



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Expansion of French Immersion approved

(Windsor, Ontario, Dec. 16, 2014) – Parents seeking French Immersion for their children will have improved access throughout the region when programs expand at two more of the board’s elementary schools next fall.

WECD SB Trustees approved in principle a recommendation tonight to provide French Immersion in September of 2015 at St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School in River Canard and at the former St. Gregory Catholic Elementary School site in Tecumseh, bringing to six the number of elementary locations for French Immersion throughout the board’s jurisdiction.

The recommendation calls for approval in principle of phased-in, single track French Immersion at the former St. Gregory school site. Dual track French Immersion will be offered at St. Joseph, meaning those parents who wish for their children to remain in their English programs can still do so.

“Parents in these two areas have demonstrated overwhelming support for French Immersion and we’re very happy to be able to provide it for them,” said Board Chair Barb Holland. “We are currently running top-quality programs at other schools and based on our success there, we are well-positioned to expand French Immersion at these new locations.”

The board currently has four elementary French Immersion sites in operation – St. Mary in Maidstone, Queen of Peace in Leamington, St. Anne in Windsor’s Walkerville district, and Christ the King in South Windsor – with two of them rapidly nearing capacity.

As part of the initial five-year plan submitted to the Board in February 2011, the French Immersion Advisory Committee was directed to explore the possibility of expanding the elementary French Immersion program. A feasibility study was approved in September, followed by a survey with the majority of respondents indicating that the Tecumseh/Lakeshore and Amherstburg/LaSalle areas were the most popular choice for expanded French Immersion.

Of the 771 people who responded to the survey, 120 in Tecumseh/Lakeshore indicated intent to enroll their children in French Immersion, while 119 in Amherstburg/LaSalle said they intended to enroll. In Tecumseh/Lakeshore, 84 respondents said they had children between 0-5 years old, while 69 in Amherstburg/LaSalle said they had children in the same age bracket.

The board also held two public consultation meetings in November in those areas for interested members of the community to provide additional feedback.

Director of Education Paul Picard attended both of those meetings and said he believes expanded French Immersion at the schools will successfully meet the needs of both communities.

“With the recently announced great news about our financial surplus, we’re in an excellent position to provide quality French Immersion programming in a fiscally responsible manner,” Picard said. “The locations we’ve selected are perfect to accommodate this program as it grows with the existing cohort of students.”

A subsequent report with a comprehensive implementation plan and all of the relevant financial data will be brought forward to the board for consideration in January 2015.

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