

Forster Family and Century
Community input collected up to June 25

Dear PARC committee members:

The Forster-Century PARC review has what would appear to be a fatal flaw in its composition: no representation from the French Immersion community – the largest single group of students affected by the draft recommendations. The committee's membership includes representatives of Benson, Brock, Dougall, Marlborough and Taylor elementary schools as well as Forster and Century secondary schools, but none from the community transitioning from Bellewood to Giles Campus.

One of the first decisions the committee made was to exclude Benson, Taylor and Dougall from consideration, but those school communities retained their committee membership, while French Immersion continues to be unrepresented.

There are difficult decisions to be made, and they must be made with all stakeholders involved in the process. As a parent moving to the Giles Campus French Immersion program, I believe it's only fair that the French Immersion community has a say in regard to the permanent accommodation of this growing student population.

The board must address the issue of the committee's composition prior to the presentation of the PARC's draft recommendations at the public meeting scheduled for May 9.

Sincerely,

Martina Obersat

To PARC committee or whom it concerns:

I am a parent of a said student in grade nine at Century. My son Ethan Kendrick loves attending your school. This did not happen over night trust me . We had to work through many of his learning disabilities in order to build his self worth high enough to attend Century Highschool. Now we feel we are back to square one again with the thought of closing Century. Disrupting these challenges in many difficult students like my son is a shame and potential breakdown of futures for students. Relocation and change is something these student don't do well especially early in there highschool years. In the events these changes must take place

I am asking that the recommendation of relocation of Century students attend new building on Marlborough site. If are son doesn,t stay inside Windsor we as parents feel strong that we could lose the bright mind of a promising future for a already struggling student and many others.

Thanks , Mr and Mrs Kendrick!

To whom it might concern:

Why don't remove the WHOLE Bellewood school to Century? Which will keep the Bellewood school's Sprit and soul together.

You will recreate 400 smiling little faces, and behind the 400 students, there are at least 800 parents and more than 800 grandparents,

And how many employees and employers will be happy. It'll be a WIN-WIN-WIN....result.

A parent of Bellewood public school whom live in North from EC.

I have received some letters home with my daughters that have caused me to really question the decisions that are being made for our children. First I am wondering why parents from bellewood or Giles are not part of these committees considering you are making decisions that will affect our children.

Relocating to lowe was supposed to be a temporary solution until a new permanent french immersion site would be found in South Windsor. These plans are now leading to a dual track school that is not in south windsor and includes schools not even close to our boundary?

Is there an idea when this plan is going forward and at what point in the process were parents from Giles going to be a part of the process?

Thanks

Sent on the TELUS Mobility network with BlackBerry

Dear Parc committee:

I am opposed to the recommendations you have.

I have two children at Bellewood school and they will have to move to Lowe this fall. When we were picking a school for them, we picked French immersion because we believed it would give them the best education.

If we didn't think so, we would have chosen our neighbourhood school and saved all the hassle of bussing them every day of their school years. The parents in French immersion choose it for two reasons, obviously they want their kids to have the advantages of learning French, but also because Bellewood is a great school, with top the system in EQAO scores and the rankings from the Fraser Institute.

Now it is too crowded and so half the school is being sent to Lowe, no matter how much we fought against it, even appealing to the province. The one thing was that the board told us the new school would be the equal to Bellewood.

But if we have to share with other students in a dual-track school, it will not be the same as Bellewood. I do not understand why you want to combine our school with another school, especially since your own numbers say we will have 600 enrollment in a few years. But if you combine, maybe you will not have to worry about having too many children. I know how many of the families north of ECRowe are moving to stay in the south Windsor boundaries.

If the Lowe school is going to fill up, it will need to be good like Bellewood school is good. So it will need to prove itself on its own. I do not demean the children of other schools, who I know are good children and have good teachers. But you must give these French immersion students a chance to earn their own success and prove that the west end of the city deserves French immersion just as good as south Windsor.

Please give us our own school, not dual-track with anybody else.

My family is included in the move to the new Giles Campus. Although I do not have anything directly to do with this PARC, in the near future this decision will affect my children. The reason I am writing today is because in the Parc for Bellewood, we were told that the student population is too big and that a school with over 1000 students would not be good for anyone. Why now are the recommendations stating that a dual track school, including secondary, eventually going to carry over 1300 students? How is this different than the situation at Bellewood? Bellewood had the land to add on another addition and house the amount of students that were anticipated by 2015, why would you now move them and build a school that will house 1300? This will have jk-12 interacting with one another and a separate french track. At Bellewood everyone was on big happy family, at the new school there will be so much segregation, how will anyone feel the sense of togetherness that we had at Bellewood? At Bellewood we all felt as if we belong, and single spirit. We will not have that at the new school. In Tecumseh they build a jk-12 school on very LARGE property, Marlborough does not have the space needed to build this type of school. You need to keep the younger children separate from the older high school students. I do not support any of these recommendations. We were told that we would have a solution for our situation and the only thing I hear, the same situation we currently have at Bellewood. OVERCROWDING! Every year the enrollment goes up for french immersion and you want to combine french and english track together! Estimated enrollment is over 1300 students, the children will not get the learning support they deserve and are currently getting at Bellewood! Even though right now it is a large population, it is not even close to 1300 students!

I know I am probably not going to be heard as I and MANY other parents were not heard during our PARC. My comments will be falling on deaf ears I am sure. These are my children and I would like to do what is best for my children, not what is best for GECDSB!

Marnie Pinkney

mpinkney@uwindsor.ca

Invoice Clerk

University of Windsor Bookstore

Sunset Ave. & Wyandotte St. W.

Dear Program and Accommodations Review for the Forster Family of Schools:

I write to protest the recommendations you have presented regarding the Giles Campus students.

None of my neighbours were happy to get moved out of Bellewood. This is a school where we were very satisfied.

When the board decided to force us out, they promised we would have a similar school to wait for us.

So far, this is not true.

Our children are sent to an old building that is not even in the boundaries of the school. They must attend in a high school not suitable for younger children. They must have a longer bus ride.

Now they are going to be sent to a huge school from kindergarten to grade 12, mixed with students studying only English? This is not fair. Why do only the south Windsor parents get such a good school as Bellewood? Our children deserve their own school.

I have a friend who did not speak English when she first sent her daughter to Bellewood, only Mandarin. Her daughter also spoke only Mandarin. In the first term, she learned French from the teachers and classmates at Bellewood. They did not make fun of her for not knowing English.

If she must go to a school with both programs, how will she learn French and English fast enough so that other children are not mean to her?

I know many parents are moving to stay in the Bellewood boundary. Now if you force our children into a permanent school we do not want, you will make us who stayed and trusted into the fools.

Dear members of the Forster-Century PARC:

I appreciate the opportunity to bring to your attention my thoughts on your pending recommendations.

My daughter will be entering grade 5 at the Giles Campus French Immersion School this fall, and I am opposed to any eventual relocation from that site to a dual track school. Please allow me to explain.

I wasn't always a proponent of single-track French Immersion. In fact, when the board previously proposed creating a dual-track school with Benson for our children, the only concern my wife and I expressed was about ensuring adequate learning materials for all the children at the school.

When that plan proved impractical, the board struck a new PARC for South Windsor, and this time, I sat on the committee, formed in the spring of 2010. So many parents came to me and expressed a desire for a single-track school, I decided to do some research. My plan was to find the studies that proved that dual-track schools are as good as single-track schools, so that I could allay their fears.

Imagine my surprise when I learned that the opposite is true. Most of the research indicates that dual-track schools can provide an adequate education, but that single-track schools are better.

Administrators fudge the issue, saying the research is mixed, that there are pros and cons to both models. While that is true, the pros for single-track largely relate to the quality of the education and the immersion experience, while the pros for dual-track are all about flexibility for administrators in allocating enrolment.

In 2007, Lesley Doell, a consultant with the French Language Resource Centre in Grande Prairie, Alberta, produced a report, "Differences in Setting," which compiled research of the comparison in academic achievement between dual-track and single-track French immersion programs. As a result of that report, that board decided to move to a single-track model.

In a May 11, 2011, follow-up paper published by the Centre for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, she says the change has had a profound effect on the culture of the school, and administrators told her that the students are learning French more quickly.

"Announcements, intramurals, choirs, library helpers, concerts and cultural events are all provided in French.

Rather than French being only a language of instruction, it is now brought alive outside of the four classroom walls. (Administrators) state that the students are proud of their ability to communicate in French with other people."

I will append to my note her research summary of the academic, peer-reviewed science on the difference between single-track and dual-track education.

I just wish to reiterate that all our children deserve the best possible education, and the hard research indicates that for French Immersion students, a single-track school provides the best experience. I hope you will give fair consideration to that evidence in your continuing deliberations and your final recommendations to the trustees.

Sincerely,

Kevin Johnson

Manager, Web Communications

Comparing Dual-Track and Single-Track French Immersion Programs: Does Setting Matter?

The American Council on Immersion Education Newsletter, May 2011, Vol. 14, No. 2

By Lesley Doell, French Language Consultant, French Language Resource Centre, Grande Prairie, Alberta

In 2007 a school board in Canada requested that I compile research examining the differences between dual-track and single-track (immersion centre) French immersion programs in Canada. An immersion centre is an entire school that is devoted to French immersion, and a dual-track model is one in which a school houses a French immersion program alongside a regular (English-medium) program.¹ At the time members of the school board were debating whether to move to the centre model for their elementary French immersion program. This school board provided an example of best practice by ensuring that their decision-making would be research-informed and data-driven.

As the external consultant hired by the school board, in this report I offer brief summaries of the research I compiled and presented. I concentrate this report primarily on research that addresses differences in academic achievement. It is worth noting that research in this area is limited. Finally, I briefly describe final outcomes and administrators' perspectives on the model currently in place.

Research Summaries

1. Lapkin et al. (1981) published a study comparing student outcomes in immersion centres and dual-track schools. The research was carried out for the Carleton Board (Ottawa, Ontario) and involved testing of grade 5 students in centres (six classes) and dual-track schools (four classes) in both French and English. A survey of the staff was also conducted.

Results indicated that on two of the four tests (listening comprehension as well as reading comprehension/vocabulary), immersion centre students outperformed dual-track students. No other differences in performance were indicated. The conclusion was that immersion centres led to superior achievement in French and some aspects of English language skills. The questionnaire data indicated that centre students were possibly using more French in out-of-classroom contexts than dual-track students and that they had more exposure to written and spoken French in the school environment than their dual-track counterparts.

Furthermore, teachers in centres appeared better satisfied with resources available in their schools and with their overall teaching situations. In interpreting the results, the researchers speculated that support for the French language was more pronounced in the centre setting where they found school corridor displays featuring more material in French, assemblies conducted in French, administration and other staff more likely to be bilingual and so on.

2. Lapkin (1991) cited examples of how the Lapkin et al. (1981) research was used to bolster opposing points of view and how research is often used as after-the-fact rationalizing of politically motivated decisions. Even though the 1981 study yielded important findings, Lapkin cautioned against the use of a single evaluation focussing on one grade as evidence that the centre proves optimal for immersion programs. She argued that this cannot be safely generalised without replication studies and consideration of a host of other contextual factors. Nevertheless, she claimed that the 1981 study showed that the recipe for successful implementation includes not only actively encouraging the use of French outside of the classroom but also within the school "so that the language is perceived as an authentic means of communication for a social purpose that goes beyond academic learning within the class and pervades the life of the school" (p. 2).

3. A survey conducted in Manitoba of French immersion graduates in 1998 and 1999 revealed that the respondents viewed immersion centres more favourably with regards to resource materials and academic support services (Manitoba Education, 2001). In response to two survey items in particular: School provided adequate French resource material and School provided academic French language support services, the immersion centre graduates indicated much higher levels of agreement than the dual-track graduates.

4. Crawford (1995) conducted a study on dual-track programs. She examined in depth the culture of the dual-track elementary school by conducting seventy-six semi-structured interviews with parents, teachers, students and administrators in two different schools.

Crawford found that developing a shared school culture was a great deal of work, but well worth the effort. A dual-track school setting had its advantages: exposure to diversity, chance to teach and learn in two languages, better student and parent cooperation due to choice, good French as a Second Language instruction, elimination of neighbourhood cliques, development of cultural tolerance and keeping community schools open. Furthermore, there was an implication that the development of subcultures within a school is not perceived as negative: subcultures can protect the integrity of groups and programs and thus facilitate overall cooperation and harmony.

5. Kissau (2003) did a study assessing the relationship between the school environment and program effectiveness. Two settings were investigated: an immersion centre and a dual-track school. The study consisted of questionnaires completed by grade 7 students and teachers in both settings. Results indicated that centre students

were perceived, by both teachers and students, to be exposed to more French and less peer pressure than their dual-track counterparts.

6. In a socio-political analysis, Safty (1992) examined the organizational settings of immersion and the sociology of the school culture. He questioned the integration and effectiveness of dual-track schools with two different linguistic and cultural orientations. He quotes McGillivray (1984) stating that the two programs are not compatible and that they “co-exist with difficulty.”

7. In a brief review of what has been learned from studies on French immersion, Cummins (2000) indicated that two problematic areas have been noted in the implementation of French immersion programs in Canada. One problem is the quality of French oral language and written proficiency attained by immersion students and the other being the relatively high attrition rate in Canadian French immersion since its inception. Students often lack interaction with native francophone students, and they also have few classroom opportunities to use French. He explained, “Expressive skills tend to develop better in schools where the entire school is a French immersion centre rather than in schools where just one stream is taught through French; however, the latter organizational structure far outnumber the former as a result of the political difficulty of devoting an entire neighbourhood school to French instruction...” (p. 4).

8. Perhaps the most significant research recently conducted in this area was done in Alberta. Guimont (2003) reviewed prior research on single- and dual-track immersion schools including work by McGillivray (1984), who wrote that immersion centres often have administrative advantages because they devote all their staff, programs and resources to immersion, making the budget more manageable. He also explained how centres often have specialists for remedial services, which may in part account for the lower attrition rate in centres. In contrast, unilingual administrators in dual-track schools often lack pedagogical knowledge of second language learning, and have problems communicating about educational issues with, supervising, and evaluating French immersion teachers.

Guimont (2003) conducted a comparative analysis (dual/single track schools) of two sources of quantitative data provided by Alberta Learning: provincial achievement test results from 1995-1996 and 1999-2000 for all grade 6 French Immersion students and a multiyear report of scores on the four core subjects taught in French. He also gathered qualitative data through taped, unstructured interviews with six current and former principals of five of the top six schools where the students achieved the best overall results in the four subjects taught in French (Social Studies, Mathematics, French Language Arts, Science).

Results of the quantitative data showed that students enrolled in immersion centres achieved better results in all of the subjects, for each of the years that was reported in the study. Furthermore, the results in 1999-2000 showed a greater difference in mean scores than the results in 1995-96 in all the subjects in the years examined. It is interesting to note that French Language Arts is the subject that had the least difference in Total Test Mean results between the two immersion sub-populations.

Three themes emerged from Guimont’s interpretational analysis of the data gathered from the principals’ perspectives, reflections and explanations in light of the quantitative data results:

Immersion centres function like francophone (French first language) schools. The principals talked about the students having more exposure to French, of the difficulty in ensuring that students speak French outside the classroom in a dual-track setting, how more exposure would enable them to remember more words and of the creation of a French community within a single-track setting.

Common goals and resources directed at one program are best. In regards to resources, respondents felt that the establishment of common goals and allocation of resources was a key factor to the success of students in immersion centres.

Immersion centres attract more committed parents. Principals felt that parents whose children have to travel outside the neighbourhood in order to attend an immersion centre are more committed. They also felt that families with one Francophone parent generally chose an immersion centre as opposed to a dual-track school. Guimont concluded with fourteen implications for practice including the following:

Administrators in dual-track schools must be given more professional development opportunities to help them tackle the daily challenge of leading a bi-cultural staff, promoting and respecting cultural needs, building and maintaining team spirit among colleagues, and working toward the realization of school goals.

Principals of dual-track schools must ensure that the school functions effectively as one school and that this is clear to all stakeholders.

Principals must demonstrate the value of and strongly believe in the importance of the immersion model. In light of the results, school authorities must ask themselves how important it is to provide the best setting for their immersion students to achieve optimal results and to allow them to develop the best French language skills possible.

School Board Decision and Administrator Perspectives

Upon presentation of the research and recognition of a declining English-strand population in the school, the school board that requested the compilation of research decided to move to a centre model for the fall of 2007. The two administrators who transitioned from the dual-track model to the centre model were interviewed in the winter of 2010 and asked to give their perceptions of the shift. After two years of the centre immersion model, they both felt strongly that the centre model was more beneficial for a number of reasons.

One benefit is the development of a common vision and school mission since it is substantially more difficult to lead a team whose goals represent two different populations. In addition, managing a dual-track school is significantly more complex because the needs of the two tracks are different. Politically, it is also more sensitive as one program cannot spend more than the other. Prior to changing to a single-track immersion centre, they had felt their French Immersion program was lagging. For example, they were unable to provide the same quality of services to students in French as in English, nor were funds available to do so.

The transition to single-track has also had a profound impact on the culture of the school. Both administrators concur that the acquisition of the French language is more rapid in a centre model. Announcements, intramurals, choirs, library helpers, concerts and cultural events are all provided in French. Rather than French being only a language of instruction, it is now brought alive outside of the four classroom walls. They state that the students are proud of their ability to communicate in French with other people.

Teachers were initially hesitant and fearful of the change. Some were upset about losing friendships with colleagues teaching in the English track. However, since the transition, they recognize they are able to have their specific immersion needs met effectively and also have more opportunities to work in French professional learning communities.

It is the belief of the administrators that some schools should initially open as dual-track programming, but with the intention of moving towards a single-track model when it becomes financially feasible for the school board.

Dear PARC members:

Imagine if a committee of parents, principals and teachers were discussing how your children should be educated. Now imagine that you were not informed about their discussions.

For parents of the Giles Campus French Immersion School, we do not have to imagine. This is the situation we found ourselves in on Friday, May 4, when we received our first official communication about this process from the school board.

You have been meeting for months. Your school communities have been getting letters home inviting them to join the process and attend the first two public meetings of the committee. Not us. We do not have a principal or a teacher, let alone parent representatives, we can ask about how the recommendations are being made.

I hope you can imagine how frustrating this is. Now add to that a set of three recommendations, every one of which calls for our students (projected to number 600+ very soon) to share a school space.

I have taken the time since receiving the May 4 letter to read all of your committee minutes. In there, I can find no discussion of the relative merits of single-track education versus a dual-track setting. Can you please tell me whether any of your deliberations included the research pointing to better educational results for French Immersion students in single-track schools?

I have a few other questions I would like you to answer before you submit a final report to trustees.

Can you guarantee that French Immersion students in a dual-track school will receive French-language instruction in every avenue – not just in core classes, but in physical education, creative arts, music, and extracurricular activities, as is the case at Ecole Bellewood?

Is your first option (JK-12 in a new space at Marlborough location) intended to be dual-track right through grade 12? If so, will there be enough concentration of high school students in French Immersion to sustain the program? If not, where will French Immersion graduates pursue secondary education? Under your second option, a dual-track elementary school would occupy Century high school. According to your enrolment projections, how soon will that combined population exceed the building's capacity? Will there be funding in place to build an entirely new school on the Marlborough site, as called for in option three, or do you instead expect an expansion to the existing facility?

Thanks for your consideration,
Martina Obersat

The following are questions I will be asking at meeting for Forster Family Schools at General Brock today.

OPTION – CLOSE CENTURY – MOVE AB TO WESTERN QUESTIONS:

What is planned method of bus pick up for AB students?

Transportation is provided to four boards in this area by a Transportation consortium. *Students are transported now and will continue to be transported as per Transportation policy*

What is estimated length of time for student on bus each day?

According to Transportation policy, students should not be on a bus longer than one hour

What is estimated cost? Is transportation budget increased?

Students are already transported. Transportation is always provided in the most cost efficient manner

Are scheduled breaks and PA days the same in the city and county?

Yes

What is the number of AB students presently at Western?

Approx. 120 students

What is the grade breakdown of Century AB students?

Approx 100 students (grade breakdown is not public information)

Is there a criteria presently in place that determines whether a special education student attends Century or the home school special education program? If so how would that criteria be changed to now accommodate Century students.

IPRC

Are there presently students in the AB Century program who could move into the special education programs at home district schools?

Not public information

Could special education programs at local schools be modified to include AB students in Windsor?

STEPS, PATHS

Special Education department decision

What is meant by Transition.

Changeover.

Will status quo be maintained until new school built?

Please remember that these are the recommendation of the commit which acts as an advisory committee to trustees. Administration will formulate their recommendations in the Fall which trustees will vote on. They may be the same as the committee's they may be different.

Will parents of incoming AB students be advised that their child may be bused to Western?

yes

What will protocol be should a child get sick or injured during the school day?

Same as is currently in place at Century and Western. If no one is available to pick the student up, they are sent home by cab

Will Adaptive Program be phased out ?

no

Could AB students be moved to a school in Windsor that is centralized.

Special Education department decision

OPTION 2 – CREATE NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHOOL

Forster enrollment presently – 452 – 284 Gr. 9-12, 180 – ESL, 11 STEPS. What is plan – just 9-12 to Century +STEPS OR entire Forster population. What would be total population?

Entire Forster population

Will Century site need to be modified to accommodate Forster students.

no

Thank You

Judie Acton