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## **French as a Second Language Advisory Committee**

Email address: [fslactoronto@gmail.com](mailto:fslactoronto@gmail.com)

Webpage: [www.tdsb.on.ca/fslac](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/fslac)

January 22, 2014

To: Trustees  
From: FSLAC

Re: Planning and Priorities Committee, Jan 22, 2014 – CAC review

Dear Trustees,

The French as a Second Language Advisory Committee (FSLAC) is supportive of the main recommendations of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) report.

Our only concern is recommendation 5 on standardizing CAC mandates, structure, membership, communication and reporting. There are distinct types of CACs – parent run CACs (FSLAC, PIAC, ASAC), mandated CACs (PIAC, SEAC), and the others where the membership is predominantly community organization reps. FSLAC parents are elected by and represent the parents in your wards. They put many volunteer hours into support for and outreach to French as Second Language parents in support of the work of staff and would like to continue to focus their efforts on FSL rather than on developing a one-size-fits-all CAC system.

“If we ain’t broke, don’t fix us”.

Since our inception in 2005, we have drawn on the extensive experience of our parents on school councils and the guidance of staff and our trustee co-chairs/members to develop into an inclusive, transparent, responsive and well-governed CAC. We have built an excellent relationship with FSL and senior staff and are able to present to Board committees as needed on FSL policy and other topics. Currently, we have 33 committee members with parent representatives/alternates from 15 wards who are elected by ward councils for two year renewable terms. We build consensus on issues so that our advice to staff and trustees is supported by the entire committee. Our parents run the committee with minimal (but much needed) administrative assistance from the Parent Involvement Office. We meet as a whole committee about 7 times a year to work on the mission the Board assigned to us on January 31, 2007: *“To consult with and advise the Board on French as a Second Language matters. As a Board community advisory committee, the FSLAC will contribute to the work of trustees and staff. This partnership of trustees, staff and parents will foster excellence and growth in FSL programs at the Board.”*

We hold our annual general meeting at the end of the school year in June where we review our operating guidelines, elect our executive and finalize the year-end report that we, at our own impetus, have submitted to PSSC since 2010. The reports are posted on [tdsb.on.ca/fslac](http://tdsb.on.ca/fslac). The executive meets once during the summer so that come September, we are ready to go and as frequently as needed over the school year. We produce and distribute a briefing booklet to our members with tips on what to do and FSL information.

One of the greatest strengths of our committee is the way that our parent volunteers work as a team, each stepping up to the plate to attend a local meeting when called upon and each giving the time that they can at meetings and also between them. We try to be very flexible and mindful of the busy lives of parents in

making time demands and recognize that our parents are also dedicated volunteers at their schools. The Board benefits from the deep commitment and expertise of FSLAC members at PARTs, PARCs, public consultations, immersion/extended information nights and from the information we put on the website and share with parents, trustees and staff. We are liaisons between the 'big system', the parents and numerous FSL stakeholders.

To continue to build our capacity to do outreach to parents and to support those who support you, we are hoping to receive some additional help from the Board:

**Babysitting fund:** Many of our parent members have young children. Child-minding assistance is mentioned in the CAC report. While onsite babysitting is often offered at school meetings, it is not ideal at the Board office due to the timing of our meetings (7-9 pm on school nights) and the distance many of our volunteers need to travel to attend. We would like the Parent Involvement office to provide a babysitting fund to cover the extraordinary circumstances when parents cannot organize a cost-free alternative. It is important to ensure that no parent faces a financial barrier to participation.

**Tele/Video Conferencing and Wi-Fi at 5050:** The current teleconferencing system does not work well and needs to be upgraded, perhaps to video conferencing. Also, we would like to be able to use the Wi-Fi at 5050 Yonge to access our own webpage during meetings, to use electronic documents and to use free services like Skype or Google Hangout.

**School council email addresses:** Back in 2005, the FSLAC was very concerned that communicating with parents board wide was beyond the capacity of a volunteer parent committee. The Board responded by agreeing to facilitate parent-to-parent communication by providing standardized email addresses for every school council and by providing us with the means to use them. This has not yet materialized. There are now about 25 000 students in immersion/extended in over 100 schools and about 120 000 students in Core French in almost every school in the TDSB. We send FSL information and receive very positive feedback through our own efforts from our Gmail account but our coverage is nowhere near what it could and should be. We ask that a renewed and focused effort be made to move this forward.

We appreciate the efforts made by the Board and thank the parent volunteers on the working committee for their work on the CAC report. We look forward to continuing to be part of this conversation and to continuing our work on FSL.

Sincerely,

Kristina Laperle  
Parent co-chair  
French as a Second Language Advisory Committee

Working together for our students. Travaillons ensemble pour nos élèves.