



French-as-a-Second Language Recommendations: Interim Report

To: Committee of the Whole

Date: 10 June, 2020

Report No.: 06-20-3901

Strategic Directions

- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students
- Transform Student Learning
- Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being
- Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs

Recommendation

It is recommended that the French-as-a-Second Language Recommendations: Interim Report be received for information.

Background

In June 2017, the Board approved a Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy, establishing Program Priorities aligned with the Vision for Learning and the Integrated Equity Framework, and identifying equity of access to French-as-a-Second Language (FSL) programs as a key priority for the Board. During spring 2018, as part of the Director's Response to the Enhancing Equity Task Force Report, a review was conducted to provide a comprehensive environmental scan of the Board's FSL Programs—Core and intensive French programs. This extensive consultation process captured representative feedback on the TDSB's French programming. Multiple stakeholders were included and given various opportunities to comment on the TDSB's French programs. This process included community meetings, student forums, staff forums, focus groups, as well as online surveys. There were a total of five community meetings held in May 2018 for any community members (i.e., parents/guardians, staff, and other community members). In addition, there was a meeting held specifically for

TDSB staff, and a meeting for students in Grades 9-12 representative of the Core French, Extended and Immersion programs. Additionally, two focus group meetings were held for Parent Advisory Committees: one involving representatives from all Parent Advisory Committees and one particularly for the French-as-a-Second Language Community Advisory Committee. Additionally, three online surveys were developed and shared of which one was designed for parents/guardians, one was designed for staff and one was designed for students in Grades 6-12.

Participation and engagement in these consultations was high as evidenced by the number of overall participants, i.e., 10,535.

The [review findings](#) provided a comprehensive overview of the Board's FSL programs, highlighting system successes (e.g., growth in number of French Immersion/Extended French program sites), but also identified challenges in a number of areas. This data was used to inform the approved FSL recommendations, and continue to guide next steps.

Purpose

As outlined in the initial report on June 12 2019, the existing structure for FSL programs across the TDSB allows for multiple entry points. Two of these entry points are system-wide programs (i.e., the Early French Immersion – SK entry and the Junior Extended French – Grade 4 entry), and the other four are programs that are locally-managed intensive French Programs with different entry points (i.e., the Middle French Immersion – Grade 4 entry in 2 schools, the Intermediate Extended French – Grade 7 entry in 14 schools, the Intensive Extended French – Grade 6 entry in 1 school, and the Bilingual Alternative program – JK entry in 1 school). These smaller programs operate in a limited number of schools, where they reflect local historical legacy-program models.

Currently, with an overall combined enrolment of over 29,000 students, the Board's delivery model for intensive FSL programs is unusual. Unlike other boards, which typically provide one or two entry points into an intensive French program, the TDSB offers six.

The approved FSL recommendations by the Board of Trustees in June 2019 are aligned with the strategic documents as listed below, and respond to the comprehensive FSL Program Review conducted in the spring of 2018:

- Multi-Year Strategic Plan, its goals and action plans;
- Guiding Principles of the Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy;
- Board's commitment to Equity; and,
- Responds to student voice, and stakeholder input.

The overarching principle guiding the approved FSL recommendations is to provide equitable access to stronger FSL programs by restructuring the Board's intensive FSL programs leading to a single program model with two entry points and the elimination of all other entry points. The streamlining will increase access to an intensive FSL program for students in the board. It will permit the focus of resources, both material and human, in order to serve students better, and to strengthen the Core French programming that serves all students in Gr. 4-9 (and beyond) in TDSB schools who do not choose an intensive FSL program. The streamlining will also support the following: allow a more effective deployment of FSL qualified teachers, staff allocation process (i.e., concentrate staff efforts in two French programs only - Core French and Immersion), school organizational model, maintain program viability, support teacher retention, and reduce the need for supplementary French teachers.

Multi-Year Strategic Plan

The Vision for Learning, Integrated Equity Framework, and the work of the Enhancing Equity Task Force laid the foundation for the Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP), which sets direction and identifies system goals to support all TDSB students. Approved in October 2018, by the Board, the MYSP focus is to ensure that every student receives a great education by having equitable access to programs and resources and increased opportunities to lead to success. The MYSP and its associated action plans lays the groundwork for how staff will transform student learning, create a culture of well-being, provide access to learning opportunities, and allocate resources strategically and build strong partnerships. Key elements of the MYSP that are at the basis of these changes are continuing to support every student in the Core French program and the intensive FSL programs, ensuring enhanced access to learning opportunities, and to developing strong literacy, critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills which is how outcomes for every FSL student are improved. The documents outlining the MYSP goals and action plans can be found [here](#).

Guiding Principles of the Long-Term Program & Accommodation Strategy

In April 2019 the Board approved a new set of guiding principles for the Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy (LTPAS). These new guiding principles outlined equity, access to programs and flexible learning spaces as its core work. One of the five program priorities identified continues to be intensive FSL programs with a focus on specific drivers such as balanced enrolment across tracks. The document outlining the details and guiding principles for the LTPAS can be found [here](#).

Context and Current System

The interim report for the FSL Recommendations details the current system context for elementary intensive French programs, the implementation plans for the Grade 4 Middle

French Immersion program (MFI), and any activities or initiatives that have taken place since the January 29, 2020 Committee of Whole meeting.

In June 2019 staff received direction from the Board of Trustees to move forward with the implementation of the FSL recommendations. This report will provide for the Board of Trustees a system-wide overview of all elementary intensive French programs, how enrolment, capacity, utilization and demographic projections will impact the potential redistribution of intensive Early French Immersion (EFI) programs over the course of the next few years.

This report will help inform how the Board could possibly achieve the goals and objectives set out in the Board's key strategic documents. Given the complexities and intricacies of the TDSB system, staff recognizes the need to take a careful and measured approach to ensure the needs of all FSL students are met.

Over the next several years, the TDSB will phase in changes and enhancements to FSL programs, which are all aimed at improving equity of access for students. The future redistribution of some existing EFI entry programs will help support the establishment of a single program model with two entry points – Junior Kindergarten French Immersion (beginning 2022) and Grade 4 MFI (beginning 2021). As part of planned program changes, the Grade 4 Junior Extended French (JEF) Program will phase out as the Grade 4 MFI Program begins, and the following entry points will phase out entirely: the one (1) Grade 6 Intensive Extended French Program and the fourteen (14) Grade 7 Entry Extended French programs. At the foundation of this decision was a commitment to ensuring that access to intensive FSL programs was more fair and equitable across the TDSB. The streamlining of programs will increase access to an intensive FSL program for students in the board.

New Realities

Continued Commitment to Core French and Intensive FSL Programs

Currently, more than 94,000 TDSB students are enrolled in the Core French Program and more than 29,000 TDSB students are enrolled in intensive FSL programs. Core French is mandatory in Ontario from Grades 4 to 8 for all students in English-Language elementary schools. Policy and program requirements for elementary school Core French programs dictate that students entering Grade 4 must receive French instruction in every year from Grade 4 to Grade 8, and must have accumulated a minimum of 600 hours of French instruction by the end of Grade 8. There is also one mandatory Core French credit required in Grade 9. Conversely, the optional intensive FSL programs are available to all students who apply at the entry of each program by the annual deadline.

The TDSB continues its commitment to learning a second language as staff recognize that it is an advantage for students and studies show it is a key factor in academic success. A second language enhances overall skills in learning, expands career opportunities, promotes understanding among cultures, and creates multilingual world citizens. At the foundation of its commitment is student success and achievement.

Inclusion in FSL Programs

Rooted in its commitment is the continuation of a plan to fund and target professional learning specifically for new and experienced Core French and intensive FSL (elementary/secondary) teachers that includes the principles of Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP) and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Staff will continue to identify, share and implement best practices and strategies in Core French and intensive FSL programs through job-embedded professional learning, and coaching and mentoring staff.

As all students are capable of learning in another language, and all can benefit from the positive effects on literacy and learning, staff is steadfast in support for leaders to build staff capacity and shared leadership regarding programming and strategies to ensure all students can benefit. Staff remains committed to the principles of equity and inclusion in all FSL programs and will continue supporting professional learning, procedures and resources that support differentiated instruction, accommodation of a range of learning needs and classrooms where all students can see themselves as language learners.

Secondary Program Review – Pathways and Programs

The approved FSL recommendations in June 2019 outlined a number of significant changes to intensive FSL programs in TDSB. The impact of the FSL changes on secondary schools will be considered through the Secondary Program Review. Currently, there are approximately 5,200 secondary students enrolled in intensive FSL programs (7% of the total enrolment) at 11 secondary schools that offer the French Immersion program and 12 secondary schools that offer the Extended French program.

As the Grade 4 MFI program begins and the JEF program will phase out, there will be opportunities to explore potential secondary pathway changes. As outlined in the Secondary Program Review Interim Report, many schools that currently offer intensive FSL programs are overutilized, or may soon become overutilized as a result of larger cohorts of students moving through the elementary panel and into secondary schools. Conversely, there are existing intensive FSL programs that are small and approaching non-viability. These programs will also be explored as part of the Secondary Program Review.

Implementation Plans for Grade 4 Middle French Immersion Program

Early intensity matters for students maintaining and building further language proficiency; there is a higher proficiency rate when at the onset there is greater exposure to the language. This model is more inclusive as it provides students with increased exposure to the French Language in order to build both their proficiency and literacy skills in the language of instruction. The Grade 4 MFI program permits students to blend with the Early Immersion program entry students at the onset of the secondary level to continue their studies. This may permit access for secondary students to a more fulsome menu of courses in French with a variety of depth and breadth to compulsory and elective courses.

Sites and Locations

To begin, all existing JEF [program sites](#) may transition to serve as the new Grade 4 MFI site. Included as well will be the currently existing two Grade 4 MFI sites - John Ross Robertson Junior PS and Valleyfield Junior School - bringing the total entry sites to forty-one (41). Considerations for program locations for the Grade 4 MFI have been reviewed given school capacity, utilization, projected enrolment, existing material resources, staffing efficiencies and program pathways.

All existing pathways at this time as established at the entry of each Grade 4 MFI program will remain as such. Changes may occur in the future in accordance with board procedures.

Communication Plans

Information on the Grade 4 MFI and location sites will be shared with the public and the TDSB community through regular channels of communication including TDSB Connects, the Board website, social media, FSL Resources for Families Google Site and inserts for school newsletters.

In addition, virtual information sessions prior to the application period, along with an extensive application package and public information video will be made available to all parents/guardians and the TDSB community through regular channels of communications including a robust redesigned website with questions and answers, and social media.

Communications are being developed specifically for school Administrators, Superintendents, Trustees, teachers and other staff. Avenues of communication like Direct Line, System Leaders Weekly, Trustee Weekly, TDSB FSL Google Site,

Academic Workspace and the Google +Communities will be leveraged to ensure staff is kept informed as the transition process rolls out.

Application and Placement Process

The system-wide Grade 4 Middle French Immersion program will continue to be overseen by the central FSL Department. Applications to the forty-one (41) Grade 4 MFI programs are made the year the child is in the Grade 3 English program for entry in September of Grade 4. Applications will continue to be an entirely online process. Interested applicants may visit the application site www.tdsb.on.ca/pars during the application period which will commence in January 2021. The application period as well as virtual information sessions and application package information will be communicated to all parents/guardians well in advance and will be posted on the public TDSB website at the following link: <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Elementary-School/School-Choices/French-Programs>

While admission to the Grade 4 MFI program is guaranteed at the entry points to all on-time applicants, admission to a specific school is not guaranteed. Every effort will be made to place students in the school identified as their area MFI school, however this is not always possible. In cases where the number of applications in a given area is greater than the number of allotted program spaces in the school, students may be redirected to schools with available program space. The number of allotted program spaces will align with staff direction to achieve efficiencies by organizing Grade 4 MFI programs more optimally. Placements are made based on the child's primary home address of record prior to the application deadline. If the address changes between the application deadline and the fall of the Grade 4 year, there is no guarantee of placement in the new area. Changes may occur in the future in accordance with board procedures.

Professional Learning Plan

The Professional Learning Plan for the 2020/2021 school year will include sessions designed to address the transition from the Grade 4 JEF to the MFI. These sessions will be offered in a variety of modalities and to specific audiences:

- professional learning for teachers/administrators focusing on the teaching strategies in JEF that will continue to be effective for MFI while addressing their application to the teaching of Math and Science in French;
- virtual or in-person sessions on the implications and logistics of transitioning from JEF to MFI for any staff at a current JEF location;
- online communities to facilitate sharing of best practices, questions and ideas as the transition rolls out;
- Learning Centre based networks for MFI teachers.

Resources

The FSL Department will provide funding to add to current classroom resource collections in order to support the teaching and learning of Math and Science in French. Current JEF sites have library collections that support learning in French and will be appropriate to the transition to the MFI program.

Budget Considerations

Implications of FSL Teacher Shortage and Budget Decisions (Supplementary Teachers)

Fulfilling the demand for qualified FSL teachers has been an increasing challenge in the TDSB and all Ontario schools for the last several years. As the number of students enrolled in intensive FSL programs increases, there continues to be concerns around the recruitment and retention of qualified FSL teachers and support staff. Like all boards, the TDSB is confronted with the intersection of many factors that influence FSL teacher recruitment and retention (i.e., number of FSL teachers graduating from Faculties of Education, factors influencing decision-making for job opportunities, job vacancies, and French proficiency).

Conversely, during last year's budget process, the Board of Trustees approved the staffing of intensive FSL classes at the benchmarks. Staff direction is to achieve efficiencies by organizing French programs more optimally so that programs are staffed closer to caps. A balanced representation of students across the programs where possible (i.e., English and French) helps ensure that schools have a sufficient number of teaching staff to offer a range of educational opportunities, and thereby minimizing the need for supplementary teachers.

Implementation of Transportation Changes

As part of last year's budget process, the Board of Trustees approved the elimination of TTC tickets for students in grades 9-12 in FSL programs in order to achieve savings. In addition, the Board of Trustees approved changing school start and end times to provide more efficient and cost-saving transportation services that will take effect September 2020. Most of these changes impact schools with intensive FSL programs. Given these decisions approved in 2019, operational procedure PR597 was updated to reflect no service changes to transportation for K-8 in French Immersion/Extended French programs for the 2020-2021 school year for those students who qualify.

Redistribution: Continued Feedback and Guiding Questions

Staff will gather feedback on guiding questions that will inform next steps in the implementation of the JK entry point for EFI. Community input will be collected on the public website through an online feedback form (i.e., Lime) and collated for consideration in the implementation phase of the JK EFI entry plans and redistribution process.

Although there are many areas of the TDSB where interest in the EFI has led to high enrolment, there are also areas of the TDSB where EFI enrolment is low. There may be a variety of reasons why certain intensive FSL programs are over-enrolled or under-enrolled including local demographic changes in the community, distance to the local EFI school, and variance in interest in the optional program. In some areas, schools are challenged with enrolment imbalances (French and English program), program sizes, enrolment pressures and space capacities.

Redistribution of EFI sites presents challenges as communities wish to see their local program preserved. Communities that have been in walking distance to a program may now have to consider access by travelling. This may be perceived as a loss. Conversely, other communities wish to see local programs within walking distance; however, challenges with facility capacities make this less feasible in some areas.

As the Board strives for greater equity of access to opportunities for all students in all programs, staff has a duty to address areas where schools feed themselves while for many others, the distance of travel to the local EFI site is considerable or may be the reason why parents/guardians do not apply. A school that has no feeder other than itself risks a significant imbalance between the French and English programs. The impact of the imbalance in programs may effectively limit access to a strong and viable English program at a student's local school. It may also increase the need for additional staffing and supplementary teachers.

Attached are several appendices (i.e., Appendix A: Early French Immersion and Junior Extended French Schools & Associated Number of Feeders, Appendix B: Map: Overview of Entry Points – Early French Immersion Sites, Appendix C: Map: Overview of Entry Points – Junior Extended French Sites, Appendix D: Associated Ward Maps and Inventory Tables) that highlight each ward's intensive FSL programs, utilization rates, school capacities, projected enrolment, and demographic information. This information will help inform the discussion around redistribution of EFI sites in the fall.

Given the above-mentioned information around budget considerations and the approved FSL recommendations in June 2019, the TDSB continues to be committed to

equity of access to an intensive FSL program through the redistribution of existing EFI programs taking into consideration the following:

- Transportation
- School capacity
- School configuration (i.e., JK-3, JK-5, JK-6, JK-8, 4-8, 6-8, 7-8)
- Proximity to other EFI programs
- Number of feeder schools to EFI programs. Two EFI schools have large catchments with fifteen (15) feeder schools each; they are Corvette Junior PS and William G. Miller PS.
- Secondary school pathways.

Below are the three (3) guiding questions for which staff is requesting feedback.

Guiding Question #1: Given the above-mentioned budget and staffing considerations, what would you consider a reasonable distance to travel for students accessing an EFI program?

Context: Transportation and Distance

Currently, there are 71 SK EFI sites and 39 Grade 4 JEF sites plus 2 Grade 4 MFI sites across the TDSB that will transition into the forty-one (41) MFI sites for September 2021. The current geographical distribution of the JEF program (i.e., transitioning to MFI) is more equitable than that of the EFI program sites. The redistribution work will focus on EFI in the fall.

Given the current locations of the EFI programs, and the guarantee that all on-time applicants are offered a placement in an EFI program, but not a particular school, there are varying distances that students travel to access a French program. Some students may walk as the EFI program is located at their neighbourhood school, while others may be transported as the local EFI program is further or the number of allotted program spaces has reached capacity, and therefore students have been redirected to a nearby school with available program space.

Guiding Question #2: What should be the minimum number of feeder schools to an EFI program?

Context: Number of feeder schools to Early French Immersion programs

Currently, every home address in TDSB is connected with an English school and all of those home addresses make-up what is called a catchment. Each English school catchment is associated with an EFI school defining the catchment of that EFI school. The number of schools in a catchment is an indicator of the distance a student interested in EFI may have to travel to access the program. Presently, there are fourteen (14) EFI entry schools whose French catchment is only associated with their

own English home school (e.g. Adam Beck Junior PS, Allenby Junior PS, Howard Junior PS, RH McGregor Elementary School, Runnymede Junior & Senior PS, etc.). Whereas, other EFI entry schools may have 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 English school catchments. Some like Corvette Junior PS and William G. Miller PS have fifteen (15) English school catchments associated with their EFI school. Some students in areas like these would have to travel greater distances to access their local EFI program.

Guiding Question #3: Given the current school capacities and utilization rates at TDSB schools, what are your thoughts about the following?

- French Immersion Centres (French only)
- Dual Track schools (English/French)

Context: School Capacity, Utilization and Balance amongst tracks (English and French)

The approved LTPAS document identifies as one of the guiding principles the balanced representation of students across programs in schools where French programs are offered. It also establishes parameters for optimal school size and utilization rate, among others.

Redistribution Next Steps

An EFI redistribution plan will be presented at the Committee of the Whole in the fall following feedback gathered from the guiding questions and review of the existing EFI entry sites to improve equity of access for families across the TDSB. Consideration for program locations or potential redistribution, pathways and secondary school sites are all under review within the FSL Implementation phase and the Secondary Review. All existing pathways at this time as established at the entry of each intensive FSL program will remain as such. Changes may occur in the future in accordance with board procedures.

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

An updated report will be brought to the Committee of the Whole in the fall to share the results of the guiding questions that will inform the potential redistribution of EFI sites.

Resource Implications

No additional resources are required at this time.

Communications Considerations

The redesigned FSL public website will contain information on the FSL Review, recommendations, implementation phases including updated reports as approved at Board Meetings, and house all the updated Question and Answer fact sheets related to the recommendations, phase out of the Grade 6 Intensive Extended program, the phase out of the Grade 7 Entry Extended French program and the transition from the Grade 4 JEF program to the Grade 4 MFI program. Staff will also continue to work with the Government, Public and Community Relations Department to determine further communication needs and support required to inform parents/guardians, staff, and students.

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

PR597 – Operational Procedure, French Immersion/Extended French

P068 – Policy: Accommodation and Program Review

Appendices

- Appendix A: Early French Immersion and Junior Extended French Schools & Associated Number of Feeders
- Appendix B: Map: Overview of Entry Points – Early French Immersion Sites
- Appendix C: Map: Overview of Entry Points – Junior Extended French Sites
- Appendix D: Associated Inventory Tables and Ward Maps

From

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