



**Report to the Seven Oaks School Board on the consultation
with the École Templeton and James Nisbet school communities.**

In response to concerns raised by a number of residents in the Ambergate area the Seven Oaks Board of Trustees asked its administration to consult with the École Templeton and James Nisbet School Communities with respect to school program and catchment designations, specifically whether the Board should reconsider its decision in November 2019 to establish École Templeton as a K-5 Milieu French Immersion school or convert it and James Nisbet to dual track schools offering both English and French Immersion.

The Superintendent convened two public information meetings on February 8th at École Templeton and February 9th at James Nisbet. The presentation slide deck was posted on the division website. Following the presentations, the following survey was distributed to families with children registered at École Templeton and James Nisbet. Translated versions were also made available.

February 2023

In response to requests from families in the Ambergate area, the Seven Oaks School Division is consulting the École Templeton and James Nisbet school communities to help it determine if the two schools should continue as they are or change to both become dual track schools.

The division held information meetings at École Templeton, February 8th and James Nisbet, February 9th to review the two options. A copy of the slide presentation from the information meetings can be found on the division's website.

Please let us know what you prefer by filling out this form and ***returning it to the school no later than Friday, February 17th.***

Check ONE (✓) only:

OPTION A:
Maintain both École Templeton (K-5 French Immersion) and James Nisbet (K-8 English) as they are but allow residents of Ambergate to attend Amber Trails Community School for English if they choose. This option does not require any students to change schools and gives Ambergate families the choice to register at nearby Amber Trails.

OPTION B:
Change both École Templeton and James Nisbet to dual track English and French Immersion schools offering K-5 French Immersion and K-8 English. This will involve a number of students changing schools.

I don't have a strong opinion so I'm okay with either option.

RESULTS FROM ÉCOLE TEMPLETON:

Number of families at Templeton: 351

Number of families on vacation: 19

Total families responded: 296

Option A – Stay as is: 258

Option B – Change to dual track: 23

Option C – Okay with either: 15

Unreturned: 36

There were 110 comments for Option A. There were four common themes.

Theme 1 – Importance of French milieu:

“We think it’s best for École Templeton to stay as French immersion. We all want to build relationships with the community and the school has established that and produced really good French speaking students through its practices and leadership.”

“We believe a milieu school is more beneficial for French language learning and that it is difficult to maintain an identity in a dual track school.”

“Changing École Templeton from a French milieu to a dual track will negatively affect the ability of children to learn the French language. This should be the main focus versus the inconvenience to adults if their kids go to a school slightly farther away. This is a Seven Oaks’ community school, not an Ambergate community school. We pay taxes just the same and want the best education possible for our kids.”

“I strongly believe that École Templeton should remain exclusively French immersion”.

Theme 2 – Impact (social, emotional, disruption):

“Keep as is for the sake of the children who have established great relationships at École Templeton. Let’s not compromise quality for convenience!”

“My concern is not only about my son, but for all the kids, parents, teachers at Templeton. I feel that it’s not fair for our kids to feel this right after the pandemic, they’ve been through more than enough. They’re just starting to feel normal again, to be with their friends and teachers again...and then this news? I think this is SO UNFAIR for them to experience the separation anxiety and trauma...this is emotional torture for the kids...for what??? ONLY to accommodate or consider the request of an outnumbered community for their convenience? I think it is unreasonable, unjust and unfair for everyone at Templeton.”

“We are of the strong opinion that we maintain the schools as they are to avoid psychological and emotional distress to children already attending their school.”

“Please do not make any changes. It will be difficult for our children as well as our family.”

“I just hope that the decision is made in the best interest of the children. École Templeton is just not meant to serve only the Ambergate community. Instead it serves the entire Amber Trails. I strongly believe that the option of having Amber Trails Community School open to Ambergate solves the entire issue without causing any mental/emotional stress to anyone”.

Theme 3 – No change please/Asking the Board not to succumb to pressure from a small, vocal group:

“Regardless of the survey result, I honestly think that the board should be firm about maintaining École Templeton as it is now. A school’s priority to provide quality education and create positive learning experience should not be sacrificed over the community’s request or over a group of peoples’ convenience. It is disheartening than an educational institution like École Templeton is going through this. Likewise, as a parent of three kids, how saddening for them emotionally/mentally stress”.

“All the children already were moved from their original school to be sent here. It makes no sense to send them back. Please keep it the same.”

“We do not need these proposed changes to our school. People at Ambergate should attend Amber Trails School if they want English for their kids. Please need to adjust, not the school!

“We love our school just the way it is!”

“Let it stay the same. Please and thank you.”

Theme 4 – 3 families requested that École Templeton become K-8

Option B (change to dual track) – 9 families commented:

“I like the dual track option because if my son begins to struggle in French, he could switch to English track without losing his community.”

“I think dual track has more options for kids.”

“It is better to have both options.”

RESULTS FROM JAMES NISBET:

Number of families at James Nisbet Community School: 371

Total families responded: 213

Families on Vacation (out of country): 15

Option A – Stay as is: 123

Option B – Change to dual track: 49

Option C – No strong opinion: 41

Unreturned: 143

There were 123 responses and 36 comments for Option A. There were three common themes.

Theme 1 – Importance of Child’s Community & Relationships grown/fostered:

“We chose option A, we don’t want any changes to both schools. Keep it as it is. We don’t want stressed out our kids. Kids already build up relationships with classmates, teachers and school environment. So please don’t change anything. Thanks.”

“Our kids want to stay in the James Nisbet School. It is because of the teaching and school staff are very good. That’s why it is our children’s favourite school.”

“I chose option A because I want my child [name removed] to stay at James Nisbet School Community”

“School should remain as it is. We don’t want to change school and good teachers. Thanks.”

“My child doesn’t want to leave James Nisbet Community School. My Daughter really like the staff and school. Thanks very much.”

“We want James Nisbet as it is now.”

Theme 2 – Impact on children, families and community (social, emotional, disruption):

“There has been enough change in the past 2-3 years. Consistency is needed. The James Nisbet Community has grown stronger since the change to K-8 English. Keep the school community together and continue building.”

“I believe it would be a very poor allocation of resources to maintain both schools as dual track. We are not in favour.”

“Option B was already [presented] into effect a few years ago and families had to make changes and adjust. Why disrupt routines?!”

“The past few years has been a struggle for students and families due to COVID. Option B would be another hurdle to overcome for the students/families who would need to change schools.”

“Parents should decide where to enroll their child in the catchment. Don’t disrupt relationships when changes can strain on students and/or anxiety building.”

“Option A would be the best as it will give options to Ambergate without moving students who do not want to.”

Theme 3 – No change please/Other considerations

“I strongly believe the division should stick with the French Milieu School. Ambergate and surrounding area seems to be expanding in a few years time and there might be a need to open a new school in the extending community. Thus no need to disturb the present set-up.”

“Keep it as is. James Nisbet already undergone drastic change in the last few years.”

“I strongly need my son to stay where he is as I cannot drive or work due to a hereditary disease.”

“If both schools are changed then there will be more financial burden on government.”

“Let it be.”

There were 49 responses and 17 comments for Option B (change to dual track) – Here is a sample of the themes which emerged:

“My daughter can go to school in the Ambergate area. It will save transportation cost as I can drop.”

“As a taxpayer of Ambergate, why we cannot get a school in our own community.”

“Ecole Templeton is closer to my house. It will be very convenient for us to have (student name removed) study here in English.”

“As a resident of Ambergate area where the Ecole Templeton is location, it will be more convenient for my son to attend school closer to our house.”

“This will benefit more students in terms of proximity to their area of residence.”

“It is better if the dual track. Kids will learn both languages that is good for their future.”

“Will provide more options nearby, avoid traveling far for English.”

“We want both languages in both schools”

In addition to the surveys, the Board received roughly twenty emails from residents of Ambergate in favour of Templeton becoming a dual track school. The emails were a standard form and content. Those submitting the emails did not indicate if they had children in school.

A petition was also received as follows:

Petition

We, the undersigned, petition Mr. O’Leary and the Board of Trustees as follows:

As residents of the catchment area of Ecole Templeton, we ask that the survey is sent to all the families in the neighbourhood, not just the families whose children are currently enrolled at Ecole Templeton and James Nisbet. At the information meeting held on February 8, 2023, we were disappointed to hear that such a large portion of neighbourhood families will be excluded from the survey that will decide whether or not both English and French immersion will be offered at Ecole Templeton. The families who may want to see the option of English immersion offered alongside French Immersion at Ecole Templeton are in the danger of being fully left out of this public consultation as many families in the neighbourhood who prefer English immersion send their kids to schools other than James Nisbet or Ecole Templeton. We believe that all families in the neighbourhood deserve to voice their opinion in this survey as the decision will impact the future of our school community and each family deserves their voice to be heard. Despite having sent letters to decision-making officials, our concerns have not been addressed in a meaningful manner.

We petition for the relevant decision-making officials to allow all families who reside in the Amber Gate and Aurora area, to participate in the survey that will decide whether Ecole Templeton will be a dual immersion school or not.

It contained a total of 75 signatures from residents of Ambergate and a further 31 signatures from residents of Aurora at Northgate.

There appears to be belief by some Ambergate residents that only their neighbourhood is impacted by school program and catchment decisions. As the school division manages changing enrollment patterns and copes with substantial new residential development it can be challenging to respect the wishes of particular neighbourhoods. For example, the division has had to shift enrollment from the Meadowlands in West St. Paul to schools in Riverbend in order to keep West St. Paul from being over crowded. The division has bussed Garden City students from north of Leila Avenue to schools in older neighbourhoods south of Leila where there is available space rather than building a school in that neighbourhood.

RECOMMENDATION:

That École Templeton remain a K-5 Milieu French Immersion School.

That James Nisbet continue to transition to a K-8 English Program School.

That Ambergate residents be offered the option of registering their children at Amber Trails Community School.