ARC Committee
April 21, 2017

Dear Committee Members,

I would like to pass along to you some opinions from two perspectives if possible.
I have been the Program Team Leader of French and Transitions since 2008 and teaching exclusively in
the French Immersion and Extended French Programs at Chippewa. I am also a parent of two secondary
school students, both enrolled in the French Immersion Program.

As Program Team Leader of French, I would like to suggest very strongly that the history of French
Immersion and Extended French is well-established at Chippewa (Immersion began here in 1982 and
Extended followed shortly after. I was in the graduating class of 1989). In the 1990’s the Near North
Board decided to offer Extended French at two other sites outside of CSS and these programs were
eventually grandfathered out due to lack of student retention, divided resources, divided staff and most
importantly, lack of culture. When you keep Immersion and Extended (Programs I feel have been
essential to the survival of the Near North District School Board, among others) together, in one setting,
students support each other. We have enough students to run the ten (plus) credits necessary for the
French Immersion Certificate. We have the resources and staff to support these students.

It is also essential, in my opinion, that French Immersion and Extended French remain at Chippewa, or
on the CSS site. We have, as a 7-12 French Immersion and Extended French school, established an
essential link with the French Immersion school beside us, Alliance. This relationship began long before
FI students moved into Alliance but it became even stronger when the grade 7 and 8 students moved
into CSS. Transitions at the grade 6-7 and 8-9 levels are very seamless and we have worked hard to use
this geography to our students’ advantage, particularly with respect to Student Success.

Finally, as a parent of French Immersion students, I feel that the Near North Board has, on some
occasions, taken French Immersion and Extended French families for granted and assumed that families
would remain loyal to the Near North Board through yet more drastic building and location change and
subsequent upheaval. I have heard recently from many French Immersion and Extended French parents
who have said that if the Immersion and/or Extended Programs moves to the WFSS site, they will
remove their child and enroll that student at one of our neighbourhood catholic secondary schools,
either the English (with Immersion) or the French (with French first language). I am very concerned
about this.

Finally, I can appreciate the financial constraints under which the NNDSB currently functions. However, I
am not, personally, in favour of a 3-1 option. As an educator, I feel that one large school will not
sufficiently address the multiple needs of the clientele in this municipality. I do feel the best option is a
3-2 where French Immersion and Extended French remain at CSS and Arts Nipissing and ST-21 and Tech
should be housed at a second location.

Thank you for your consideration,

Heather Chirico
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