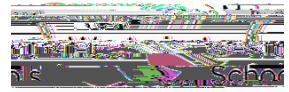


A Review of School District No. 40 (New Westminster)

**Prepared for the Superintendent of Schools
and The Board of Trustees**



Executive Summary

The Purpose

The Programs of Choice Review was initiated in January of 2023 as part of work outlined in the New Westminster School District's Strategic Plan (2019-2024). There are several components of this Plan that relate to the Review.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY A : *Transform the student experience*

District Goal: "Students Will Thrive Emotionally, Socially and Academically", specifically "*Provide robust, engaging, viable and sustainable Programs of Choice*"

STRATEGIC PRIORITY C: *Lead into our future*

District Goal: "Develop innovative and sustainable programs", specifically "*Increase access to existing and future specialty programs.*"

The Process

The Review took place over the first 6 months of 2023. Three Programs of Choice were reviewed during this process; Early and Late French Immersion at the elementary, middle and secondary school levels, Montessori at the elementary level and the Home Learners Program, which is available to students in Kindergarten through Grade 8.

The key areas of focus were:

- The alignment of the New Westminster School District's Programs of Choice to the BC curriculum's emphasis on personalized learning, differentiated instruction and inclusion

- The alignment of the three Programs of Choice with district values and the Board of Education's Strategic Plan

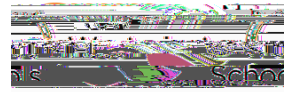
- The extent to which each Program of Choice meets student interests and needs

- An assessment of program viability regarding current and future needs related to facilities utilization, geographic equity, staffing, resources, training, etc.

- An analysis of the district's ability to support the diverse students' needs and interests through existing and possible new programs

- An overview of the various Programs of Choice offered in neighbouring school districts.

The process involved interviews with individual staff at the district and school levels, focus groups with students, parents and staff, an extensive survey process and on-site visits to all schools



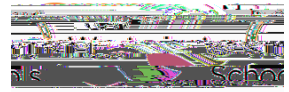
1. What is working well in the program (EFI, LFI, Montessori, Home Learners)?
2. What challenges and obstacles are being faced by the program?
3. What are opportunities are there for improvement to the program?

What Was Learned

What is Working Well?

French Immersion

French Immersion in New Westminster is a sought-after Program of Choice



Montessori

Parents say their children are engaged in their learning and believe that the Montessori program offers freedom and flexibility.

The Montessori Program aligns closely with BC's revised curriculum.

The Montessori Program is well-supported by an involved parent community and the New Westminister Montessori Society.

There is currently a dedicated teaching staff with strong Montessori pedagogy and training.

There is a strong sense of collaboration and professional support between the staffs at both schools.

What are Some of the Challenges and Obstacles?

French Immersion

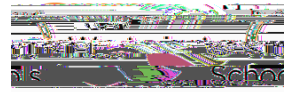
Parental demand for Early French Immersion exceeds available spaces in New Westminister's program.

For a variety of reasons, it is sometimes a struggle to keep the FI program properly staffed.

There is a need for better understanding on the part of parents as to what the French Immersion program entails.

With only one Kindergarten EFI class in each school each year, attrition is a significant issue at the Intermediate grades and beyond.

There is



There is a need for additional inclusive supports for students, particularly in the area of counselling.

Parents and staff do not feel that the Home Learners Program is recognized by the district or included in district events.

The yearly activation activities are perceived by parents to be onerous and not relevant to their curriculum.

There are frequent complaints of inconsistent, confusing or late communication from the school to parents.

Parents feel that too much time is taken for individual student conferencing and assessment which leads to a loss of in-person instruction.

Montessori

Parental demand for Montessori exceeds available spaces in New Westminster's program.

There is a need for better understanding on the part of parents as to what the Montessori program entails.

It is becoming more and more difficult to find teachers who are fully trained in the Montessori Method.

There is a perception on the part of some parents and staff that the program is not a "pure" Montessori program.

There are class size inequities in the Intermediate grades due to attrition.

Montessori classroom resources are expensive to purchase and therefore difficult to replace.

There is a perception of little or no district support for the Montessori program.

Considerations for the Board and Senior Staff

French Immersion

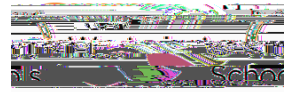
The development of more program information sources for parents, including video clips, interviews, newsletters, etc.

The provision of more opportunities for teacher collaboration across the district and between the elementary, middle and secondary FI programs.

Reinstate school visits to all Grade 5 classrooms to promote the Late French immersion Program.



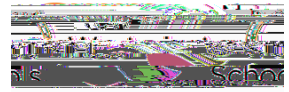




DISTRICT

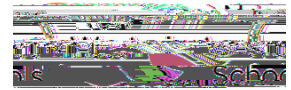
There are several Administrative Procedures (APs) which direct how Programs of Choice are to be implemented in the New Westminster School District. They are:

AP 213 French Programs (<https://newwestschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/French->



Terms of Reference and Review Process

As outlined in the report presented at the Operations Policy and Planning Committee in



In addition to the school visits, 12 meetings (virtually and in person) were also held with the following staff and community representatives:

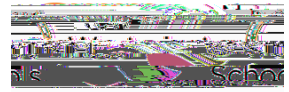
- CUPE 409 President
- New Westminster Teachers' Union President
- New Westminster DPAC President
- New Westminster District Parents' Advisory Council (DPAC)
- New Westminster Montessori Parents' Association President and Vice-President
- New Westminster Canadian Parents for French Executive
- District French Immersion Advisory Committee
- French Programs Facilitator
- French Programs Coordinator
- Communications Manager
- Human Resources Manager for Teaching and Administration
- Clerical and Registration Manager

12 program-specific electronic surveys were also made available to the following groups:

- All parents and interested community members
- All staff (teaching and support)
- All school-based administrators
- Programs of Choice staff (teaching and support)
- Parents of K-8 French Immersion students
- Parents of Secondary French Immersion students
- Parents of Montessori students
- Parents of Home Learners
- Grade 5 Montessori students
- Grade 5-8 Home Learner students
- Grade 5-8 French immersion students
- Secondary French immersion students

In total, 1323 survey responses were received and analyzed. The breakdown was as follows:

Partner Group	Population/Cohort Size	Number of Responses	Response Rate
Staff (Teaching, Support and Administrative)	793	154	19%
French Immersion parents	990 students	317	32% ***
Montessori parents	209 students	80	38% ***
Home Learners Program parents	116 students	48	41% ***



General parent/community



New Westminster Secondary School Student Voice Representatives	Virtual	13	6
Ecole Glenbrook Middle School EFI and LFI students	In-person	22	22
TOTAL			90

Finally, people who expressed an interest in participating in a focus group but were unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict were invited to respond to the three guiding questions by email. 8 people contributed their thoughts and opinions in this format.

"In a small school district, we do an exceptional job of offering choices for learners." (staff)

"Knowing that the district is growing, being proactive with setting up programs of choice will help support future students." (staff)

"The programs at my school location are, in my strong opinion, successful at meeting the needs of each student because of the care and dedication of staff. I am very proud to be part of SD40 and my school location, and feel very much supported in my role to support students." (staff)

"I think these programs are super beneficial to kids and should continue to be offered." (parent)

"I am a strong believer in the diverse and inclusive nature and fantastic programming and teaching in our "neighbourhood" program. I don't feel like my child needs to attend a "program of choice" to have a quality public education. Our teachers do an amazing job." (parent)

"The demand is much higher than the availability, so we need to understand why, we need to ensure that staffing is available and that we have access to high quality teachers for the specialized programs (such as French) and then ensure that the school community as a whole is lifted up by the program rather than becoming an exclusive group within a school." (parent)

"Continue these surveys and have community meetings with school district parents to discuss further options. Sharing ideas, suggestions in person" (parent)

"I'm happy to be given options for my children's education." (parent)



French Immersion

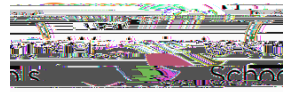
The New Westminster School District offers both Early and Late French Immersion Programs. Late French Immersion was first introduced at Glenbrook Middle School in the year 2000, and in 2003 the Early French Immersion Program was started with Grade One classes at both Herbert Spencer Elementary and Lord Tweedsmuir Elementary.

Currently, Early French Immersion begins in Kindergarten (with some additional opportunity for entry at Grade One as space permits) and continues through Grade 5 at 3 schools; École Herbert Spencer, École Lord Tweedsmuir, and École Qayqayt. École Glenbrook Middle School is where EFI students continue their French program in Grades 6 and 7. It is also where Late French Immersion students begin their French studies in Grade 6. Both groups come together in Grade 8 to form one French Immersion cohort, which then continues for Grades 9 through 12 at New Westminster Secondary School. Attrition is an issue in FI at the secondary level (as it is in other districts as well) but the majority of French Immersion students who enter NWSS in Grade 9 will graduate with a Bilingual Dogwood Certificate at the end of Grade 12.

Year	Number of students registered in FI in Grade 12 (based on September 1701 data)	Number of FI Students Receiving their Bilingual Dogwood Certificate after Grade 12
2021/2022	59	62
2020/2021	73	66
2019/2020	72	68
2018/2019	73	63
2017/2018	63	46

During the 2022-2023 school year, there were almost 1000 K-12 students registered in French

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Grade 6 LFI



What is Working?

- 4. French Immersion in New Westminster is a sought-after Program of Choice which meets the requirements of the Ministry of Education’s French Immersion Policy outlined earlier in this report, as well as the Graduation Order Requirements. In fact, at the secondary level, there are more course options available than are required. For example, in order to earn both a British Columbia Certificate of Graduation (Dogwood Diploma) and a Diplôme de fin d’études secondaires en Colombie-Britannique (what is referred to as a “Dual Dogwood”), French Immersion students must meet the graduation requirements for the Dogwood Diploma and, of these 80 credits, they must earn:
 - 1. At least 16 credits at the Grade 12 level (including a Français langue seconde- immersion course at the Grade 12 level).
 - 2. Français langue seconde-immersion 10 (4 credits).
 - 3. A Français langue seconde-immersion course at the Grade 11 level (4 credits) or IB French A2 (SL) 11.
 - 4. Français langue seconde-immersion 12 (4 credits).
 - 5. At least 12 credits in Grade 10, 11, or 12 courses that are in French with at least 4 of these credits at the Grade 11 or 12 level.

At NWSS, students can choose from the following Language Arts and Social Studies courses:

Language Arts – French Immersion

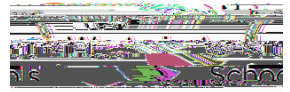
- 5. Communication orale 11
- 6. Études du cinéma et de la littérature francophone 11
- 7. Médias et communication numérique 11

Social Studies – French Immersion

- 8. Explorations en Sciences Humaines 11
- 9. Justice Sociale 12
- 10. Peuples autochtones de la Colombie – Britannique 12

As well, students may be able to complete their Dual Dogwood and an IB Diploma, provided that they take the appropriate IB courses.

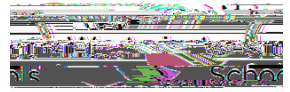
- 11. As stated earlier, a higher percentage of students in New Westminster are enrolled in French immersion (currently 13%) than the provincial average of other school districts (10%) . As well, the program has remained relatively stable in terms of size over the years. This (s)2 ysize o 9.9 (th7mr)4 (s Tw T*(T)2 (hi)-2 (pr)e3 (i)4 (a)4 fa-12.31-1.2 10 (e)3 ()10 (he)3is2 (pr)4



and 1 secondary school allows for more hands-on and in-person support from the District's French Facilitator who last year was able to spend a full day each week in each of the three elementary schools. As well, the French Coordinator was able to survey each school, grade and teacher as to which French resources they required for their classrooms.

13. Each year, with support from the Government of Canada, the British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care provides OLEP (Official Languages in Education Protocol) funding to school districts offering French education programs. Recognizing that resources for French Immersion programs are often difficult to find and expensive to purchase, these funds are intended to aid in the purchase of learning resources, including E-learning, and the provision of professional development for teachers and cultural activities for students. Examples of how the funding was used last year in SD40 include:

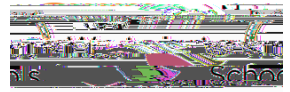
13.4 additional French professional development opportunities



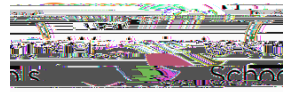
What are the Challenges and Obstacles?

As is the case in every school district in the Lower Mainland (and indeed in BC and the rest of Canada), parental demand for the Early French Immersion Program is much greater than the availability of spaces in New Westminister's program. Some parents commented that they would like to see the French Immersion Program available in every elementary school in the district. As noted earlier in this report, there are usually twice as many students applying to the program as there are spaces. While ideally, it would be wonderful if all school districts could offer more Early French Immersion classes, it is not currently possible in New Westminister, or most other school districts for that matter. This is due primarily to a significant shortage of qualified French Immersion teachers in BC, as well as a lack of the necessary additional physical space (classrooms) in most schools.

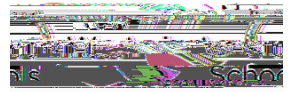
Canadian Parents for French, which has an active chapter in New Westminister, continues to advocate for more French Immersion classes across the country. Both the Federal and Provincial governments have initiated projects such as the Growth Initiatives Fund outlined earlier which are intended to support current and possible future measures that the Government of Canada, Provincial Ministries of Education, faculties of education and school boards could consider to address the French Teacher supply and demand gap. To be clear, this is a national issue that needs to be examined at all levels of government and is not specific to the New Westminister School District.



During the focus group meetings, frequent mention was made of the perception on the part of some parents that French Immersion is a sort of “enrichment program” that offers something “extra”, and that there are fewer discipline and learning issues in a French Immersion class, none of which is actually the case. Other than the language of instruction being French rather than English, all public school classrooms in BC follow the same

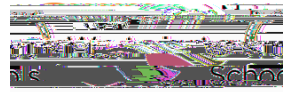


assemblies or even the singing of the national anthem rarely happen in both languages. Part of this may be attributed to the fact that there is only one French-speaking administrator in

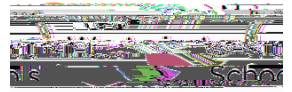


Considerations

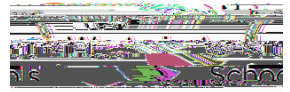
1. While the district does offer online parent information sessions prior to French Immersion Program application deadlines, there continues to be a lack of understanding of what the program entails and what the expectations should be. The district may want to consider developing further sources of information which are easily accessible by parents. In addition



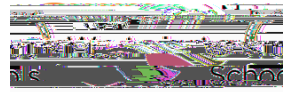
“Events for French speakers in New Westminster because the French community is located in Vancouver and it's far from the city center.”



"We should bring back visits to the elementary schools to promote/explain the late French

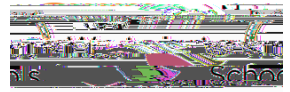


A more immediate consideration would be the consolidation of the three current sites into two schools, both of which would remain as dual track schools. Again, in order to strengthen the program, it is essential



“For something like EFI, if there were fewer locations but offering more spaces within the fewer schools, there would be more of an opportunity for the students to practice speaking French. There would also be more resources in fewer locations.” (parent)

“Elementary schools are not pure immersion into French and the language is suffering. A magnet school with admin staff and non-enrolling teachers (art/music etc) who spoke French would improve the quality of the spoken language.” (parent)

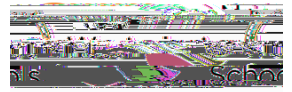


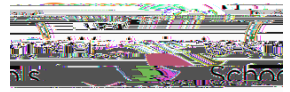
Unlike the French Immersion Program, there is not a single entry point at Kindergarten that students apply to each year. Rather, students often come to the program as a family unit and therefore, the number of students and which grade levels they are applying to will vary from year to year.

Grade	2022 Applicants	2023 Applicants (as of 08/08/23)
Kindergarten	10	13
Grade 1	9	1
Grade 2	11	12
Grade 3	10	2
Grade 4	5	5
Grade 5	2	1
Grade 6	3	5
Grade 7	4	0
Grade 8	2	0
Total	56	39

Grade	Sept. 2022 New Students	Sept. 2023 New Students
Kindergarten	4	13
Grade 1	5	0
Grade 2	4	6
Grade 3	3	0
Grade 4	4	2
Grade 5	2	1
Grade 6	9	4
Grade 7	5	0
Grade 8	1	0
Total	37	26

Families choose the Home Learners Program for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to, some who are looking for an alternative to a traditional “bricks and mortar” school, those who are dedicated to the concept of home-schooling (oc)8 (ho)12-22tchoout no@choortar” school, those

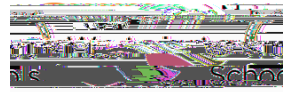




What is Working?

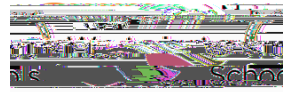
15. Although it is a small staff, teachers in this program have worked together for a long time, in some cases 18-20 years. The teachers, parents and administrators all comment on the fact that the teaching staff work very well together and are passionate about the program and the students they support.
16. Parents are thankful that HLP provides an alternative to families who are not interested in the traditional model of schooling. They like the flexibility of the program as well as the blend of in-person and at home learning. They commented that they feel well-supported and respected by the teachers.
17. Parents and staff also very much value the school site itself, located adjacent to Hume Park, and the fact that they have a dedicated building that they are not obligated to share with another program. Prior to their arrival at Hume Park, the program had been housed in four other buildings, which was said to have created some difficult situations.

"The location of HLP, next to Hume Park is vitally important to the program as the kids are out there learning about nature daily. T



“reined in”, made smaller and more manageable, and that it needed to be provided to them much earlier in the process than is currently the case.

6. In addition to the poor communication around the activation activities noted above, parents spoke often of their concerns with the methods of communication in general. They complained of a lack of continuity as to who was sending out emails and when. They felt that there was an almost constant change of plans and last minute messages about these changes that were not received by all families in a timely manner, leading to confusion, errors, and missed opportunities.
7. Many parents referred back to the previous pre-Covid model where there was an optional third in person day available to interested families. The focus of this 3rd day was often outdoor activities, and many families feel that this is now something that is missing from the program.
8. And finally, parents believe that there is currently too much time taken for the individual student conferencing and assessment which leads up to the reporting periods. They say that taking all of September to conference to create the learning plans, and then conferencing again for 3 weeks prior to each of the reporting periods of December, March and June means that it is difficult for students to get into a routine. Just when they become used to going to school twice weekly, the in-person learning stops for conferencing.



Considerations

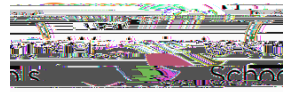
1. More of a concerted effort should be made to include the Home Learners Program in all district notices and events. If there is an opportunity for HLP students to participate in events or activities appropriate to their grade level, every attempt should be made to ensure that they are invited or considered. Given that these students will move into the mainstream system at NWSS after Grade 8 (if not earlier) any opportunity to familiarize them with the rest of the SD40 school community early on can only help with that transition.
2. In regard to the huge amount of time and energy that is involved in the allotment process, there are two options that the district can consider to reduce the stress and provide more structure and support to the process. The first would be to increase the clerical allocation to the school to 1.00 FTE. Staff and the school principal report that the current 0.60 FTE (3 days per week) does not allow enough time for the clerical person at the school to do all of the necessary ordering of resources and still have time for the myriad of other duties that are a part of a normal school clerical role.

The second option would be to place requirements or restrictions on how at least a portion of the allotment can be spent. For example, if 1/3 or 1/2 of the \$600 amount must be spent on "required materials", then the number of individualized resources needing to be ordered would be greatly reduced, and would be more manageable within the current clerical FTE. Examples of required materials could include pre-determined lists of recommended resources appropriate to each grade level or kits in areas such as literacy, Math or Science created by the teachers to support the program.

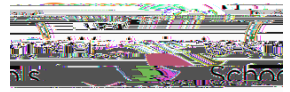
3. Many of the concerns voiced by parents centered around the lack of stable, consistent and regular communication. The teaching staff and administrator need to work to create a communication plan that is shared with all HLP families and provides regular, scheduled and consistent communication from a single source. This will ensure that everyone hears the same information at the same time and that no one is left out or informed too late. It is suggested that all teachers would share their communication messages first with the principal who, working with the clerical staff, would be the primary contact for all outgoing communication with families.

"Inefficient communication emails: the emails sometimes get sent out from "Hume Park Homelearners", some from the learning consultant or another teacher, and it is very confusing when we are searching for past emails because we don't remember who sent it."
(parent)

"Usually the showcase projects are not emailed with adequate time to complete them. The instructions are often very confusing. And often only a few days before the showcase presentation week is when the requirements for the actual presentation are emailed. It is



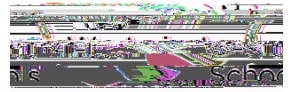
also very confusing to read and understand. I know other families have expressed their frustration about this as well.” (parent)



there are always more applicants to the Montessori program than there are Kindergarten spaces available. Siblings have priority for this program as well.

Year	Number of Kindergarten Applicants
2023	88
2022	122
2021	93
2020	70
2019	47
2018	66

It should also be noted that although it is not possible to provide exact data because there are two separate application processes, it is well-known anecdotally that many families will apply for both the Montessori Program and Early French Immersion when registering their child for Kindergarten. Given this fact, it is unclear how many families apply for both programs.



Survey Results

Grade 5 students in the Montessori Program: 22 respondents

Parents of students in the Montessori Program: 80 respondents

100% of Grade 5 Montessori students surveyed agree or strongly agree that they are happy to be enrolled in the program.

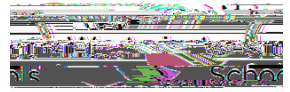
86% of Grade 5 Montessori students surveyed agree or strongly agree that they like the things that they learn in the program.

89% of Montessori parents surveyed agree or strongly agree that their child's academic needs are being met in the program.

83% of Montessori parents surveyed agree or strongly agree that their child is engaged in their learning in the program.

94% of Montessori parents surveyed agree or strongly agree that their child is happy to be a part of the program and is proud of their learning.

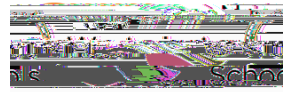
84% of Montessori parents surveyed agree or strongly agree that they would recommend the program to other families.



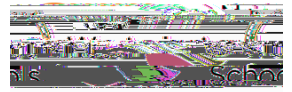
What are the Challenges and Obstacles?

1. The biggest concern voiced by both Montessori parents and staff is the lack of understanding on the part of some parents as to what Montessori program is about. One parent interviewed said that in their experience, parents apply for the program because they are looking for something extra, something that they would see as enrichment over the regular neighbourhood classroom, but not because they know about or agree with the fundamental principles of the Montessori method. Several examples were cited of parents not truly understanding the focus on student-led activities, the importance of the type of materials used, why there are multi-age classrooms, all of which are core components of the program. As one staff member said, "Some parents enroll their children thinking it is highly structured and rigid, others enroll because they think it is a free for all and students can do whatever they want, whenever they want. In truth it is neither of these things."

"

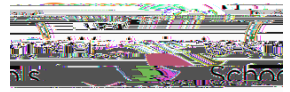


"It seems not a lot of differences with the regular classroom, the activities and learning etc. .



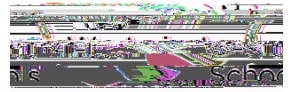
Considerations

1. While the district does offer online parent information sessions prior to Montessori



4. In order to support the principles of the Montessori program and provide the specific types of materials required in a Montessori classroom, the district should consider a small annual budget allocation for schools with Montessori classrooms. As is the case with the French funding provided to FI schools, this budget would only be used for items unique to the Montessori program. For example, the funds could be used to replace the math manipulatives and puzzles specific to the program, but would not be used for materials such as technology or books that would be seen to be useful in any classroom. These types of purchases would continue to be taken out of general school and district budgets.

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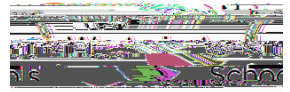
**Additional Items for Consideration
Which Impact All Programs of Choice**

The following considerations, if implemented, would support and enhance each of the Programs of Choice reviewed.

1. Currently, Administrative Policy 220 (Programs of Choice) states the following:

“Waitlists for Early French Immersion, Late French Immersion and Montessori will be dissolved on the last Friday of September at 4:00pm. ”

It is recommended that this waitlist dissolution date for the Early French Immersion and Montessori Programs be changed to the last school day in December of that same year. It is not uncommon that after a month or two of school, families may decide that a program is not a good fit for their child, that transportation to the school is too difficult, or even that they will be moving out of district. Parents spoke of spaces becoming available in a

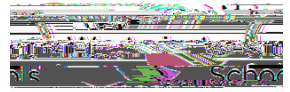


3. Fine Arts
4. Gifted or Challenge Programs
5. STEM focused programs

“Not all learners are identical and having a variety of programs with enough space for demand is key to students finding the right educational fit. New West has too few program supports for gifted/advanced learners.” (parent)

“I think we are lacking Programs of Choice that challenge those who are both strong academically and motivated to learn.” (parent)

“We have no middle school program of choice except LFI and HLP. There are many students leaving grade 5 who are not going to thrive in either of those programs, and who therefore have NO choice for grades 6, 7 and 8. I am an SD40 elementary school teacher (as well as a parent of students who did Montessori Elementary and LFI in SD40). As a teacher, I am worried about the lack of options for some of my my my 1mwam).9yryi tyry0m1 (s)a(r)-1 (,)-1 (r)-1 (s)-5 (o) (w1c-9 (f)-9 (o)-1 (h i)10



With Gratitude

The information provided in this report is intended to support the New Westminster Board of Education and Senior Staff when making decisions regarding both existing Programs of Choice and any new program offerings that may be contemplated in the future.

The reviewer would like to acknowledge and thank the many staff, students and parents who took part in the review. The participants were open, honest, and welcoming, and each gave willingly of their time to ensure that a complete picture of their school, their program, their beliefs, and their thoughts were shared.

I would also like to commend the school and district staff who work in all New Westminster schools for their obvious dedication to student success and their pride in their schools and their programs.