



ÉDITO:

Dear LIFT families,

Allow me to bring to all LIFT educational community a recent topic: some reservations shared by CE1 parents with regards to the offer next school year of a double grade CP / CE2, following the introduction of the pedagogical structure at the occasion of my latest editorial. It seems to me important that all the school's stakeholders can take part in this discussion, that all parents can have the same level of information and be able to contribute with their ideas.

We suggest you meet with us at LIFT on Tuesday March 7, from 17.00 pm to 18.00 pm to discuss this matter. The meeting will also be available online (<https://meet.google.com/gfm-xbcr-wiv>). Your child /ren may stay at the classroom library so you can leave with them directly at the end of the meeting. We are opening this meeting to all, although current CE1 pupils' parents and families wishing to register a child in CP next school year are naturally the first concerned.

To prepare this exchange in the best possible fashion, allow-me to give some additional elements:

- LIFT identity is the identity of a new school; along with all challenges this brings, and notably growth challenges. It is also, we wish so, a school where parents are not "clients" of an educational service, but a non-for-profit organization where all the educational community communicate to find collectively the best possible solutions. This often implies that collective choices have to be made for the school, and that these choices ask for trade-offs that transcend the specific family situations. At LIFT, parents and teachers have the right to know the rationale behind each decision taken, and to contribute to this decision-making process. This mindset is precious to all of us, and it has been reminded by parents themselves, for which we are grateful.
- It was important for us to open all the elementary levels this first school year, to build the school credibility, and to create a consistent teaching team and a robust school project. This has been done with taking into account our costs structure: the current CE1/CE2 class, welcoming only 10 pupils is not financially sustained and is financed by CP and CM1/CM2 classes.
- The LIFT business model suggests financial sustainability when fixed costs related to the opening of a new class are covered by 15 pupils. The opening of a class of 6ème next school year is crucial, to ensure the continuity of education and to consolidate our credibility as a school. Likewise, offering a learning opportunity to all our current pupils is a priority, above our ability to recruit new families. The opening of a new class imply - essentially - to recruit a French teacher and to rent a new classroom. It is extremely difficult to get an agreement from Liu Gong for a new lease of a classroom. We are working on this and I will come back to this matter in further details soon. The pedagogical setting for next school year has been designed with those constraints in mind.
- Our growth follows a rationale of cohorts / generations evolution; with an entry point in the French educational system by the CP class, and a pyramidal students' demography, where classes with many pupils in CP "feed" the grades above, up to the baccalauréat. In the medium run, this imply that double grades of the elementary school will be divided until the creation, in 2025/26 of a class per division for the elementary.
- Double grades classes are not a default option. This is a very common practice in France where communities wish to maintain schools opened in small villages, but, and we would like to emphasize that, this practice has been studied, documented, and we have a wealth of literature, tools, and good practices to implement it. Anthony is available to synthesize the literature on this learning setting. Our teaching team has been trained to teach double grades and is experienced with this setting. We had this discussion at the beginning of this school year with a lot of families who were not used to this kind of class, and we are confident to say that this setting is so far a success.





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- We had the opportunity to share with AEFÉ this learning structure and specifically this CP/CE2 class in the framework of our accreditation request. The National inspector the French Ministry of education has not been surprised (it is, again, a common practice in new school abroad), and on contrary positive about the idea.
- We have 5 pupils in CE1 this year, and did not yet received pre-registrations or meet new families concerned by a registration in CE2 next school year.
- We are confident about our proposal. We will not have suggested a CP/CE2 class by default should we be doubtful about the quality of the learning. Valérie Catrice-Brignon is experienced in these two grades, and familiar with teaching a double grade class. It is important to note that the learning in the classroom implies time periods when the teacher teaches directly and time when pupils work in autonomy. The building of this autonomy is at the heart of our teaching practice. Thus, a double grade class means in fact a class where pupils are not too numerous, with a best possible differentiation of teachings. It is often advised that these double grade classes gather very different age groups; it is actually quite common in France to have CP/CM classes to clearly separate the teaching between groups.
- It is not financially possible to open a stand-alone CE2 class for 5 - maybe a maximum of 7 if we have new pupils - next school year. The financial effort will be dedicated to the opening of the class of 6ème. We already have a full CE1 class for current CP pupils. We want to limit our class to a maximum of 20 pupils to ensure the quality of teaching and learning and our effort of differentiation.
- We get into details about this setting with Anthony with new families who are considering a registration in the french-speaking CP (within the CP/CE2). We did not have any concerns from families yet after explaining the setting.
- Considering the current demographics of LIFT, the only other option would be to keep a CE1 / CE2. But we think that this option is not best in terms of quality of learning. On one hand, we already have 21 pupils in CP and CE1. On the other hand this will basically move the issue to the recruitment of french-speaking CP, a class we would have then to open to non-french speakers to sustain it. Finally, this basically means only to delay the same issue for 2024/25 school year.

I suggest we discuss these topics next week. We are keeping in mind our governance principles: openness, and, if applicable, a democratic vote (on this topics by the School Council, and, considering the financial impacts of choices that will be made, also by the LIFT Board). I think important as well to underline the need for trust we need to grant in our teaching team on these matters, and to emphasize once again that our first and foremost concern is the well-being of the children and the quality of our teaching.

