

**From:** Jill Comeau <[comeaujill@gmail.com](mailto:comeaujill@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** Thursday, May 18, 2023 at 11:27 AM  
**To:** Craig, Sarah (ASD-S) <[Sarah.Craig@nbed.nb.ca](mailto:Sarah.Craig@nbed.nb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re:

Hi Sarah...I meant to copy you into the below!!! Sorry. The PSSC at Loch Lomond is not pleased with the recent notification of losing FI program. Please let me know what else we should be doing....

Thanks! Jill Comeau

On Thu, May 18, 2023, 11:03 AM Comeau, Jill (SD/DS) <[Jill.Comeau@gnb.ca](mailto:Jill.Comeau@gnb.ca)> wrote:

To: Derek O'Brien, Superintendent of Anglophone South School District,

Melissa Savoie, Director of Schools

I am writing this email not only on behalf of the PSSC at Loch Lomond School as the Chairperson, but also as a very concerned and upset parent. The PSSC members combined have over 10 years experience at Loch Lomond School, with all of our children enrolled in the highly regarded French Immersion Program. The decision to begin phasing out the French Immersion Program starting in September 2023 is one that will have a detrimental affect on all students, staff, the school dynamic, and the larger community in which Loch Lomond School encompasses.

The French Immersion Program has been offered at Loch Lomond School for the last 25 years, being one of two satellite schools to branch off of Millidgeville North School who, until then, held the only French Immersion program in the zone. From there, they have created a strong, dynamic French program with consistent and proficient teachers – one of whom remains at the school since FI's inception. Recruiting and retaining French Immersion teachers has never been an issue for the school, and further two French mentors from the district chose to come to Loch Lomond School when they went back to classroom teaching because of the strength of the program. Other schools and Education Centres seek to replicate what has been established at Loch Lomond School and will come observe the teachers in action so they can implement a French Immersion program as effective and successful as this one. Their use of innovative teaching styles, such as Co-Teaching and Flexible Groupings have also been observed and mirrored at other schools.

The administration and teachers at Loch Lomond School team together to ensure this school receives extra funding for the enrichment of the French Immersion program. They were Innovation Grant Recipients for grades one and two last year, as well as a grade three grant for art this year (and many others in years past). Loch Lomond celebrates French Week every year, which not all schools do, and receive additional funding from the district to support this initiative. This week features everything French from music to food to art, it is a school wide week that enriches the education of all Loch Lomond School students.

Loch Lomond school embraces its French Immersion program, and like the province (although this is starting to be questioned), has devoted itself to being a bilingual facility. Signage in the hallways, sight words going up the stairs, and library books are all offered in both languages which speaks to not only a significant financial investment in the program but the investment in a bilingual community. Every student at Loch Lomond School benefits.

With solid teaching and programming come results. Students in the French Immersion Program at Loch Lomond School consistently achieve provincial testing results above the Saint John Education Centre average. Past and present students have developed such proficient French language skills that they have been able to pass the assessment to attend Samuel de Champlain beginning in middle school. The PSSC is struggling to comprehend why such a renowned and successful program is being taken away without any consultation.

It is the PSSC's understanding that this quick and thoughtless decision is the result of low registration numbers for the French Immersion Program for the current school year and for next year. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Policy 309: French Second Language Programs, Section 6.4.1, states "A Superintendent implements an immersion program in a community where there is sufficient interest and where it is deemed to be sustainable overtime". Given the sustainability over the last 25 years, and with fourteen children currently registered to start French in the fall, we challenge the insufficient interest and sustainability. The PSSC believe an important consideration is that only recently was the plan to replace all FI programs with a new program quashed, but also affected the enrolment numbers as parents were faced with many unknowns. Putting the last two years aside, the years preceding saw large enrolment numbers with the need to create two classes. The community surrounding Loch Lomond School is growing, with housing developments being established in the very neighbourhood the school resides. Although there is ample room to accommodate more children in the classroom, it also must be considered that the trend is similar on the English Prime side as well. "Low" enrolment measured across two years does not warrant a program closure; the trend has yet to prove be consistent. It is further challenged that fourteen is a reasonable class size, where many great learning opportunities can be offered to those students beginning their FI endeavours, and we also know that we receive other registrations throughout the summer prior to the commencement of the school year. Should parents choose to continue with their child's FI enrollment, is Forest Hills able to accommodate any type of influx?

The PSSC would argue that phasing out the French Immersion program at Loch Lomond School is non-inclusive. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Policy 322, Common Learning Environment, Section 6.1.1 states "Is enabling each student to participate fully in a common environment that is designed for all students. It is appropriate for the student's age and grade, is shared with peers in their neighbourhood school, and respects learning styles, needs and strengths". Children have the right to learn within their community schools. French Immersion is not offered in all East Saint

John schools; in fact, there are only two that offer the program with Loch Lomond being one of them. The Hampton Education Centre offers French Immersion in all their schools except two, which have low registration numbers given their rural locations. Parents of students who begin kindergarten in any other East school aside from Loch Lomond or Forest Hills are forced to decide whether they want to change schools for grade one to access FI or wait until Middle School for the late FI start. One of our PSSC members can attest that parent's make decisions based on FI being offered in their community school and their displeasure in relocating their children the year after kindergarten, as she had to make this decision for her child. Many other classmates chose to remain at their community school and not enroll in FI solely to prevent disruption. It would seem prudent to consider allowing those children looking to access FI at the early entrance to begin their school career at the location in which FI is offered instead of phasing the program out due to lower enrolment numbers. Has this, or any other option been considered? The interest of FI exists within our community, but the accessibility is not favourable. As well, has the increased travel time for students to access FI in East Saint John been considered? If parents are not wanting to relocate their children from Lakewood Heights to Loch Lomond School, imagine how parents of students in Rowley, Fairfield, or St Martin's feel about bussing their young child to Forest Hills? I can assure you, that putting my child on a bus early in the morning and enduring a lengthy bus ride with older students would deter me from enrolling in a French Immersion program. It is hard not to think that perhaps deterrence is the motive.

The PSSC is strongly against the decision made to eliminate the French Immersion Program at the school. It is clear that Loch Lomond School leads in their delivery of the program and disassembling the FI team will be a devastating loss to the school and to the other school's who access Loch Lomond's Program for training purposes. The French Immersion program is one-third of the Loch Lomond School community and contributes to the school's overall functioning and well being. Loch Lomond sees low numbers of tier three behaviour interventions, and it is felt that the FI program is a strong contributing factor to this as these students are predominantly positive leaders and mentors to the whole school. The disruption of the positive bilingual culture at this school will have lasting effects not only for the school dynamic but also for the transfer of learning to other sites. The PSSC urges the reconsideration of this decision and encourages looking at other options to ensure the longevity of the FI Program at Loch Lomond School. The PSSC is willing to meet and/or discuss any ideas or concerns that this email generates.

Sincerely,

Jill Comeau, parent and PSSC Chair

Victoria Dickens, Parent and PSSC Co-Chair

Tammy Brine, Parent and PSSC Member