

Thames Valley District School Board
Attendance Area Review Committee
Elgin County French Immersion Attendance Area Review
Port Stanley Public School
Report of Port Stanley Public School Attendance Area Review
Subcommittee

Subcommittee Members: Julie Meyers, Amanda Zavitz-Gocan, Katelyn Vey, Julie Looper

Report Sections:

- 1) School-Level Meeting Summary
- 2) Grade 7/8 FI Parent Survey Results Summary
- 3) Overall Summary

School Level Meeting date: November 6, 2017

Meeting location: Port Stanley Public School

Meeting Co-Chairs- Amanda Zavitz, Julie Meyers

In attendance: Jana Walters, Geoff Vantlees, Monique McGahan, Ralph Seelisch, Heather Kaufmann-Seelisch, Amanda Zavitz, Katelyn Vey, Donna Horton, Julie Meyers

Section 1- School Level Meeting Summary

Attendees were presented with the proposed attendance area options. In groups and individually, they worked to record their thoughts in terms of pros and cons for each of the presented options. They were encouraged to offer additional options if/as desired. The results of this meeting are as follows:

Option 1

Pros

- I like option 1
- Music / art
- Keep grade 8 students together – music program
- Keep grade 7 cohort together for one year
- Place grade 7 students together for graduation next year; host the graduation ceremony at Parkside
- Room to grow
- More central location
- East / west split in Elgin county

Cons

- Locke's is geographically further than Mitchell Hepburn to the new school
- How will teachers divide?
- New Sarum means another move

Option 2

There were no pros and the con for this option is the length of the bus ride for those living on the west side of St. Thomas

Option 3

Pro is that Mitchell Hepburn is closer to Sparta and closer to New Sarum

Other Suggestions

- Keep current grade seven cohort together to PET for one year so they can graduate together
- Have all grade eight students next year graduate together despite where they are – graduate at Parkside
- 72 students in total to keep together at one school for one year is reasonable and will recognize the emotional / social importance and stability, friends, one less move for this group of students
- There will be one extra class at PET for one year
- Not good to have 4 moves in 4 years – this would be considered a risk factor
- The major concern of the parents is another transition, and the emotional impact of splitting the cohort for the grade 7 students going into grade 8 – this is an important year for students and not the time to be disrupting them more so than they are already being disrupted
- Want the impact to be minimal – all students go back to their school (PET) that is familiar to them
- Students reported to their parents that they want to stay with their friends

Section 2- Grade 7/8 FI Parent Survey Results

A survey was sent home with all students in the grade 7 and 8 French Immersion program, including those students in the 7/8 Extended French Immersion class. The survey was also posted online, and sent out via eNews as well as being posted on the school Facebook page. The results of the survey are as follows:

Summary- There were **29 surveys completed.**

Results regarding options are as follows:

Prefer Option 1 – 17

Prefer Option 2 – 2

Prefer Option 3 – 7

Other - 3

Preference of keeping children together

Keep grade 7 cohort together – 6

Keep grade 7 cohort together at PET next year – 21

Keep grade 7 cohort together at Sparta – 1

Keep grade 7 cohort together at Port Stanley – 1

13 people responded to the question regarding preference for Sparta or New Sarum:

Remain at Sparta – 11

Move to New Sarum - 2

Comments on the survey were very similar to those made at the public meeting:

- Multiple moves are negative for students
- Splitting friends is a negative for students
- Long bus rides are negative for students
- Multiple transitions are too difficult for students
- Concern expressed for the cohort of students who are currently in grade seven at Port Stanley public school.

Section 3- Overall Summary

Overall, those who participated in the Port Stanley public school French immersion Attendance Area Review meeting seemed to prefer option three out of the options provided by the School Board because Mitchell Hepburn is closer to the new French immersion public schools than Locke's. Option number one was deemed more acceptable than option number two. Option two was not preferred because of the distance that students from Dunwich and Dutton area would have to travel to attend the new French immersion public school. The primary thrust of the meeting was not a debate about what option was best out of the three options provided, but rather a concern for the current grade seven students attending Port Stanley public school.

Under the current proposal from the Thames Valley District School Board, this particular cohort is about to face four moves within the timeframe of four years. They attended Pierre Elliot Trudeau French immersion public school in September 2016, they were moved to Port Stanley public school in September 2017. Under the proposed plan, they

would be moved to another school in September 2018 and then they would go to a third school for high school in September 2019. This number of transitions is a major risk factor for mental health disruption and a threat to the emotional well-being of these children.

There are 72 students currently attending Port Stanley public school in the grade seven French immersion program. Those in attendance at our French immersion Attendance Area Review meeting would like to see those students stay together as a cohort for their grade eight year. This would mean allowing a one-year exception wherein all those students currently attending grade seven would attend grade eight together at Pierre Elliot Trudeau French immersion school. This school has been proposed as the primary location because the movement back to P.E.T would not be emotionally challenging for this group of students. Parents who attended this meeting felt strongly that this cohort of students who are currently in grade seven should be able to share a grade eight graduation ceremony together. Those in attendance all felt that the kinship bonds and friendship ties of this cohort trump locational needs of new proposed French immersion public school.

Finally, there was very little debate regarding the two proposed locations of the new French immersion public school. There was limited discussion regarding the fact that New Sarum would have a larger yard and would be a more central location; but the group of parents who attended the meeting was also concerned about further disruption to the children if they had to move to Sparta public school and then be moved again a few years later to New Sarum public school. That being said, this group was most concerned about keeping the cohorts of students together and the move would be less disruptive if all of the students from Sparta are moving as one large group to New Sarum. There was no conclusive agreement about support for this decision one way or another. The group in attendance acknowledged the pros and cons of both options.

In addition to the meeting there were also 29 Surveys completed regarding the options put forth by the Board. The majority of people who completed the survey preferred option one, followed by option two. 27 out of the 29 people who returned the survey wanted to keep the current grade seven cohort together and the majority wanted those students to complete grade eight at Pierre Elliot Trudeau French immersion public school in St. Thomas. Only 13 out of 29 people reflected upon the option of having New Sarum as the final French immersion public school for Elgin Country. 11 out of those 13 people stated that their preference was for Sparta Public School to remain the Elgin Country French immersion public school. Most of the comments on the surveys were similar to the comments presented at the meeting. Parents were overwhelmingly concerned about the negative impact several moves within such a short timeframe would have on students.

In summary, our Elgin County French Immersion Attendance Area Review concluded that most parents would agree to options one or three and that the parents who participated are most concerned about the well-being of the students who will experience the largest number of transitions.

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like further clarification, please feel free to contact me.

Dr. Amanda Zavitz

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