

FRENCH PROGRAM CONVERSATION

BOARD COMMITMENT:

Continue to provide a French language program which enables students to graduate with strong French Language skills.

PURPOSE OF THE CONVERSATION:

Consider ways to increase the number of students who graduate from a strong French language program in Golden.

MOVE TO LATE IMMERSION MODEL WITH FRENCH IMMERSION GRADE 4 –

12

PROS:

- Students are able to spend their primary school years building their English skills, which will provide a stronger scaffold on which to build second language skills
- The district would no longer have to struggle to find qualified, primary trained FI teachers. This has been very difficult to do in recent years.
- Starting in gr. 4, larger class sizes would allow greater numbers of students to join, and students with language deficits would have already been identified so parents could make informed decisions about the suitability of the FI program for their child. Together these two improvements would reduce the attrition rate prior to graduation.
- Students with learning difficulties would be more quickly assessed and supported, rather than exacerbated by the second language.
- Students would learn primary math skills in their first language, and not have language difficulties which can create problems in that area as well.

- Parents are able to play a more active role supporting their child's learning in English through the important elementary years.
- Strong base in English language, grammar.
- Let's look at ways to allow this to happen in our existing early FI program.
- Welcomes families/students into the program if they move into Golden after gr. 1.
- Kids should be allowed to enter FI at any grade if child wants it and parents are supportive. Provides an opportunity for a late start.
- May work better for kids that need more time to adapt to school environment.
- Still learning a second language.
- None in this community when we already have early FI.
- Positive experience for those who have not previously had the opportunity to enroll in French Immersion.
- Possible that other students interested can join existing FI class.
- Allows parents to have confidence that their child has strong first language skills.
- A wonderful way to increase enrolment in high school to K-12 FI. A great program addition to current K-12 FI.
- Provides parents more time to be informed about the immersion program and how much energy it takes on the part of parents and students to learn a second language.
- Allow people who move into the area after kindergarten to join in.
- Larger class sizes in gr. 4 may allow more students in program.
- Gives students who are not academically strong a good foundation before you give them the added tool of a second language.
- Children learn to produce babbling sounds thus learns to produce an improved accent.

CONS:

- Some studies say second language learning becomes more difficult as a person gets older.
- Layoffs for current K–3 FI teachers who do not have requisite English skills and usually less seniority.
- Less students entering perhaps because of additional workload/homework
- Parents may be scared.
- By starting later, you've missed the early years of learning and early foundation.
- Strong bilingual background missed in the early years.
- Could lead to an academic elite program.
- Why are kids more likely to stay with FI starting in gr. 4 than gr. 1 or K?
- How are high school choices going to change?
- French Immersion is a form of enrichment for students who might get bored with the regular program. What kind of enrichment would be put into place to keep these students stimulated?
- The understanding of all at the table is it has been shown that children are much more receptive to learning a new language the younger they are.
- Could decrease enrolment as older children are less likely to support increasing the academic work required to learn 2nd language. It is much easier to start school in this stream.
- Research overwhelmingly shows that 2nd language learning must take place early, earlier the better.
- The early immersion program is absolutely the best. There is no problem with enrolment at early grades. How would this option decrease attrition at high school?

- It's easier to learn a language when you're under the age of 12.
- If you join in gr. 4, you have to make up for the first four years you missed in school work, way more work so students would be less willing.
- You may have to leave your friends in the English program to be in Intensive French; again, you would be less willing.
- For academically strong students only
- There will still be attrition.
- Would need new resources, students in gr. 4 aren't interested in the same thing as kindergarten, but that's the level they will be at; we will end up throwing away great resources and spending more money for new resources.
- Embarrassed to speak French, social pressure
- Too late for full advantage of absorption due to age (brain psychology).
- More resistant to learning a second language (social attributes and acceptance)
- Not what the majority of Golden residents want for their children.
- Early immersion students tend to graduate from their program with better oral and listening skills than middle and late immersion graduates.
- Possible low enrolment because children have already bonded with classmates from K to gr. 3 and moving to late French would separate them from their peers – big disincentive.
- Defer a lot of people from moving to Golden who come here specifically because we have an early French Immersion program.
- Lose the benefit of early learning. Kids are sponges and soak up information when they are younger than when curriculum is harder.
- Lack of interest in older children because of the lack of exposure in our community to French that would encourage this – in early immersion, parents (with wider experience wisdom choose this.)
- Four less years of the best time to learn a second language.

- If a child drops out at high school they will have less French than EFL.
- Already starting a new school (move from APES to LGES) and starting new language would be too much pressure at this level (friendships and groups have already developed).
- Replacement of FI with late immersion does not solve attrition problems which you claim is the issue.
- Children grow up with a tight group of friends started in kindergarten.
- The French Immersion will be encouraged by friends when started at 5 yrs. old.
- If starting the late French Immersion, kids will have their friends made and will want to continue with them if they go in English; therefore may be less interest to take French if friends go to English.
- Much easier and much less stress on child to learn at a younger age; by the age of 10 or 12 they get a lot more going on and more stress or peer pressure involved so less interest in learning 2nd language. It's great; we love it. The children and graduates are proof of how well it works, why chance it?

COMMENTS:

- My child has a bilingual mother and French grandparents. He is currently halfway through his first year in French Immersion (gr. 1) and he is now able to carry on a conversation in French. Putting off this valuable education until gr. 4 or 6 would have increased the length of time that he was unable to have a conversation with his grandparents. He has been able to pick up a second language with minimal effort due to his early exposure in a school setting.
- For those who drop out it is a known fact that their English language skills are often below those of the students, who have been on the English program since kindergarten.
- Early FI students do extremely well in English; their aptitude for languages increases and they often excel in 3rd and 4th languages if available.

- We need comparable stats on late immersion models in Canada to compare to early FI.
- Only in addition to early immersion.
- In French speaking competition (concour d'art oratoire) French students from Golden did much better than the Intensive French students from Cranbrook.
- Not an option; we should not be asked for alternative without attempting to fix what we have.
- In order to increase students who graduate in French program, adding late immersion to early immersion will definitely increase numbers. Moving from early to late would, in my opinion, decrease the numbers.
- Promote the FI program; do not cap numbers at kindergarten.
- Recruit more students by advertising at the schools. Recruit at any grade. Provide information about the benefits of early French immersion (many studies have been done; look into them).
- Communicate to parents if there are openings in the French Immersion program so they can fill the spots.
- The pride my 3rd grader feels to know a language I don't know started in kindergarten – wouldn't have the same passion for it if it was later.
- Pro/con page is manipulative.
- Standardizing Intensive French at gr. 4 throughout the district for all students solves your attrition issue not making it a choice program but who has the guts to do that, keeping in mind homework level.
- Give parents some time to come up with alternate scheduling options at the high school level.