



French-as-a-Second Language: Update

To: Planning and Priorities Committee

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Report No.: 11-21-4199

Strategic Directions

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

Recommendation

It is recommended that the French-as-a-Second Language: Update, as presented in this report, be received for information.

Background

The French-as-a-Second Language update report details the current system context for elementary intensive French programs, specifically the implementation plans for the transition to the Junior Kindergarten entry point to Early French Immersion program (EFI).

In June 2019 staff received direction from the Board of Trustees to move forward with the implementation of the French-as-a-Second Language (FSL) Review recommendations. Over the next several years, the TDSB will continue to phase in changes and enhancements to French programs, which are all aimed at improving equity of access for students.

The phase out of Extended French and phase in of Middle French Immersion will help support the establishment of a single program model with two entry points – Junior Kindergarten French Immersion (beginning September 2022) and Grade 4 Middle French Immersion (September 2021).

As part of planned program changes, the first cohort for the Grade 4 Middle French Immersion Program (MFI) began September 2021. The following programs will also phase out entirely by June 2028: the single (1) Grade 6 Intensive Extended French Program and the fourteen (14) Grade 7 Entry Extended French programs.

At the foundation of these decisions was a commitment to ensure that access to intensive French programs was fairer and more equitable across the TDSB. Over time, the streamlining of programs will increase access to an intensive French program for students in the board, and will increase program viability, while minimizing the impact of additional staffing or need for supplementary teachers.

Given the complexities and intricacies of the TDSB system, staff recognize the need to take a careful and measured approach to ensure the needs of all French students are met.

Current Context

Implementation Plans for Junior Kindergarten Entry to Early French Immersion Program

Early intensity matters for students maintaining and building language proficiency; there is a higher proficiency rate when there is greater exposure to the language at the onset of the program. This model is more inclusive as it provides students with increased exposure to the French language to build both their proficiency and literacy skills in the language of instruction, and supporting their success in the subject areas taught in French. The shift to entry at JK supports improved access in various ways:

- JK entry provides parents/caregivers an opportunity to opt for and students to engage in the FI program without any preconceived notions or prejudice from the beginning of their school experience.
- biases may influence recommendations made to families as to who should or should not participate in intensive French programs, which only serves to promote systemic barriers to access
- equity of access will be improved by eliminating the influence of these biases.

An entry point at JK supports student achievement and well-being in multiple ways:

- means less transition for primary students;
- it provides an opportunity for families and students to build relationships with the school community from the beginning;
- it engages French students in deep learning and gives them an opportunity to focus on pre-literacy skills in the target language to meet the TDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan reading and math targets for all students;
- there are lower cognitive demands in earlier starting programs and a better fit between the language level of the learner and the complexity of the language in the subject content areas;

Sites and Locations

All existing Early French Immersion (EFI) [program sites](#) will transition to serve as the new Junior Kindergarten entry point to EFI. In addition, four (4) new sites have been identified proactively to prioritize underserved areas of the TDSB and reduce the largest French Immersion catchment areas to improve equitable distribution of programs across the system. Locations for these new EFI programs considered school capacity, utilization, projected enrolment over time, existing material resources, staffing efficiencies and program pathways. Program locations were identified through

the Local Feasibility Team (LFT) meeting process, which included the local area Trustee(s), Superintendents, Principals, and central staff.

Starting in September 2022, and during the online application period of November 2021, the four (4) new Early French Immersion sites listed below will be introduced at the following school locations. Maps of these new programs and their associated catchment areas can be found in Appendix A:

- Brookhaven Public School (York South-Weston – Ward 6, Trustee Tonks)
- Fraser Mustard Early Learning Academy (Don Valley West – Ward 11, Trustee Chernos Lin)
- George B Little Public School (Scarborough-Guildwood – Ward 19, Trustee Patel)
- Mason Road Junior Public School (Scarborough Southwest – Ward 18, Trustee Kandavel)

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

In addition, the following pathway changes were identified through Local Feasibility Team meetings to reduce some of the longest student commutes, and will take effect September 2022.

- Former Pathway: Millwood Junior School (SK-5) > Hilltop Middle School (6-8)
(Etobicoke Centre – Ward 2, Trustee MacLean)
- New: Millwood Junior School (SK-5) to Bloordale Middle School (6-8)
(Etobicoke Centre – Ward 2, Trustee MacLean)
- Former Pathway: Broadacres Junior School (SK-5) > Hilltop Middle School (6-8)
(Etobicoke Centre – Ward 2, Trustee MacLean)
- New Pathway: Broadacres Junior School (SK-5) > Bloordale Middle School (6-8)
(Etobicoke Centre – Ward 2, Trustee MacLean)
- Former Pathway: Corvette Junior Public School (SK-6) > Tredway Woodsworth Public School (7-8)
(Scarborough Southwest – Ward 18, Trustee Kandavel) > (Scarborough Guildwood, Ward 19, Trustee Patel)
- New Pathway: Corvette Junior Public School (SK-6) > Robert Service Senior Public Senior (7-8)
(Scarborough Southwest – Ward 18, Trustee Kandavel)

Note: All existing secondary pathways at this time as established at the entry of each EFI program will remain as such. Changes may occur in the future in accordance with board procedures.

The potential redistribution of Early French Immersion sites was explored, and areas of higher and lower density of EFI programs across the system were identified, catchment sizes and travel distances were analyzed, application rates were reviewed.

The closure of highly subscribed programs within well utilized schools presented their own challenges. The consolidation of programs in facilities that are full or situated on small sites is not a feasible option. Closing programs in these areas will place further accommodation pressures on these schools that would then need to be addressed.

Further, creating French Immersion centres by removing or closing the regular track program requires a lengthy process such as Pupil Accommodation Review, and often increases the distance that students must travel to access an EFI site. French Immersion centres provide opportunities for larger enrolments, as meaning the catchment area is usually larger. Consequently, this approach does not always improve equity of access to EFI programs and risks removing access to a walkable neighbourhood regular track school.

Therefore, in the short-term, to improve accessibility to French programs, the opening of new sites was prioritized in underserved areas. Moving forward, staff will achieve efficiencies as opportunities present themselves annually through thorough ongoing discussions in yearly Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy meetings, and in accordance with Operational Procedure PR597. As examples, there are two planned studies this school year that will be exploring access and pathways to secondary French programs. These studies emerged from the Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy and Secondary Program review discussions with Trustees.

Application and Placement Process

The system-wide Early French Immersion program will continue to be overseen by the central French Department. The entry point to Early French Immersion is currently Senior Kindergarten. However, as per recommendations approved at the Board in June 2019, the entry point will change to Junior Kindergarten for September 2022. There will be one transition year wherein students who will be entering Junior Kindergarten and Senior Kindergarten in 2022 will be eligible to apply to the Early French Immersion program during the November 2021 application period. Moving forward (2023), the only entry point for Early French Immersion will be Junior Kindergarten.

Applications to the seventy-four (74) EFI programs 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 November 2021. The application period as well as virtual information sessions, an information package, and other communications noted below will be publicized to all parents/caregivers well in advance and will be posted on the public TDSB website at the following link: www.tdsb.on.ca/Elementary-School/School-Choices/French-Programs

While admission to the EFI 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 EFI 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 EFI programs more optimally. Every effort will be made to support the successful rollout of the JK entry in all 74

sites. 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 Kindergarten year, there is no guarantee of placement in the new area. Changes may occur in the future in accordance with board procedures.

Communication Plans

Information on the EFI and location sites will be shared with the public and the TDSB community through regular channels of communication including TDSB Connects, the Board website, French Resources for Families google site and inserts for school newsletters.

In addition, the Central French Department staff will host three virtual information sessions prior to the close of the application period in November with differentiated support in the form of sessions particularly for communities with historically lower uptake hosted at new location sites. An extensive information package and public information video will be made available to all parents/caregivers and the TDSB community through regular channels of communication.

The week of August 30, EFI announcement banners went out to all schools with Kindergarten. An EFI flyer, translated into 22 languages, is available on www.tdsb.on.ca/French. An extensive digital advertising and printed media campaign targeting families with children born in 2017 and 2018 who will be JK/SK students in 2022 is planned along with print ads that will appear in local community print publications, some in local community languages.

Communications are being developed specifically for school Administrators, Superintendents, Trustees, and other staff. Avenues of communication like Direct Line, System Leaders Weekly, Trustee Weekly, TDSB French Google Site, Academic Workspace and the French Currents Communities will be leveraged to ensure staff is kept informed as the transition process rolls out.

Professional Learning Plan

The Professional Learning Plan for the 2021/2022 school year will include sessions designed to address the transition from the Senior Kindergarten to the Junior Kindergarten entry. These sessions will be offered in a variety of modalities and to specific audiences:

- professional learning for educators/administrators focusing best practices in the early years for play-based learning and inquiry-based learning with a French context;
- sessions for experienced EFI Kindergarten teachers acknowledging and preparing for the different implications of welcoming JK students relative to SK students only;
- virtual or in-person sessions on oral language and a comprehensive literacy program;
- online communities to facilitate sharing of best practices, questions and ideas as the transition rolls out;
- Learning Centre based networks for EFI teachers.

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

Subject to the Planning and Priorities Committee's receipt, the report will be provided to the Board of Trustees on November 10 for information.

Resource Implications

No additional resources are required at this time.

Communications Considerations

The French public website will contain information on the Implementation phases including updated reports as approved at Board Meetings, and related Fact Sheets to support the transition of entry point to Early French Immersion.

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

- French-as-a-Second Language Programs (P080)
- Operational Procedure, French Immersion/Extended French (PR597)

Appendices

- Appendix A: Maps New Early French Immersion Sites

From

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