



November 18, 2016

To: Concerned Parents of Mandarin Program South

Thank you for your letter dated November 9, 2016 outlining concerns in the following areas:

- Space available at Midnapore School
- Future of a south Mandarin Junior High
- Staffing commitment by CBE

At the November 1st meeting held at Midnapore School regarding the South Mandarin Bilingual Program, the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) informed parents that we will not be opening a middle/junior high school for the 2017-2018 school year. Currently, there are not enough students enrolled to offer a quality program beyond elementary school. In addition, there are currently not enough qualified Mandarin-speaking teachers to support expanding the program at this time.

Staffing

We know families want and appreciate a choice of programming. We try to provide that choice where possible. We work closely with our HR department on staffing and teacher recruitment. Our goal is to ensure we have exceptionally qualified teachers at all levels and within all programs in the CBE. It is what our public expects and how we support quality learning for each student every day.

We hire hundreds of teachers annually from across Canada to support all the programs we offer. Every year, our HR team attends close to 30 universities across the country to recruit teachers. In the last two years, we have placed significant emphasis on a strategic recruitment process for high-demand programs like Mandarin, hosting and attending career fairs, offering information sessions for university students, and advertising on electronic job boards, where feasible. We continue to consult with various levels of government and agencies such as Immigration Canada to investigate opportunities to employ international applicants in our language based programs including Mandarin.

For many years we have had a continuous job posting for Mandarin teachers on our CBE website as well as on the Education Canada website; the main job posting website for the CBE. It is important to note that when we update our posting it automatically adjusts the date referenced. During the last year, we have also posted jobs specific to Mandarin on the Jobs in Education website and jobbank.gc.ca.

Despite the time, cost and effort over a significant period of time, these postings have not yielded the desired number of candidates fluent in Mandarin, with teaching qualifications which support CBE's vision of personalized learning within our schools.

It is also important to note other school boards are interested in hiring Mandarin-speaking teachers and are vying for the same pool of talent. We should highlight that the CBE is the only board of education to offer Full Year Temporary Teaching (FYTT)

contracts on the spot to excellent teachers who have specializations in key curriculum areas such as Mandarin. Each year, we have been able to make FYTT contract offers to about 5 Mandarin teachers. We are prepared to make more of these offers should we find additional candidates that meet our criteria. All Mandarin teachers who have been offered a FYTT contract are currently working in our Mandarin schools.

Space at Midnapore School

Currently, there are between 40-50 students per grade registered in K-3, 24-27 registered per grade in grades 4/5 and 8 students registered in grade 6. Based on the capacity of Midnapore School, the school is able to accommodate increasing numbers of students in the Mandarin Bilingual Program. While preliminary interest in January and February in the Mandarin Bilingual Program may have indicated the need for a Kindergarten/Grade 1 lottery in the spring, every year we have been able to accommodate all students into the program by the September call back date. Please visit the CBE webpage for more information on the lottery process.

<http://www.cbe.ab.ca/registration/registration/Pages/Lottery-Information-for-Parents.aspx>

South Mandarin Bilingual Program for middle/junior high

Parents have asked us to consider late entry for Mandarin Bilingual Program. According to the Program integrity documents Bilingual Alternative Programs – Program Integrity Framework on the CBE website

<http://www.cbe.ab.ca/programs/program-options/language-programs/Pages/default.aspx>

students wishing to enter into a language program other than at K/Grade 1 may do so at the principal's discretion. Students interested in attending the program beyond the entry points will need to complete and pass a proficiency test measuring their language literacy levels in speaking, reading and writing in both English and Mandarin.

While some Midnapore parents have expressed a desire to have a middle school program, other emails received from parents of students in the Mandarin Bilingual Program at the school have indicated a desire not to remove the grade 5's and 6's from Midnapore School.

During this engagement, we have heard from many families, students, staff and community members and have incorporated feedback into our plans moving forward. The CBE is committed to working with our stakeholders on an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the 2017-2018 school year. Specifically, this EOI would be for a grade 5-7 Mandarin Bilingual program in south Calgary. To ensure the sustainability of this program we would require the following:

- 40 students per grade in grade 5 and 6 and 20 students in grade 7 registered before March 31, 2017
- Ability for the CBE to secure the appropriate number of qualified teaching staff

If we cannot meet both of the above mentioned criteria, the CBE would not be in a position to offer a south program. A final decision regarding the potential to offer a south middle/junior high Mandarin Bilingual Program for September 2017 will be communicated by April 17, 2017. If we are unable to offer the program, grade six students wishing to continue their Mandarin Bilingual Programming will have the

opportunity to attend the junior high school program in the North with subsidized transportation.

Every year, the Planning and Transportation Department in collaboration with Area Directors makes decisions regarding student and program accommodations. Our student population grows and changes and we manage our learning spaces in the best interest of student learning. Whenever possible, we ask our families and school communities for their input on grade configuration changes and possible program moves to help us determine the best steps forward. Sometimes, there are no accommodation options for us to explore. In those instances, engagement is limited to informing our parents and school community about the decision and helping them understand why the decision was necessary. We are committed to working with you on a solution that helps address your concerns within the financial and human resources we have available.

Sincerely,



Sydney Smith
Director, Area V



Carrie Edwards
Director, Planning & Transportation

