

Online Submission Form

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This is an exciting time in education in Ontario. We have spent the last decade working with our education partners to create an education system that is recognized as one of the greatest around the world. Our task now is not to settle for great, but instead to continue striving for excellence.

One of the most significant challenges and opportunities before us is how to best prepare our students for a rapidly changing, technology-driven, globalized world. To do so, we need to broaden our view of student achievement to include even greater emphasis on higher-order skills – such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity and entrepreneurship. These are skills that are necessary for developing global citizens who bring the competencies and qualities that employers of tomorrow are looking for, and that our children will need to thrive.

Working with a diverse group of thinkers, we can build an updated vision for the future of education in Ontario that will guide us in our journey.

Thank you for taking the time to be a part of this consultation, and for your interest in education in Ontario. Your thoughtful consideration and answers to these questions will help to create a new vision for the future of education in Ontario.

Deadline for all submissions is November 30, 2013.

About yourself:

I am submitting on behalf of an institution / organization / company etc.

Name of organization (required)

French as a Second Language Advisory Committee to the Toronto District School Board

Description of organization (optional)

The French as a Second language Advisory Committee (FSLAC) is a community advisory committee in the Toronto District School Board. With parent volunteers from across the city, the FSLAC's Board-assigned mission is to consult with, and advise, the Board on French as a second language (FSL) matters. As a Board advisory committee, the FSLAC contributes to the work of Trustees and staff, and this partnership of Trustees, staff and parents fosters excellence and growth in FSL programs in the TDSB.

What are the skills, knowledge and characteristics students need to succeed after they have completed school, and how do we better support all learners in their development? (1000 word-limit)

A/ The Skills, Knowledge and Characteristics Students Need

- Students need to be global citizens. They need strong communication skills including, ideally, the ability to communicate in other languages. They also need tolerance, open-mindedness and empathy in order to engage and work with people from different cultures and backgrounds. Students will require patience and perseverance. They will need to be able to work well independently and in teams, and they will need to be flexible in their problem-solving skills in order to adapt to a constantly changing environment.
- Students must be able to multi-task in several different capacities (e.g. text, chat, listen to music, interface with whoever is there) and will need to know how to prioritize and organize the various sources of information.

B/ How do we Better Support Learners in their Development?

- Widen students' horizons and prepare them to compete on a global scale. Help them be ready to change and adapt, be willing to follow different pathways, not to fear different cultures, and to be open minded. Help them develop problem solving skills and integrity at school and at home.
- Teach children a second, third (or fourth!) language, which will help students develop tolerance, perseverance, patience and independence.
- Focus on transferable skills such as teamwork and ability/willingness to compromise.
- Fortify communication skills, including communication across groups and boundaries, and build the ability to connect socially in ways that are meaningful from the perspective of the other person.
- Support the development of life skills and principles including emotional intelligence, independence, self-reliance, integrity, and accountability.
- Language learning makes students more flexible and tolerant and develops independent learning skills and intellectual capacity. It helps students understand that there are choices available to them, and that they shouldn't feel stuck on any single path. It helps them learn to adapt and has lasting, transferable benefits. Language learning also helps prepare students to compete globally.
- Encourage learners to use French and other languages in and outside of schools (e.g. do presentations and interviews) and ask questions/provide answers all in French (e.g. ordering at a restaurant).

What does student well-being mean to you, and what is the role of the school in supporting it? (1000 word-limit)

- Student well-being means happy, engaged learners that are not reluctant to go to school.
- The school must create an environment with many choices (extra-curricular programming, tutoring support during school hours, arts and athletics), in conjunction with strong opportunities for language learning, at all educational levels (primary through secondary).
- Teachers should be passionate about their vocation so that they can share their enthusiasm and encourage students to be more engaged learners.

From your perspective, what further opportunities exist to close gaps and increase equity to support all children and students in reaching their full potential? (1000 word-limit)

- The introduction of a second or third language stimulates brain development, triggers intellectual flexibility, and helps set children up to succeed in an increasingly global world.
- Knowing an additional language is a concrete skill that opens more job opportunities, e.g. government jobs for French/English bilinguals. Language learning has the additional benefit of facilitating students' ability to tap into other cultures and enhances their ability to engage in social immersion, which is important in our global world.
- Proper support should be provided so that each and every child is given the opportunity to access, and excel at, language learning programs at the earliest possible stage and while they are 'fresh' learners. For instance, one-on-one tutoring during the school day, not after school when children are tired.
- Model schools (TDSB) are a good thing, and language learning, in addition to hot lunches, after-school programs and tutoring, should core components to help close the gap between 'have' and 'have-not' schools. After 6 months of this type of programming, evaluate how students are doing using a modern assessment tool to help schools and parents better understand progress and ongoing student needs.
- Marking patterns should be realistic. Passing students along without fear of failure can be detrimental and demoralizing when students reach later grades.

- Educate parents to support children appropriately, e.g. via the OERB. Improve French and other language content on this resource, and share it with parents (over and over again!)
- Encourage social immersion and immersive learning experiences outside of school, e.g. days away
- Provide adequate bussing for language programs like French immersion if placement at the local school is not possible

How does the education system need to evolve as a result of changes to child care and the implementation of full-day kindergarten? (1000 word-limit)

- On the whole, French Immersion enrolment is strong and growing, however there are indications that parents are declining placements because of a lack of child care. There is an equity challenge. Students entering the English stream are granted priority placement if they attend on-site daycare; however there is no such priority for students wishing to attend French immersion (even if they live within the English catchment). The FDK model doesn't solve this problem, e.g. when learners have younger siblings that are also in care. Parents are sometimes faced with the difficult choice between French Immersion and childcare at two different locations.

What more can we all do to keep students engaged, foster their curiosity and creativity, and help them develop a love of life-long learning? (1000 word-limit)

- Model lifelong learning. Give learners the opportunity to see adults learn, and encourage this behaviour among parents outside of school hours. Apply and promote the Common European Framework of Reference, which provides proficiency bench-marking under the premise that language learning follows a life-long continuum.
- Teach children to be comfortable making mistakes. Babies fall over as they learn to walk; children need to learn not to be crushed if they can't conquer a skill the first time. Language learning helps encourage learners to take risks.
- Ensure that appropriate opportunities exist for boys and different learners, including in the context of French Immersion and language programming, since early labels can be harmful
- Encourage students to find what they like to do.
- Keep programs like strings, sports in the school. Get the children outdoors and in alternate environments to the classroom. Help learners understand that their interests are connected to study.
- Engage teachers and TAs that are experts/love their fields, including in French and other language classes. Children are more engaged when they sense a teacher's passion.
- Teach children to prioritize and handle the multiple stimuli in their environment.

How can we use technology more effectively in teaching and learning? (1000 word-limit)

- OERB is a wonderful resource, however it requires more French content. Also, parents should be told and reminded again and again about this and other online resources.
- There are many learning aps available for parents, but they may be overwhelmed by the choice and unsure what the better choices are. Educate parents constantly about the tools that are available to support children at home.
- Many teachers also need to be educated about the different forms of technology available for classroom use. They should regularly be provided with training on how to use technology more effectively in the classroom.

In summary, what are the various opportunities for partnership that can enhance the student experience, and how can they benefit parents, educators and our partners too? (1000 word-limit)

- We should partner with quality organizations that provide appropriate opportunities for immersive learning or learning opportunities outside the classroom.
- In the French context, exchanges provide wonderful, eye-opening opportunities to enhance students' classroom learning and open student minds to new, different environments, routines and cultures - essential in today's cross-border world.

Additional Comments

Continue to support our language learning programs!

Thank you for taking the time to help us build the next phase of Ontario's Education Strategy.