



Parents keep warm waiting for French Immersion registration in 2018. (Morning Star file photo)

French Immersion feedback positive for Vernon School District

Ninety-one families lined up for 88 spots this week

PARKER CROOK / Jan. 17, 2019 12:30 p.m. / LOCAL NEWS / NEWS

Only an estimated three families were turned away from registering their child in the Vernon School District's French Immersion program.

Maritza Reilly, a communications coordinator for School District 22, said approximately 91 families lined up outside Beirsto Elementary Tuesday, Jan. 15. Some of those families began to line up Monday night to claim one of the highly coveted 88 of September's available spots, including eight spots in Grade 1.

"Feedback from most of the parents was positive and many of them believe the first-come, first-served process we have here is the most fair," Reilly said.

"We have also heard comments from those that believe this process eliminates the opportunity for single-parent families, but we have been communicating out to our families that they may arrange for another family member or friend to register on their behalf, if they have the appropriate paperwork, including a letter authorizing them to register the child. We offer this option in the spirit of supporting single-parent families."

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Vernon isn't the only community to see wait-listed French Immersion students.

According to the Canadian Parents for French British Columbia and Yukon, an estimated 200 students will soon find themselves on these wait lists. Parents in Sooke, Saanich, Vancouver, North Vancouver, New Westminster, Coquitlam, Surrey, Chilliwack, Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Kootenay Lake, Rocky Mountain, Fort. St. John, Cowichan Valley, Nanaimo and Burnaby are in similar positions.

“No child should be turned away from this popular life-changing educational experience. That’s the bottom line,” said Glyn Lewis, Canadian Parents for French executive director.

However, Reilly said, compared to some other districts, School District 22 feels it is able to accommodate the demand.

“We currently accept registration at the kindergarten and Grade 1 levels, as well as at Grade 6 for our Late French Immersion program,” Reilly said. “So if a child does not get into Kindergarten for this September, there is another option next year, or again in Grade 6.”

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