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By Ryan Kiedrowski
Journal Staff
Thursday May 24, 2007

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"There won't be a specific meeting directed around this issue, but we're in direct communication with the parents," said Dr. Ivan Yackel, Director of Education with the NESD. "We're encouraging parents to deal directly with John [Casavant, Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction] if they have any questions or concerns and try and put all the pieces together for those who are looking for some other options."

One of those options is bussing students to Zenon Park for instruction, something that is still in the deciding stages.

"If there was enough interest in that, it's something we could pursue on our own or in harmony perhaps with the Francophone school in Zenon Park," Yackel explained. "We haven't pursued that yet and until we get a handle on exactly how many people are serious about that option, it's difficult for us to know."

"I suspect at some point before the end of the school year, John [Casavant] will be arranging for those parents who have indicated to him that they are interested to have a look at the school and begin to make those decisions," he continued. Yackel also noted that to date only four parents have indicated that bussing their children to Zenon Park was something they were in favour of doing.

According to Yackel, what started the wheels in motion for the discontinuance of French Immersion in Nipawin was low student body numbers. He pointed out that about six per cent of eligible students in Nipawin are participating in the program with four students lined up for Kindergarten in the fall.

Grades 10 to 12 will be able to receive their high school credits, but when asked why younger students would not be able to be phased out as well, Yackel noted confidence in the program as a factor.

"The trouble with that [phasing out from Kindergarten on] is with them knowing the support is gone for the future, we would begin to erode even more," he told The Journal.

Yackel also said that those currently in the French Immersion program raised concern from their own experience.

"Some of our senior students have had some comments around the program now that it's going to be phased out. They've indicated that triple grading has been very difficult," he said.

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Publisher: Kathy McAuley
Proprietor and published
by Bowes Publishers
Limited at 220 Centre
Street, Nipawin,
Saskatchewan, Canada
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