. Based on information from other boards, this projection assumes:

- 80% of FI students will continue between Grade 8 and Grade 9
- 95% between Grade 9 and Grade 10
- 80% between Grade 10 and Grade 11, and
- 95% between Grade 11 and Grade 12.



Table 1 - Total French Immersion Enrolment Forecast

Year	Elementary Forecast									Secondary Forecast				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	9	10	11	12	Total
21/22	140	140	96	84	76	50	50	0	635					
22/23	140	129	130	88	73	64	53	48	725					
23/24	140	129	119	119	81	61	69	51	770	38				38
24/25	140	129	119	110	110	67	68	66	810	41	36			77
25/26	140	136	122	106	103	82	91	65	703	52	38	29		120
26/27	140	136	128	108	99	76	78	86	710	52	50	31	27	160
27/28	140	136	128	114	101	73	73	74	697	69	49	40	29	187
28/29	140	136	128	114	106	74	69	69	695	59	65	39	38	202
29/30	140	136	128	114	106	78	71	66	697	55	56	52	37	201

While it is possible that there may be some increased participation from outside of WCDSB elementary FI students, this has not been assumed in the projections.

With a new program, it is important for program viability to ensure that students can continue in FI without access to the designated host school as a barrier.

Currently, opting to attend specialized programming does not support access to yellow bus service. Students who may choose to attend a school other than their home school are considered Out of Boundary in accordance with [Admission of Out of Boundary Students -APA003](#).

The 2020/21 French Immersion Review concluded that no change would be made to elementary FI transportation. However, the Board approved Recommendation 5,

5. *That the Waterloo Catholic District School Board assess the impacts of offering transportation to French Immersion students living outside a secondary school's English boundary, and that a decision on providing transportation to these students be made prior to November 2021.*

Staff have consulted with Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region (STSWR) to assess the feasibility of offering transportation for Out of Boundary secondary FI students. STSWR has compared the cost of offering regular home stop yellow bus service, as well as a hub-style option for students living outside of the St. David CSS home school attendance boundary.

Regular Home Stop Option

Regular home stop service to St. David for existing WCDSB FI students, aligned with the level of service generally provided to the board's bus eligible riders, is estimated to cost:

2023/24	3 buses	\$126,000
2024/25	5 buses	\$210,000
2025/26	8 buses	\$336,000

Costs are significant due to the inefficiency of running multiple routes for a relative low density of students and ride time restrictions according to board procedure.



Hub-Style Transportation Option

Comparatively, it is estimated that a hub-style service could be offered by providing transportation from home secondary and elementary school location in Southwest, East and West Kitchener. Students would be met by a yellow bus at the hub locations and transported to/from St. David. This option does rely on the students getting to / from the hub but provides increased access by ensuring that eligible students can get to / from St. David.

Costs are estimated as follows for the hub-style transportation option:

2023/24	1 bus	\$42,000
2024/25	2 buses	\$84,000
2025/26	2 buses	\$84,000

This method is the most efficient approach to transporting students who don't reside within the St. David boundary, minimizes ride times, yet continues to improve the overall access and opportunity to attend the designated FI secondary school by ensuring the availability of transport for those students living outside the school's boundary.

Conclusion

St. David CSS will offer the first secondary French Immersion program in the Waterloo Catholic District School Board starting in September 2023. Future secondary site locations will be reviewed and confirmed by staff through future communication and / or reviews.

Secondary French Immersion students who reside outside of the St. David CSS boundary will be eligible for transportation. Transportation will be offered to those French Immersion students who qualify, generally in accordance with the hub style option outlined herein. Transportation will not be available to Out of Boundary non French Immersion siblings wanting to attend St. David CSS.

The availability of Out of Boundary transportation for secondary FI students may be reconsidered as additional high schools are designated to offer French Immersion in response to the expansion of the program as additional cohorts from the board's elementary schools enter high school.

RECOMMENDATION:

This report is provided as information for the Board of Trustees.

- Prepared/Reviewed By:
- Loretta Notten
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*Bylaw 4.2 "where the Board of Trustees receives from the Director of Education a monitoring report that flows from a responsibility delegated to the Director under Board Policy – **except where approval is required by the Board of Trustees on a matter delegated by policy to the Board** – the minutes of the Meeting at which the Report is received shall expressly provide that the Board has received and approved of the Report as an action consistent with the authority delegated to the Director, subject in all instances to what otherwise actually occurred."

