



REPORT TO:	Planning and Priorities Advisory Committee
	For Board Meetings: Choose an item.
TITLE OF REPORT:	Report on Transportation for Tech Emphasis and French Immersion Programs
PRESENTERS: <i>(list ONLY those attending the meeting)</i>	Paul Sydor, Superintendent of Student Achievement
REPORT AUTHORS:	Paul Sydor, Superintendent of Student Achievement Cathy Lynd, Superintendent of Business Andrew Canham, Associate Director
PRESENTED FOR:	Input/Advice
Recommendations: <i>(only required when presented for approval)</i>	TBD
Purpose: <i>(include context)</i>	This report has been prepared in response to the 2024 February 27 Board motion, as follows That the Director of Education create and present a preliminary implementation plan for tracking initial and continued eligibility of students for transportation services to Tech Emphasis and French Programming to a Planning and Priorities Advisory Committee meeting.
Content:	<i>Background/Context</i> Students in Secondary Schools in the Thames Valley District School Board are generally provided with school bus transportation to school if they live more than 3.2 KM from their home school, or if there is a significant road hazard between their place of residence and their home school. (TVDSB Policy 1002 – Transportation; mybigyellowbus.ca/policies including Transportation Eligibility) Because of the variability of student learning needs and program availability at different schools, students may potentially have several options for their home school; a local school, another for Tech Emphasis, and a third for French Immersion.

Transportation to school for regular programming, for Tech Emphasis, and French Immersion programs is determined by the student's home address. This approach ensures that students are provided with busing to their designated school, based on their place of residence.

Documentation of Transportation Eligibility

The eligibility for transportation to Tech Emphasis and French Immersion programs is documented by Student Transportation Services (STS) and determined based on the program code attached to the student record by the school. This ensures that only eligible students receive transportation. This program code is input at registration in Grade 9 and updated periodically by the school.

Process for Students Leaving the Program

If a student chooses not to take Tech Emphasis classes in Grade 11 or beyond, or withdraws from the French Immersion program, the current process dictates that the student is to return to their home school.

However, this transition does not always occur.

In the cases of Tech Emphasis and French Immersion, student withdrawal from the program generally occurs after Grade 10. At this point the student has most often become invested in the school and developed relationships with peers and with staff. This makes it challenging for the student to be withdrawn, even though they no longer meet the program requirements for transportation.

Eliminating transportation services to the school has the potential to excluding many students, as families may lack the means to provide their own transportation or access public transit options.

Continuation of Transportation for Non-Program Students

The number of students who continue to access transportation to Tech Emphasis and French Immersion schools despite no longer being in the program is not centrally documented. At this time, this information is only available at the school level.

In Semester Two of 2023-2024, there were 317 secondary school students receiving transportation to an out-of-area school. Each of these pupil transportation decisions were made by STS based on seat availability on existing routes and would be inclusive of any former French Immersion and Tech Emphasis pupils who applied for and

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received choice of school transportation. This transportation is only provided where there are vacant seats on existing bus routes that can be utilized without displacing in-area pupils and/or incurring additional transportation costs for the board.

Challenges, Opportunities, and Gaps

Returning students to their home school when they withdraw from a specialized program presents challenges and opportunities. Gaps in our processes have been identified.

Challenges:

- **Loss of Students:** Students may choose to leave the school board for a nearby school in the coterminous board if they must return to their home school.
- **Distressed Students and Families:** Students returned to their home school who do not wish to depart will likely express having an unsatisfactory school experience.
- **Course Availability:** Students reassigned to their home school may not have the same opportunities to take classes if their course requests were not considered in the timetabling process.

Opportunities:

- **Reduced Transportation Costs:** Sending students back to their home school can lead to cost savings in transportation.

Gaps:

- Tech Emphasis schools permit students to attend their school for grade 9 and 10, based on the understanding that the students will engage in the Tech Emphasis program in grade 11 and 12.

Summary

Strictly enforcing attendance areas would result in a cost savings in transportation and the reallocation of resources to enhance program availability for other students.

	<p>This may also lead to student dissatisfaction, potential school board attrition, and challenges of course availability must be carefully considered.</p> <p>Implementing the recommendations below will likely have significant implications for student retention. There is a high likelihood that this course of action will lead to students choosing to leave the Thames Valley District School Board for the coterminous Roman Catholic board. The potential for decreased enrollment should be carefully considered in assessing the long-term effects of this decision.</p> <p>Should a motion be passed to create and implement the tracking of initial and continued eligibility of students for transportation services to Tech Emphasis and French Programming the following strategies would be recommended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide training and clearly communicate consistent expectations for implementing this documentation process in all Secondary Schools with French Immersion and/or Tech Emphasis programs. 2. Implement a rigorous documentation processes to monitor and manage the status of students in specialized programs that can be accessed centrally. 3. Implement a strict policy that ensures students do not attend a Tech Emphasis school in advance of Grade 11. As there are currently students in Tech Emphasis schools in Grade 9 and Grade 10, this policy would begin for Grade 9 students entering in the 2025 – 2026 school year. 4. Implementing a strict policy of loss of transportation upon program withdrawal, and loss of registration at the next semester break. 5. Engaging in ongoing communication with students and families to address concerns and provide clarity about transportation eligibility and program requirements.
<p>Connection to Committee Mandate:</p>	

Financial Implications:	TBD
Timeline:	TBD
Communications:	TBD
Appendices:	N/A

Strategic Priority Areas:

Students, families, and staff are welcomed, respected, and valued as partners: Choose an item.

Relationships: Promote and build connections to foster mutually respectful communication among students, families, staff and the broader community: Choose an item.

Create opportunities for collaboration and partnerships: Choose an item.

Create opportunities for equitable access to programs and services for students: Yes

Equity and Diversity: Students and all partners feel heard, valued, and supported: Choose an item.

Programs and services embrace the culture and diversity of students and all partners: Choose an item.

Achievement and Well-Being: More students demonstrate growth and achieve student learning outcomes with a specific focus on numeracy and literacy: Choose an item.

Staff will demonstrate excellence in instructional practices: Choose an item.

Enhance the safety and well-being of students and staff: Choose an item.

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