

From the MES Pac:

Hello to all, introduction of self

The parents of the Mamquam PAC feel that we have not been given enough time to adequately explore the options open to us with regards to moving the FI program from Mamquam School. We started our discussions at the end of the last school year and then over the summer you took several of the options off the table and presented us with a totally new one. We have had a short discussion on this at a regular PAC meeting and then we held a specially designated meeting to review the School Board's option of moving the District FI program out of MES. Several ideas were brought forth and discussed. It was a brainstorming session and some of the ideas were not viable, however we discussed options other than just the one the School Board is bringing forward. More discussion regarding these ideas is necessary with the Mamquam stake holders (administration, teachers, parents) before any further information is brought to the board

For the record, the Mamquam PAC does not want the program moved from the school. Having said this, we know that due to the new full day Kindergarten program and the board's decision not to change or enforce boundaries, our school cannot house the projected enrolment for the upcoming school year. We have a projected Kindergarten enrolment for three classes in September. One option we came up with was that if Mamquam was able to cap the Kindergarten intake at two classes, we would have enough space for one more year to prepare, discuss and plan properly for a well informed and though out move of the FI program. Is it mandatory that we take all the students that try to enrol? If our school is full, it is full. We would really like the board to strongly consider this option.

The overall goal of the Mamquam PAC is to support, maintain and improve the integrity of educational programming for all our children in both the French and English streams. We are looking to create a **long term** solution that will help achieve this. As we all do not want to have to revisit this issue again in the near future, it is imperative we get this worked out correctly.

In response to the only option presently on the table, the Mamquam PAC would like to ensure that enough research and planning has been done before any such move of the FI program to Squamish Elementary happens. If the FI program is to be moved, we support the move in its entirety-not grade by grade, year by year. However, in making this statement, we are not only concerned about the impact on the students of Mamquam but also on Squamish Elementary where a new group of approximately 140 intermediate French speaking students descends upon them all at once. How will Squamish students feel and what will the impact be on the FI students? The school will be changed from one with a population of 252 to one with 390 in one fell swoop-not to mention, more than doubling the number of intermediate students. These numbers do not include the siblings that would also be moved with the FI students. I know the capacity of SE is 425. It won't take long to reach those numbers when the FI program is running at full enrolment.

It will be difficult for the Mamquam students who are used to the Mamquam Community to now be an isolated entity, at least for the first while, at a new school. At the beginning, they will only know each other. Squamish has its own culture and community which I'm sure will be quite different, but in no

way, any less impressive than Mamquam's. We feel it will take a lot of planning, time and adjustment for those involved to prepare for a new culture to be developed at the school and to ensure that the two cultures will assimilate and integrate, not to remain as separate entities. Time and strategies to plan for this is imperative! In connection to this, there are several programs (such as Montessori, and Strong Start) currently running at SE that may have to change locations if FI is transferred. This will have a major impact on the SE community.

IF this option was chosen and the District French Immersion Program was moved to Squamish Elementary we have some ideas and concerns that we would like the board to consider:

1. By moving the FI program en mass, it will give strength to the numbers and support for both the teachers and students in the program. If it were moved one grade at a time, it would be very difficult to have one class (probably not two the first year due to the location change) and one teacher with only a few of the resources trying to maintain and build a program without the support of their friends and colleagues.

2. All of the library books and FI resources could be moved at the same time so they wouldn't have to be divided between two locations. This would be a cost and energy saving measure.

3. With all of FI gone at once, it would give MES a chance to rebuild their school all at once with new teachers and hopefully a few more grade 5, 6, 7 students. As I talked about earlier, the culture of Mamquam is very unique. This will now be gone and a new one will have to be rebuilt given the change of demographics of the students at the school.

4. A short term (3 to 5) year transportation link between MES and SE should be considered as it would help maintain the numbers in the French program for the interim during the changeover. User pay subsidy could be an option.

5. We encourage a "trip to the new school" for the new FI students sometime in April-June so they know what the school looks like and will help them gain familiarity and reduce their anxiety. Included in this could be the use of the public transit system because it is a reality that many of these kids will be using it for the first times in their lives come September, and without their parents by their sides!

6. French Immersion parents are very concerned that if smaller numbers are in the program due to the location change, what will happen through attrition from elementary to secondary and throughout the secondary program? Currently, the attrition rate from grade 5 to 8/9 is 45%. This year there is no grade 11 FI program at HSS-it will run again in grade 12. Sometimes they only have the numbers to run it every 2 years. What is the school district's commitment over the next few years to support smaller class sizes to maintain the running and integrity of the program?

Thank you for taking the time to consider our statement and the concerns we have. Please keep in mind that we all want what is best for our children as people and students. We understand that a move of some kind must take place but please ensure that the groundwork is laid before any students place a

foot on the new ground! Let's not let our kids be an experiment in the making. If it takes another year to make sure things are done correctly, please let your decision be "wait a year" before the move so all those involved can do their part to make the transition as smooth and painless as possible.