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Pre-kindergarten possible

French immersion kindergarten classes offered by the Prescott-Russell Separate School Board will be reduced to 50% because of lack of provincial funds.

St-Joseph's Separate school principal, Gilles Racine, has been informed that full immersion classes currently being offered will be reduced to only half days or will be offered every other day.

"I've been told by the superintendent of the school board that there is a big, big possibility that classes will be offered only on a half-day basis," Mr. Racine said.

He said the reason given by the ministry was lack of funds as the government tries to reduce spending by trimming various provincial subsidy schemes. The half-day courses would take effect next school year.

The cutbacks could, however, spell the beginning of a new pre-kindergarten immersion class to be operated on the off-days when the kindergarten class is not sitting. The class would be given for four year olds living in the vicinity of Russell Village.

Other communities across Ontario have pre-kindergarten French immersion classes fully subsidized by the provincial government.

"First, there would have to be a request from the parents to have such a class and then we would have to register at least 15 students for the ministry to provide funding," Mr. Racine said.

At the present time Russell pre-kindergarten students attend a municipally-funded school in Embun. Mr. Racine says by providing a pre-kindergarten school in Russell, transportation costs could be significantly reduced. Along with that, the present teacher would keep her full-time job by teaching the five-year-olds one day and the pre-kindergarten class the next day.

But Racine points out the pre-kindergarten class is only in the consideration stage at the moment.

"It all depends on the interest and support of parents and the demand. If we don't get 15 students we won't be eligible for a pre-kindergarten class," Mr. Racine said.

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