



## **French-as-a-Second-Language Programs Review Recommendations**

**To:** Committee of the Whole

**Date:** 12 June, 2019

**Report No.:** 06-19-3689

### **Strategic Directions**

- Transform Student Learning
- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students
- Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the French as a Second Language (FSL) Programs Review Recommendations, as described in this report, be approved.

1. Restructure the Board's Intensive FSL Programs leading to a single intensive French Immersion (FI) Program model with two entry points, and elimination of all other entry points;
2. Establish a minimum intake and a maximum cap at the entry points to ensure program viability and account for attrition rates;
3. Develop a Core French Action Plan;
4. Ensure Inclusive Practices in all FSL Programs;
5. Strengthen the current Plan for the Recruitment and Retention of FSL Teachers.

That the Director report back to the Board in October 2019 on next steps:

1. Core French Action Plan
2. Implementation of Proposed Transportation Plan (following Board approval on June 19, 2019)

3. Development of Redistribution Plan for FI Programs to improve equity of access (following Board approval on June 19, 2019)

4. Revision of Operation Procedure 597

## Context

The Vision for French as Second Language (FSL) Programming in the Toronto District School Board detailed below was developed in response to a comprehensive French as Second Language Program Review conducted in the spring of 2018 with the goal of identifying program needs and recommending strategies for ensuring the ongoing viability of and improving access for all students to intensive FSL Programs, as well as enhancing the program and experience of students and staff in Core French.

The Vision is aligned with the *Board's Multi-Year Strategic Plan* and the *Guiding Principles for the Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy*. While the proposed recommendations reflect the challenge of implementing the necessary changes within the constraints imposed by recently announced Provincial funding reductions, they are nevertheless consistent with the Board's *Budget Strategic Drivers 2019-2020*, allocating resources equitably to improve access to FI programming for all families across the system that choose this path.

## Background

As Canada's largest and most diverse school district, the TDSB is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities so that all students can gain the foundational skills they will need to thrive, whatever future pathway they choose.

Whether that path lies right here in Toronto, or takes them across Canada or even around the globe, the ability to communicate in both of Canada's official languages is one such foundational skill. We know that learning French can unlock critical future opportunities allowing our English-speaking students to move on to study, work and live in all parts of Canada. As *The Ontario Curriculum, French as a Second Language* points out:

*"The ability to speak and understand French allows students to communicate with French-speaking people in Canada and around the world and to develop and benefit from a competitive advantage in the workforce."*<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Vision and Goals for French as a Second Language – Core, Extended, and Immersion, Grades 1 to 12 in The Ontario Curriculum, French as Second Language* p. 6 (2013) <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/fsl18-2013curr.pdf> The Ontario Curriculum, French as Second Language p. 6 (2013)

Similarly, lack of equitable access to enhanced French-language Programs creates a fundamental opportunity gap, and for this reason, increasing system-wide access to intensive French Programs and improving FSL programming for all TDSB students has been identified as a priority for the Board.

## History

### Intensive French Programs

The Early French Immersion program began with a handful of Toronto schools in the early 1970's; at amalgamation, there were 41 Early French Immersion entry sites in the TDSB. The Junior Extended French program was introduced in seven TDSB schools in 2004, and has since grown to 38 sites. In 2009, PR597 came into effect, establishing a process for program growth and allowing for accommodation of all families who apply to an Early French Immersion or Junior Extended French program by the annual deadline. Since that time, the Board has opened 30 new sites to accommodate growing demand for the program by parents and communities.

Currently, with an overall combined enrolment of almost 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. Two of these are entry points into the two system-wide programs:

1. Early French Immersion (SK entry), with a total entry enrolment of 2,985 students in 2018-19, and
2. Junior Extended French (Grade 4 entry), with a total entry enrolment of 1,116 students in 2018-19.

In addition, the Board currently offers four locally-managed intensive French Programs with different entry points. These smaller programs operate in a limited number of schools, where they reflect local historical legacy-program models:

- Middle French Immersion (Grade 4 entry), in 2 schools with a total overall enrolment of 146 students;
- Intermediate Extended French (Grade 7 entry), 14 schools, with a total overall enrolment of 1,232 students;
- Cosburn MS Intensive Extended French (Grade 6 entry), in 1 school with a total overall enrolment of 138 students;
- Hawthorne II Bilingual Alternative (JK entry), 1 school with a total overall enrolment of 192 students.

## **Enrolment**

The total number of SK students in 2018-19 is 14,526 of which 2,985 are currently enrolled in the Early French Immersion program (SK entry). The number of students participating in Early French Immersion for 2018-19 is 21% of those in SK as of October 31, 2018. There are 71 SK French Immersion sites to date, all of which are Full Day Kindergarten (FDK).

The total number of Grade 4 students in 2018-19 is 12,819 of which 1,116 are currently enrolled in the Junior Extended French program (Grade 4 entry). The number of students participating in Junior Extended French for 2018-19 is 9% of those in Grade 4 as of October 31, 2018. There are currently 38 Junior Extended French sites.

## **Core French Program**

Currently, more than 90,000 TDSB students are enrolled in the Core French Program. In Ontario, it is mandatory for all students attending English-language elementary schools to receive French instruction in every school year from Grade 4 entry through Grade 8, and to have accumulated a minimum of 600 hours of French instruction by the end of Grade 8. In addition, all students must have completed one secondary Core French credit (typically in Grade 9) in order to graduate.

## **French as a Second Language Programs Review**

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 programs as a key priority for the Board.

During spring 2018, as part of the Director's Response to the Enhanced 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 also given multiple opportunities to comment on the TDSB's French programs. This process included community meetings, student forums, staff forums, focus groups, as well as on-line 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.

In addition, three on-line 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 in the chart below. In total, the review captured feedback from 10,535 individuals.

Stakeholder Group	Online Survey Responses	In-person Consultation
Students (Grades 6-12)	6,844	81
Parent/Community Member	1,988	146 (parents/community) 27 (advisory committee members)
Staff	1,427	22

The review findings (see Appendix A, French as a Second Language Programs Review Summary of Findings) also provide 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 identifying challenges in a number of areas. This data has been used to inform the present recommendations, and will continue to guide next steps.

## Action Plan and Associated Timeline

### 1. Restructure the Board’s Intensive FSL Programs leading to a single intensive French Immersion (FI) Program model with two entry points, and elimination of all other entry points

#### Ensure Equitable Access to an Intensive FSL Program

Research shows that students in intensive French programs develop skills such as literacy, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, leadership, global competencies readily, and furthermore, they transfer these same skills acquired and practiced learning in a second language environment to other contexts and subject areas. The intensive French programs support the development of these skills through

the explicit teaching of learning strategies as well as the use and application of these thinking skills as students function and learn in a second language environment.

The classroom and school environment acts as a third teacher. The student survey from the FSL review reflects that many students do not see their language learning valued outside of classroom activities. If we promote a classroom and school environment that supports and values language learning from an early entry point (JK) and offers students the opportunity to use French in other contexts, their engagement, confidence and proficiency will improve.

The TDSB is committed to equity of access to an intensive FSL program through the redistribution of existing programs taking into consideration the following:

- Impact of transportation
- School capacity at the entry points with flow through until Grade 8 graduation to ensure limited transition points whenever possible
- Secondary school pathways

### **Two Entry Points to French Immersion**

Two entry points to an intensive FSL program enhances equity of access to learning opportunities for all students. A second entry point provides access for students whose families may move to Toronto after their child is three years of age; this includes newcomer families or anyone new to Toronto. Families who are new TDSB and/or newcomer families may take time to become familiar with TDSB and so become aware of the opportunity for Intensive FSL learning when it has become too late to access the program.

Results of the recently completed Parent, Student and Staff surveys in the FSL Review, Spring 2018, indicate that improvements can be made to the policies and procedures for all FSL programs and in particular access to quality optional intensive French programs. If we use the information gathered via consultations and surveys to inform the re-examination of existing policies and procedures then we can make improvements to FSL programs in terms of program access. Many parents express the need for more than one entry point; this allows for greater parental decision-making.

### **Junior Kindergarten Entry Point to French Immersion**

Setting one entry point at JK will give students an opportunity to engage in the French Immersion program without any preconceived notions or prejudice from the beginning of their school experience. We know that biases may influence recommendations made by staff as to who should or should not participate in intensive FSL programs, which only serves to promote systemic barriers to access.

## Agenda Page 7

An entry point at JK supports student achievement and well-being in multiple ways. It means one less transition for primary students; it provides an opportunity for parents and students to build relationships with the school community from the beginning. It permits alignment with the English program and goals for Early Years reading targets (all students reading by end of Grade 1) and board Math plan (all students in Grade 2 having fundamental skills in mathematics). It engages students in deep learning and gives them an opportunity to focus on pre-literacy skills in the target language in order to meet the TDSB reading and math targets for all students.

In the FSL Review, Spring 2018 (P.53), (see full report [here](#)), 68% of parents indicated a preference for a Kindergarten entry to French Immersion and 13% indicated a preference for Grade 1. Furthermore, of the 63 public English-Language school boards in Ontario, the following entry points are offered:

- 28 offer JK entry
- 9 offer SK entry (includes TDSB)
- 17 offer Gr. 1 entry
- 1 offers Gr. 2 entry
- 1 offers Gr. 4 entry
- 7 with no intensive FSL programs.

From a staff allocation and human resources perspective, the Junior Kindergarten entry point allows for flexibility in the school organizational model (i.e. JK/SK), and also allows for increased program viability, while minimizing the impact of additional staffing or need for supplementary teachers.

### **Grade 4 Entry Point to French Immersion**

As stated earlier, a second entry point improves opportunities for access to an intensive FSL program. Setting a second entry point at Grade 4 to French Immersion has advantages. In the TDSB, Grade 4 is already an existing entry point to Junior Extended French and so an entry to French Immersion at this grade would be intuitive. The existing Extended French schools have resources that are age-appropriate for students beginning to work in the target language at this grade level and would transition to support the Grade 4 Immersion entry point.

From the student perspective, learners may build on early literacy learning that has already occurred in English and make connections to this learning in French. Students beginning French Immersion at Grade 4 will have time to accumulate the hours required to continue in French Immersion at the secondary level. In this scenario, students have time to build proficiency and confidence using the target language to enable them to

merge with the Early French Immersion students at Grade 9 which will allow for a critical mass of students in secondary sufficient to offer both compulsory and elective courses in the target language in one stream (French Immersion) at the secondary level. This allows for more depth and breadth for French Immersion programming at the secondary level which was clearly articulated by students as a current challenge in the FSL Review, Spring 2018.

In support of a second entry point to French Immersion, the elimination of all other intensive programs (currently in place, such as Junior Extended French, Intensive Extended at Cosburn MS, the 14 Gr. 7 Extended French and Hawthorne II Bilingual Alternative) will effectively serve to streamline the following: staff allocation process (i.e. concentrate staff efforts in two French strands only - Core French and Immersion), school organizational model, maintain program viability, support teacher retention, and reduce the need for supplementary French teachers.

### **Elimination of all other Entry Points**

The streamlining of entry points to FSL programs to two system-wide entry points (Junior Kindergarten and Grade 4) into one intensive FSL program will permit the focus of resources, both material and human, in order to better serve students. This will permit more effective deployment of FSL qualified teachers; it will allow for the more effective formation of professional learning communities to support FSL teachers and the effective sharing of French language resources. Results of the recently completed Parent, Student and Staff surveys in the FSL Review, Spring 2018 indicate a preference for two entry points (p. 54) and for earlier entry points (p. 53); only 5% of parent respondents were in favour of the Extended French entry point at Grade 7.

Currently, there are a number of schools that offer more than one FSL program along with the regular English track program. These are referred to as Triple Track schools (English + French Immersion + Extended French) or Quadruple Track (English + French Immersion + Grade 4 Entry Extended French + Grade 7 Entry Extended French). There are currently ten Triple Track elementary schools (K-8) and five Quadruple Track elementary (6-8) as well as nine Triple Track secondary schools. This model poses challenges to staff allocation, timetabling, resources sharing, amongst numerous others. Streamlining the entry points will alleviate these challenges while still providing families with two system-wide entry points to one intensive FSL program, and students to a quality FSL program.

By adding a second entry point to French Immersion at Grade 4, the current Junior Extended French (Grade 4 Entry) would phase out. Research indicates that initial intensity of exposure to the language leads to better maintenance of the skills, increased proficiency and abilities later when the amount of exposure to the target language reduces. Therefore, students interested in the second entry point would begin

## Agenda Page 9

in Grade 4 at 100% instruction in French and continue at that intensity through to Gr. 5, at which point they will receive 75% instruction in French for Grades 6-8 and ultimately merge with Early French Immersion students at Grade 9. This increased intensity at the start will permit students to study alongside early French Immersion students earlier (in Grade 9).

All current students of the existing programs will complete their program through to Grade 8. The streamlining of entry points would take place along the following timeline:

<b>Current Program &amp; Enrolment Numbers</b>	<b>Final Entry Class Begins</b>	<b>Final Cohort Graduates Elementary Panel</b>
Junior Extended French (Grade 4 Entry) 4,374 students – total overall enrolment	September 2020	June 2025
Intermediate Extended French (Grade 7 Entry) 1,232 students – total overall enrolment	September 2020	June 2022
Hawthorne II Bilingual Alternative Junior School (JK Entry) 192 students – total overall enrolment	September 2020	June 2025
Cosburn MS (Intensive Extended Grade 6 Entry) 138 students – total overall enrolment	September 2020	June 2023
French Immersion only in all schools (elementary and secondary) by 2025.		

**\*Note:** Enrolment numbers based on 2018-2019 Monthly Enrolment Report

### **2. Establish a minimum intake and a maximum cap at the entry points to ensure program viability and account for attrition rates**

Sufficient enrolment in the Junior Kindergarten classes will be necessary to ensure healthy class sizes at all grade levels, considering attrition rates. In Junior Kindergarten French Immersion, a two class entry is ideal for the sharing of resources, job-embedded professional growth and co-planning. Two classes of twenty-nine students each (fifty-

eight total intake cohort) would be best to ensure program viability to account for attrition through the grades. Over the long term, an entry class of fifty-eight could result in a Grade 8 class of twenty-nine which would still be a viable cohort for secondary.

In a Grade 4 French Immersion program, a one class entry of twenty-five to thirty students would be sufficient to support program viability, accounting for attrition rates from Grades 4-8.

Classes smaller than twenty at either the Junior Kindergarten entry or the Grade 4 entry point would risk being too small to ensure a viable program, and therefore should not be opened.

It is recommended that the application and placement process as outlined in Operational Procedure PR597 be reviewed and revised to better facilitate achievement and maintenance of a balanced program whenever possible between the regular English enrolment and French Immersion enrolment in schools hosting intensive FSL programs. Balanced enrolment would be defined as no fewer than twenty to twenty-five students per grade level in either program (English or French) to ensure a strong cohort of students as they move through the elementary grades. When the balance of a program approaches this level as defined above, steps shall be taken to improve the balance wherever possible.

A balanced enrolment supports:

- the viability of both English and French programs within the elementary school through to Grade 8;
- equitable distribution of human and financial resources to support programming;
- the management of capacity pressures in a school with minimal to no impact to learners or families;
- the provision that the home English school students are not displaced for their regular English program due to a specialized program;
- best use of space in the school to
  - preserve one dedicated multi-purpose space in each school
  - minimize the impact of transforming every usable space in the school that can be transformed.

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.

### 3. Develop a Core French Action Plan

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.

Student surveys from the FSL Review, Spring 2018, indicate that students want to be more engaged and challenged in their Core French classes. If we develop and change teacher practice to increase student engagement and improve confidence and proficiency, students will develop stronger skills, feel more engaged, more confident and proficient in Core French programs. Research shows us that similar inquiry based, student centered, equity driven teaching strategies are most effective in Core French programs. Continued job-embedded coaching and professional learning around specific strategies for developing literacy and global competency skills, the achievement level, engagement and well-being of students will improve.

The TDSB is committed to the following:

- creation of a Core French Action Plan that will address the challenges highlighted in the student and parent surveys from the FSL Review, Spring 2018;
- whenever possible and practical, a dedicated classroom space in a school be provided for Core French as it is a mandated subject in Ontario for all students in Grades 4 to 9;
- continue to plan, fund and target professional learning specifically for new and experienced Core French (elementary/secondary) teachers that includes the principles of Cultural Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP), Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)
  - identify, share and implement best practices and strategies in Core French through job-embedded professional learning and coaching and mentoring staff
- continue to support leaders to build staff capacity and shared leadership regarding programming and strategies for differentiated instruction, to accommodate a range of learners and learning needs in all FSL programs;
- continue to provide schools with lists of CRRP resources (i.e. digital tools, apps, hard copy resources) to support classroom Core French teachers, school libraries;
- continue to expand the offerings for summer e-learning opportunities for French.

#### **4. Ensure Inclusive Practices in all FSL Programs**

Ministry and Board data indicate that we still have work to do to improve the inclusion of a wider range of learners in FSL programs; students with Special Education needs and those who demonstrate other learning needs. If we work with staff who influence parents' decision-making about the benefits and possibilities of inclusion in FSL programs for students with a wider range of backgrounds, learning styles and learning needs, and if we work specifically with Special Education leaders, Principals and classroom teachers around strategies to support and promote inclusion, more students and families will feel supported in FSL classrooms.

Research on students with Special Education needs in FSL programs confronts the assumption that students with Special Education needs cannot benefit from FSL programs. Indeed this research indicates they can both benefit from and thrive in FSL programs. All efforts should be made to design and deliver a program in an intensive FSL program and Core French program that supports a wide range of learning styles and needs. Teachers of French Immersion and Core French programs can and shall use assessment strategies to identify strengths and learning needs for all students and design a differentiated program to meet them.

Learning experiences may be differentiated by content, process, product, environment and language complexity based on the strengths and needs of the students. Teachers of French programs can and shall develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) if it is deemed necessary to meet the needs of learners with Special Education needs. Accommodations and modifications are both possible in French programs and must be put in place if the student's learning needs require those steps.

All students can succeed. Each student has his or her own unique patterns of learning. The use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), the Six Threads of Inclusive Design and differentiated instruction are effective and interconnected means of meeting the learning or productivity needs of any group of students. Inclusive Design in the TDSB is an approach to looking at schools, classrooms and systems that considers the full range of diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender and lived experiences when thinking about school improvement and helping all students succeed. The Six Threads of Inclusive Design are composed of: Designing Instruction, Responding to Student Voice, Analyzing Data, Engaging Parents, Families, Elders and Communities, Establishing Environment as Third Teacher, and Building Leadership Capacity. Universal Design for Learning means finding or designing innovative ways to make curriculum accessible in any learning situation/context, for individual learners with different backgrounds, learning styles, abilities and disabilities. Principles of UDL focus on adapting teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment to suit the learner rather

than the other way around. It means creating flexible materials and methods before they are offered to students, understanding that the kinds of support needed by one student can be beneficial for all the students.

All students are capable of learning in another language. The classroom accommodations and curriculum modifications that are possible in the English program can also be implemented in all French programs. In many schools, additional support for learners on a modified program is available in French, and strategies to support their specific learning needs can be applied to the English and French learning environment interchangeably. Any support offered in the target language transfers to literacy skills in the dominant language.

As stated in the TDSB Special Education Plan 2018:

“Our plan also supports ideals outlined in the Ontario Human Rights (OHR) Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities<sup>2</sup>, which provides guidance on interpreting provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code in an educational context. The OHR Commission interprets *Disability* as including physical, developmental and learning disabilities and *Accommodation* as a means of preventing and removing barriers that impede students with disabilities from participating fully in the educational environment. It also describes accommodation as involving three factors:

***Dignity:*** Students with disabilities have the right to receive educational services in a manner that is respectful of their dignity, which encompasses both self-respect and self-worth.

***Individualization:*** Every student with a disability is unique. Although many accommodations will benefit large numbers of students with similar needs, two students with the same disability may call for different kinds of accommodation and instructional approaches.

***Inclusion:*** While there are times when the best way to ensure the dignity of persons with disabilities may be to provide separate or specialized services, education providers must first make efforts to accommodate students with disabilities in a way that promotes their inclusion and full participation.”

There is no exception to these principles listed above for students in French as a Second Language Programs.

---

<sup>2</sup> Section 30 of the Ontario Human Rights Code authorizes the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) to develop policy documents to provide guidance on interpreting provisions of the Code. OHRC policies are frequently considered during human rights proceedings before the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario. “Guidelines on Accessible Education” is one such document, a companion to the OHRC [Disability Policy](#) and the OHRC report [The Opportunity to Succeed: Achieving Barrier Free Education for Students with Disabilities](#).

The TDSB is committed to the following:

- continue to build FSL teachers, Principals and staff capacity regarding inclusion in FSL programs through job-embedded professional learning sessions;
- continue to build shared leadership capacity, provide training for appropriate support of school leaders regarding best practices for the inclusion and support of students in all FSL programs;
- continue to communicate the TDSB's commitment to the inclusion of students with Special Education needs in all FSL programs and share information via various methods (i.e. local school communications e.g. newsletters, information nights, curriculum night, parent/teacher conferences, etc.);
  - centrally, through various methods of communication to staff e.g. professional learning, FSL newsletters, internal/external websites, FSLAC, etc.
- review and revision of Operational Procedure PR597 with the lens to update the section specific to Special Education support for students with special education needs;
- continue to implement accommodations and modifications to programming based on student needs; creation of Individual Education Plans as needed based on School Support Team and parental recommendations.

## **5. Strengthen the current Plan for the Recruitment and Retention of FSL Teachers**

The TDSB offers a dynamic, challenging work environment and unmatched career opportunities for our staff. Recruitment of qualified FSL teachers is a TDSB priority. In order to build the roster of qualified FSL teachers, the following measures are proposed:

- closer alignment with French as a Second Language Department and Employee Services Department to leverage recruitment;
- continued work with the Communications department to develop a social media strategy;
- creation and distribution of a video that promotes TDSB as an FSL employer;
- establish criteria for French fluency.

Employee Services, in collaboration with the French as a Second Language Department, will continue to support a number of recruitment strategies to attract and hire French teachers for permanent positions and to the Occasional Teacher roster.

The TDSB Recruitment Team, in collaboration with the French as a Second Language Department will:

- continue to participate in career fairs at universities that have pre-service training programs for French teachers inside and outside Ontario;
- continue to maintain liaison with these Faculties of Education beyond the career fair opportunities and organize information sessions to specifically talk to the French teacher candidates;
- continue to conduct active recruitment and interviews of French candidates while doing actual campus visits at the universities;
- continue to attend the Annual Apply to Education Job Fair and advertise on Jobs in Education. Given the need for French teachers across Ontario, this job fair invites attendees (prospective teacher candidates) from all over the GTA, as well as from across Ontario, BC, Alberta and Quebec;
- schedule French Occasional Teacher interviews at TDSB Offices on an ongoing (weekly) basis;
- engage in the practice of pool hiring French candidates for permanent contract status; pool hiring is a process by which after successful completion of the interview process, we offer French teacher candidates contract positions in advance of knowing where a specific position might exist in the upcoming school year.

Effective and intentional recruitment are critical to supporting quality French language instruction in our schools. We also know that supporting our French teachers so they continue to excel and maintain a desire to teach within our French program offers stability to this programming.

Retention efforts will be supported in the following ways by the FSL Department:

- continue to plan, fund and deliver targeted professional learning specifically for new teachers in FSL roles;
- continue to collaborate with Teachers, Leading and Learning to offer professional learning opportunities that focus on the particular questions, possibilities and challenges facing teachers in FSL;
- continue to collaborate with Teachers, Leading and Learning to ensure there is FSL representation in Exploration Classrooms, Hybrid Classrooms, to support the work of host teachers and connect new teachers to the opportunities;
- continue to provide job-embedded support for new teachers in classroom visits, co-planning/co-teaching, focused support for teachers in their school teams and individually;

- continue to support Learning Centre based Beginning Teacher committees by co-planning and co-facilitating their activities with new teachers within the Learning Centres;
- continue to collaborate with Learning Centre Coaches to ensure school-based support and job-embedded learning with FSL perspective.

## **Next Steps**

Pending approval of the Board, and within the parameters of the final 2019/20 Budget Plan to be determined by the Board, staff will work to implement the recommendations of this report.

## **Resource Implications**

No additional resources are required to implement these recommendations at this time.

## **Communications Considerations**

Staff will work the Government, Public and Community Relations Department to determine communication needs and support required to inform parents, staff, and students.

## **Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)**

P080 – French as a Second Language

PR597 – French Immersion/Extended French

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A: French as a Second Language Programs Review Summary of Findings

## **From**

Manon Gardner, Associate Director, School Operations and Service Excellence at [manon.gardner@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:manon.gardner@tdsb.on.ca) or by phone at 416-394-2041.

Angela Caccamo, Centrally Assigned Principal, Leadership, Learning and School Improvement at [angela.caccamo@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:angela.caccamo@tdsb.on.ca) or by phone at 416-396-7992.



Toronto District School Board

**TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD  
FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAM  
REVIEW: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

**Research & Development**

Toronto District School Board  
October 2018



Copyright © Toronto District School Board (October 2018)

**TITLE:** TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAM  
**REVIEW:** SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**AUTHORS:** Erhan Sinay, Amie Presley, Sarah Armson, George Tam, Thomas Ryan, Diana Burchell,  
and Christopher Barron

For any other purpose, permission must be requested and obtained in writing from:

Research & Development  
Toronto District School Board  
1 Civic Centre Court, Lower  
Level Etobicoke, ON M9C 2B3

Fax: 416-394-4946

Every reasonable precaution has been taken to trace the owners of copyrighted material and to make due acknowledgement. Any omission will gladly be rectified in future printings.

## TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAM REVIEW: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### INTRODUCTION

Outlined by the Ontario Ministry of Education, the Vision for French Education in Ontario is *Students in English-language school boards have the confidence and ability to use French effectively in their daily lives* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)<sup>1</sup>.

The Ministry of Education supports this vision with three main goals:

1. Increase student confidence, proficiency, and achievement in French as a Second Language (FSL).
2. Increase the percentage of students studying FSL until graduation.
3. Increase student, educator, parent, and community engagement in

Aligned with the overarching vision and subsequent goals are guiding principles intended to foster a common understanding of the importance of FSL in Ontario schools as well as guide policy-makers and educators in their decision making (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)<sup>1</sup>.

Currently at the TDSB, there are over 90,000 students in Core French and 28,000 students in French Immersion/Extended French programs. French Immersion programs are designed for students who do not speak French at home. Currently, the TDSB offers Core French, two-system wide intensive French programs (Early French Immersion and Junior Extended French) as well as other intensive French Programs listed below.

**Early French Immersion:** The Early French Immersion program begins in Senior Kindergarten (SK). It offers 100% French instruction in the classroom until the end of Grade 3, although some specialist subjects may be taught in English. English instruction is gradually introduced beginning in Grade 4 until it becomes a half-day program from Grades 6 to 8. Designated school pathways exist to ensure that students have a continuation of program from the SK entry to the end of Grade 12.

**Junior Extended French:** The Junior Extended French program begins in Grade 4. Students in this program spend 50% of their day in French instruction from Grades 4 to 8 at the Extended French school. The subjects taught in French are French Language Arts, Social Studies, and The Arts. English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science are taught in English. Designated school pathways exist to ensure that students have a continuation of program from the Grade 4 entry to the end of Grade 12.

**Core French:** Core French is mandatory 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 one mandatory Core French credit required in Gr. 9. Students may continue to study Core French through to the end of Grade 12.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. (2013). Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12.

**Hawthorne II Bilingual Alternative:** Children from Junior Kindergarten (JK) to Grade 3 receive daily instruction in French. This consists of 20 minutes per day in JK and gradually increases with each grade to 150 minutes from Grade 4 to Grade 6. Designated school pathways exist to ensure that students have a continuation of program from the JK entry to the end of Grade 12.

**Cosburn Intensive Extended French:** This program begins in Grade 6 and offers an 80% model of French instruction in Grades 6 to 8. Designated school pathways exist to ensure that students have a continuation of program from the Grade 6 entry to the end of Grade 12.

**Middle French Immersion:** The Middle Immersion Program begins in Grade 4 and is available to students in Grade 3 of the English program. It offers 100% French instruction in the classroom until the end of Grade 6, although some specialist subjects may be taught in English. Designated school pathways exist to ensure that students have a continuation of program from the Grade 4 entry to the end of Grade 12.

**Intermediate Extended French (Grade 7 Entry):** The Grade 7 Extended French program offers students who have successfully completed three years of Core French the option to enter into a more intensive program in Grade 7. These students spend approximately 40% of their day in French classes at the Extended French school. Designated school pathways exist to ensure that students have a continuation of program from the Grade 7 entry to the end of Grade 12.

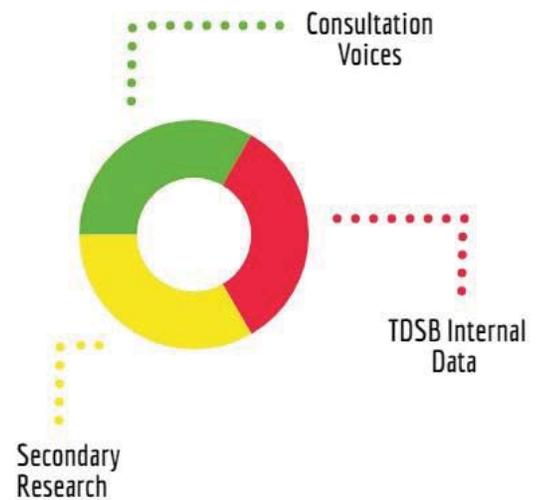
## FRENCH REVIEW BACKGROUND and OBJECTIVES

A review of French programs at the TDSB was approved by the Board in June 2017 and was conducted the subsequent spring 2018. This review examined challenges and successes of all three French programs in the board (French Immersion, Extended French, and Core French) from key stakeholders' perspectives. The overarching goal of the review was to investigate:

*What are the successes and challenges experienced by all stakeholders (i.e., parents, students, TDSB staff, Trustees, community members) involved in the TDSB's French programming?*

This review gathered and triangulated multiple data sources to provide an in-depth, inclusive analysis of the current French programming at the TDSB. Such objectives included:

- Examining the lived experiences of those involved in the TDSB's French programs (Core, Immersion, and Extended) including those that have been able to access the programs and those that have not.
- Measuring how key stakeholders (e.g. parents/guardians, students, staff) report the quality of instruction, inclusive practices, equity of access, staffing, program viability, entry points and reasons for registering and deregistering in the three programs.
- Analyzing how student, staff and parent/guardian characteristics and perceptions interact with each French program (Core, Immersion, and Extended).
- Examining trends and patterns in student demographics, and student learning. Examining enrollment, retention, and attrition patterns as well as student mobility patterns.



## CONSULTATION METHODS and RESPONDENT NUMBERS: STAKEHOLDER VOICES

The consultation component of this review was based on the TDSB's Community Engagement Policy PO78, which was informed by best practices within the area of community engagement. The process also draws on the Director's response to the Enhancing Equity Taskforce Recommendations which directed certain review concerns. To capture representative feedback on the TDSB's French Programming, multiple stakeholders were included as well as given multiple opportunities to comment on the TDSB's French programs. In total, the review captured feedback from **10,535 individuals**. Table 1 outlines who we talked to and, how we talked to them. Table 2 outlines the total number of survey respondents and consultation session participants.

**Table 1: Consultation Details, Who and How?**

Who we talked to?	How we talked to review participants?	
<b>Parents and Community Members</b>	Community Meetings and Online Survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Five community meetings in May:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Danforth Tech CI</li> <li>✓ Etobicoke CI</li> <li>✓ Birchmount Park CI</li> <li>✓ Northview SS</li> <li>✓ John Polanyi CI</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Online survey (May and June) for all guardians and community members</li> </ol>
<b>Students</b>	Student Forum and Online Survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Student Forum in June with Grades 9-12 students from Core, Immersion and Extended programs</li> <li>2. Student online survey (May and June) for all current and former students of TDSB French programs. Note: Grade 6 to 8 students completed the online survey with the support of EICs.</li> </ol>
<b>TDSB Staff</b>	Staff Forum and Online Survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Staff Forum open to French and non-French TDSB teachers</li> <li>2. Online survey (May and June) for all TDSB staff</li> </ol>
<b>Advisory Committee Members</b>	Focus Groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Advisory committee meeting (all advisory groups invited)</li> <li>2. Meeting of the French as a Second Language Advisory Committee (FSLAC)</li> </ol>

**Table 2: Consultation Details, Number of Review Participants**

Respondent	Survey	Consultation Sessions
<b>Student</b>	6,844	81
<b>Parent / Community Member</b>	1,988	146 (Parents and Community Members), 27(advisory committee members)
<b>Staff</b>	1,427	22

**HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS: STAKEHOLDER VOICES**

Rooted at the heart of this review is a community of engaged students, parents, and staff. Stakeholders felt passionately about the challenges they faced and their suggestions for improvement. The successes tell a story where most everyone recognizes the benefits of learning a second language, while the challenges and suggestions offer experiential guidance for considerations moving forward.

**Overall French Program Successes and Strengths (All Programs)**

<p>The vast majority of the Stakeholder community believed that learning a second language is a beneficial educational opportunity.</p>	<p>The majority of TDSB French teachers enjoyed teaching French.</p>	<p>In general, the student population was actively engaged and excited to learn French.</p>
<p>Overall, students had varied opportunities to learn about French language and culture.</p>	<p>In general, students recognized many French teachers as proficient, engaging, and creative.</p>	<p>In general, parents noted appreciation for childcare and/or transportation options.</p>
<p>Overall, stakeholders highlighted the increased enrolment and capacity of French Immersion programs at the TDSB.</p>	<p>The majority of parents were happy with the online application process.</p>	<p>Staff and parents were happy that students had more than one entry points available to be part of French programming, particularly the early entry in senior kindergarten to French Immersion.</p>
<p>The majority of Core, French Immersion and Extended French students felt that everyone was welcome in their French classes.</p>		

**Overall French Program Challenges and Areas for Improvement (All Programs)**

<p>Overall, there was dissatisfaction in the quality of programming and resources/technology, student learning opportunities, assessment practices, and expectations for learning.</p>	<p>In general, students desired a more engaging, collaborative, and communicative focused French class with more opportunities to build their oral proficiency and participate in French extra-curriculars.</p>	<p>Overall, there was a perceived lack of learning intervention supports for students in French noted; this included students with Special Education Needs, English Language Learners, and students with a learning challenge.</p>
<p>In general, stakeholders felt schools lacked proficient French teaching staff (including occasional teacher coverage, support staff, language resource support, Special Education Needs staff, and Administrators).</p>	<p>Overall, stakeholders stated that French Immersion is best started in the primary grades and Extended French entry points should be streamlined. Some , parents and teachers felt there were too many entry points into Intensive French programs and wanted to streamline program offerings in conjunction with strengthening Core French and offering it from K-12.</p>	<p>An overall imbalance of resources across French programs and schools was rased across stakeholder groups.</p>
<p>A need for additional professional learning and opportunities for collaboration, specific to French teachers' needs, were mentioned by the majority of teachers and administration.</p>	<p>Specific to French teachers, many noted that the 'Coach' model of support was not as effective as the 'Instructional Leader' model from previous years.</p>	<p>In general, stakeholders perceived that French Immersion and Extended French excluded large portions of the TDSB population (e.g., students from racialized and marginalized communities) and should look at ways to engage all members of the TDSB.</p>

**Overall Stakeholder Perceptions Across Programs: Quality of Teaching and French Educational Programming**

Stakeholder responses to the survey items presented a clear difference between the experiences of families in Core French and the families in French Immersion (FI) and Extended French (EF). However, in saying that, stakeholder comments in the intensive French programs showed dissatisfaction to many of the same areas for improvement suggested by Core French students, parents, and staff. For example, 51% of Core French students were satisfied with the amount, quality and type of French resources available, while 56% (FI) and 62% (EF) students felt the same. Similarly, 14% of Core French parents were satisfied with resources available, while 34% (FI) and 31% (EF) were satisfied. A pattern of lower agreement levels for Core French respondents to satisfaction questions related to quality of teaching, quality of assessments, distribution of resources, student enjoyment and learning opportunities, use of / and confidence in using the French language was evident.

**Overall Stakeholder Perceptions Across Programs: Inclusive Practices**

A slightly different pattern emerged when examining question items related to inclusive practices. Approximately 80% of students in all French programs felt all students were welcome in the TDSB's French programs, while the percentage was significantly less for parents and staff (Parents - 46% Core, 55% FI/EF) (French Staff - 73% Core, 67% FI/EF). Although a high percentage of students felt everyone was welcome in French programming, less than one-third felt they were represented in French-language

resources. In terms of access to learning supports for students with Special Education Needs, English Language Learners, and students needing support with a learning challenge, all stakeholder groups identified a lack of access across French programs.

In general, stakeholders perceived that French Immersion and Extended French excluded large portions of the TDSB population (e.g., students from racialized and marginalized communities) and should look at ways to engage all members of the TDSB.

### CORE FRENCH

Following the guidance of the Ontario Ministry of Education Ontario educators at the elementary level, teach French so that students can “accumulate a minimum of 600 hours of French instruction by the end of Grade 8. At the secondary level, academic, applied and open courses are offered for Grades 9 and 10; university preparation and open courses are offered for Grades 11 and 12” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 1)<sup>2</sup>.

Core French continues to be not only “a basis of Canadian identity, but also an essential tool for ensuring Canadians’ openness to the world. Through second-language education, the Government offers young Canadians a boost toward wider professional horizons and a key to the international stage” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013a, p. 8)<sup>2</sup>. Core French has a deep past in Ontario that predates confederation (Stern, 1986)<sup>3</sup> with the very first French class taught in an Ontario high school in 1854 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1974)<sup>4</sup>.

Today Core French continues to be the primary mode of French as a Second Language instruction in Canada with more than three quarters of students in Ontario learning French in Core French programs (Canadian Parents for French, 2017)<sup>5</sup>. This position however has been eroding and attrition is an annual concern, as many students do not continue beyond elementary school offerings (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007<sup>6</sup>; Lapkin et al., 2009<sup>7</sup>; Makropoulos, 2007<sup>8</sup>).

Currently more than 90,000 TDSB students in Core French brings challenges and opportunities for improvement. When comparing the TDSB’s Core French and the two Intensive French programs, there tended to be a divide between the two. There was a consistent theme that noted Core French as undervalued; subsequently it does not have the same resource budgets, staffing priorities, teacher professional development opportunities, student learning supports, and overall importance as other subject areas. In a bilingual country, many felt this to be unacceptable.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. (2018). Parents: French as a second language. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/FLS.html>

<sup>3</sup> Stern, H. H. (1986). Second language education in Canada: Innovation, research and policies, *Interchange*, 17(2), 41-53.

<sup>4</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. (1974). Report of the ministerial committee on the teaching of French. Toronto, ON: Author.

<sup>5</sup> Canadian Parents for French. (2017, July). The state of French-second-language education in Canada 2017: Focus on French Language Students [PDF document]. Retrieved from <https://cpf.ca/en/files/State-of-FSL-Education-Report-Final-Web.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Canadian Council on Learning, (2007). Lessons in learning: French Immersion education in Canada. Ottawa, ON: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/LessonsInLearning/May-17-07-French-immersion.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Lapkin, S., Mady, C., & Arnott, S. (2009). Research perspectives on core French: A literature review. *The Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 12(2), 6-30.

<sup>8</sup> Makropoulos, J. (2007). Student engagement and disengagement in French immersion programs: A case study in an Ottawa English Catholic high school. (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. NR52764).

Summary of stakeholders’ challenges and suggestions from the online surveys as well as the consultation sessions and forums specifically on Core French are noted below:

**Challenges and Suggestions Specific to: Core French**

<p><b>Participation in French Programming</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enrollment and Retention:</b> Overall, the lack of interest in learning French was the main reason why students did not continue with Core French after Grade 9.</li> <li>• <b>Entry Point:</b> 47% of students and 66% of parents believed Core French should begin before Grade 4. Many suggested that Core French continue past Grade 9.</li> </ul>
<p><b>French Education</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Quality of Teaching:</b> Not all students reported enjoying learning French: 47% of students in Core French enjoyed learning French.</li> <li>• <b>French Programming:</b> In general, stakeholders felt the Core French program was not fully recognized by the system and requires more system leadership and consistent support at the school level. Many agreed that Core French classrooms should have a dedicated classroom space.</li> <li>• <b>Student Learning:</b> 79% of Core French students never/rarely used French outside of school. Core French students had significantly lower self-reported confidence levels in using the French language than Immersion and Extended students. Only 3 out of 10 Core French students were striving to achieve the Certificate of Achievement.</li> <li>• <b>French and My Future:</b> Few Core French students saw French as personally meaningful or relevant to their future.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inclusive Practices</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Resources:</b> Core French students were the least likely to see themselves represented in French language resources.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Teaching Supports</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assessment Practices:</b> Many Core French teachers expressed a need for standard diagnostic tool which measures students’ French progress at each grade level.</li> <li>• <b>Professional Learning:</b> In general, Core French teachers often felt isolated in their roles. Core French teachers also struggled with classroom management and a disruptive learning environment in the classroom and noted requiring additional professional learning or classroom supports.</li> </ul>

**FRENCH IMMERSION AND EXTENDED FRENCH**

A combined, more detailed summary of stakeholders’ challenges and suggestions from the online surveys as well as the consultation sessions and forums regarding French Immersion and Extended French are noted below<sup>9,10</sup>.

**Challenges and Suggestions Specific to: French Immersion and Extended French**

<p><b>Participation in French Programming</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Enrollment and Retention:</b> The vast majority of Immersion and Extended French students noted three main reasons for leaving French programming which included: French is not offered in specialized programs or in many secondary school locations, students struggled academically, and a lack of interest in learning French.</li> <li>● <b>Entry Point:</b> Approximately half of parent respondents were satisfied with current French Immersion and Extended French entry points. Stakeholders stated that French Immersion is best started in the primary grades and Extended French entry points should be streamlined. Eighty-one percent (81%) of parents agreed French Immersion should begin in Grade 1 or kindergarten, while 45% of students felt the same. 27% of parents agreed that Extended French should start in Grade 4.</li> <li>● Students generally expressed that it was more difficult to enter Immersion or Extended programs at later entry points.</li> <li>● Some parents and staff felt there were too many entry points into intensive French programs and suggested streamlining program offerings in conjunction with strengthening the Core French program and offering it from K-12.</li> <li>● <b>Program Location:</b> Many families struggled with access to conveniently located French programs and suggested a review of current locations of Immersion and Extended programs.</li> <li>○ <b>Secondary School Pathway:</b> Approximately half of French Immersion and Extended French parents were satisfied with their child’s secondary school pathway.</li> </ul>
<p><b>French Education</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>French Programming:</b> Students desired a more engaging, collaborative, and communicative focused French class with more opportunities to build their oral proficiency. Stakeholders suggested that schools should communicate and/or align community resources and activities for students to engage in speaking French outside of the school day.</li> <li>● <b>Student Learning:</b> Students experienced a lack of subject area courses in French to choose from available at the secondary level. Many were frustrated with their learning and dissatisfied with their fluency and proficiency progression in French. Students suggested teachers provide consistent encouragement to speak French outside of the classroom as well as elaborate on fluency expectations as students’ progress through Immersion and Extended programs. The majority of French Immersion and Extended students did not use French outside of school. Less than</li> </ul>

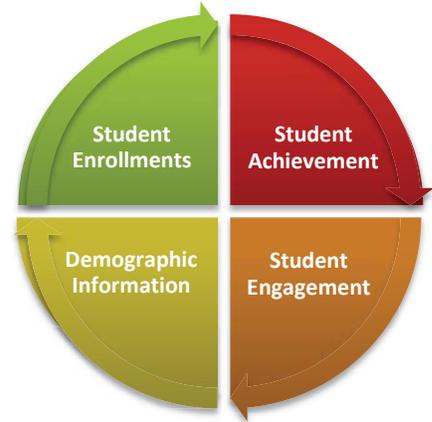
<sup>9</sup> The points in the summary are not recommendations from research - they are a summary of findings and suggestions provided by stakeholders.

<sup>10</sup> French Immersion and Extended French have been combined as many of the same concerns and issues were noted across the two programs.

	<p>sixty-percent of Immersion and Extended students are striving to achieve the TDSB Certificate of Bilingual Studies in French.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents felt there was a lack of communication about expectations for student learning as well as a lack of supports for Anglophone parents to help their children with French work at home.</li> <li>• <b>French and My Future:</b> Little conversation was happening between students and staff around post-secondary pathways and future career opportunities related to learning French.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inclusive Practices</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Resource Distribution:</b> Stakeholders experienced an imbalance of resources across French programs. This was twofold. In all three French programs, a lack of updated and relevant resources was noted. Schools that had multiple programs (i.e., English, Immersion and/or Extended) noted that the English program had much better resources than the French programs at the same site. Less than 25% of parents and staff felt English and French Immersion/Extended French students were well served in dual/triple program schools. Stakeholders recommended re-examining the value of dual/triple program sites versus French centres in terms of resource availability, purchasing power, and distribution.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Teaching Supports</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Assessment Practices:</b> Overall stakeholders noted an incomplete repertoire of consistent, high quality formal French assessments and suggested to investigate options for common French assessment and evaluation tools to be used across the system for Core/Extended French programs, including diagnostic tools to determine fluency and measure student progress at each grade level.</li> <li>• Staff expressed a desire for there to be more common French exemplars, standards for assessment and evaluation, and grade expectations for French proficiency.</li> <li>• <b>Learning Supports:</b> Within the intensive programs, staff reported feeling unclear about the process or guidelines on how to advise families whose children were struggling academically.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other Programming Concerns</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Child care and transportation:</b> Many parents detailed their frustrations with the lack of childcare options available and the challenging commutes to school many students have.</li> </ul>

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FINDINGS: TDSB STUDENT DATA**

The characteristics of students within intensive French programs (Immersion and Extended) differ from the ‘average’ TDSB characteristics in terms of demographic, achievement, and engagement variables. In general, there tends to be more representation of students with demographic characteristics such as high social economic status (SES) and less representation of students who primarily spoke a language other than English at home; these discrepancies tended to be less prominent in the Extended French program. A variety of achievement measures all suggest a pattern of higher achievement among students in the intensive French programs. Likewise, measures of school engagement suggest a marginally lower rate of suspension, absenteeism, and mobility among students in intensive French programs. A summary of key findings from the section on TDSB student data is noted below<sup>11</sup>.



**Student Demographics and Family Background**

<b>Gender</b>	There tended to be a slightly higher representation of female students compared to male students in both French Immersion and Extended French programs compared to the general TDSB demographics. In FSL programs (French Immersion and Extended French), female students currently represent 55-58% of students across the three age brackets, which is an improvement from the 55-63% range in 2011-12. There were minimal differences between Immersion and Extended programs regarding gender. The representation of female students across age brackets, however, suggest the overrepresentation of female students tends to be marginally more prominent in Grades 9-12 in comparison to the other two age brackets.
<b>Language</b>	The French Immersion and Extended French programs tend to differ in their representation of students who primarily spoke a language other than English at home and students born outside of Canada. The Immersion program has an underrepresented population of students speaking other than English at home (34-37%), and students born outside of Canada (6-10%) across all three age brackets. In contrast, students speaking other than English at home (53-59%) and students born outside of Canada (20-21%) are equally represented, or slightly overrepresented, in the Extended program. Both programs tend to have decreased representation of students who arrived in Canada in the past 1-3 years in comparison to the general TDSB demographics. This discrepancy tends to decrease for students who arrived in Canada in the past 4-5 years. Comparisons across the three academic years of data collection suggest that in general these findings have remained

<sup>11</sup> These categories primarily utilize descriptive statistics collected from two rich data sources: (1) the TDSB’s School Information Systems (SIS) as well as the data collected from EQAO assessments. These data sources are an accumulation of three academic years: 2016-2017, 2011-2012 & 2006-2007. These descriptive statistics are furthermore broken down into age brackets: (1) Kindergarten to Grade 6 (K-6), (2) Grade 7 to Grade 8 (7-8) and (3) Grade 9 to Grade 12 (9-12).

	consistent over time.
<b>Students with Special Education Needs</b>	The representation of students with Special Education Needs has improved (i.e., increased) in both the Immersion and Extended programs over the three academic years measured. Nonetheless, students with Special Education Needs remain less represented than the overall TDSB demographics across all three age brackets. Specifically, the current representation of students with Special Education Needs in Immersion (7-10%) and Extended (4-6%) programs tends to be lower than their representation in the TDSB as a whole (14-22%).
<b>Student Racial Background</b>	The percentage of students enrolled in intensive French programs varied by student racial background. Minimal differences in percentages were found among students with an Indigenous, Latin American, and Southeast Asian racial background compared to the general TDSB demographics. Students with a White racial background, however, tended to be overrepresented in the Immersion program (48-50%) and, to a lesser extent, the Extended French program (34-35%) compared to the TDSB as a whole (26-31%). The representation of White students in Immersion has marginally improved (i.e., decreased) across the three academic years measured. Both the Immersion and Extended programs have an overrepresentation of student with Mixed racial backgrounds and underrepresentation of students with South Asian racial backgrounds. This pattern was more profound in the French Immersion program than the Extended French program. In contrast, students with an East Asian racial background were slightly underrepresented in the French Immersion program (9-10%), but more represented in the Extended French program (13-20%) compared to the general TDSB demographics (12-16%).
<b>Social Economic Status (SES) Characteristics</b>	The Immersion and Extended French programs tended to differ in their representation of SES and household characteristics, with more proportionate representation being found among the Extended program. The French Immersion program tended to have a higher percentage of students who have parents with a very high SES (50-63%), a university-level education (74-83%), and had parents who were both born in Canada (37-44%). In contrast, students in the Extended program had more proportionate amounts of family with a very high SES (38-41%), parents who have a university level education (62-76%), and parents who were both born in Canada (24-37%), while still being slightly overrepresented compared to the general TDSB demographics.

**Student Achievement and Engagement**

<b>Student Achievement</b>	Student achievement was measured through report card grades, EQAO and OSSLT results, and credit accumulation. A comparison of intensive French programs to the average TDSB achievement for each age bracket showed a higher percentage of achievement among students in the intensive French programs. The percentage of students who received a level 3 or 4 on their report card in reading, writing, and mathematics was higher in French Immersion (73-87%) and Extended French (83-89%) in comparison to the average TDSB achievement (65-79%). Student achievement in the Extended program tended to be slightly higher than the Immersion program in reading and writing among report card results, but remained similar when using EQAO, OSSLT, and credit accumulation as the achievement measure. Mathematics achievement among both report card and EQAO and OSSLT results remained fairly similar across both FSL programs, but were higher than the TDSB average. On the whole, there was consistently higher achievement across both Immersion and Extended French programs, which has tended to be fairly consistent across the three
----------------------------	---

	academic years measured.
<b>Student Engagement</b>	Students in the Immersion and Extended programs were compared on levels of school engagement, as measured by rates of absenteeism, suspension and mobility in Grades 9-12. Although the difference in percentages remained small, students in FSL programs consistently had lower levels on all three measures compared to the average TDSB rates. For example, the absenteeism rates were slightly lower in French Immersion (6.5%) and Extended French (5.2%) compared to the TDSB (8.4%). Both programs demonstrated a slight decrease in suspension and mobility rates across the three academic years measured.

**Enrollment and Retention Patterns**

<b>Enrollment and Retention Patterns</b>	<p>Overall, there has been an increase in the enrollment in FSL programs in the TDSB from 2002-03 to 2017-18.</p> <p>Similarly, there was a tendency for an improvement in year to year retention when comparing the older cohorts (e.g., 2002-03) to the most recent cohorts (e.g., 2017-18).</p> <p>On average, male retention was slightly lower than female retention, especially in the Early French Immersion, Junior Extended French, and Intermediate Extended French programs.</p> <p>Some grades tended to have higher or lower levels of attrition overall. The most prominent attrition occurred between Grade 8 and Grade 9.</p>
--	---

**HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS: RESEARCH LITERATURE**

Many of the challenges presented through stakeholder voices, student data, and enrollment and retention data are well known by research scholars. Concerns acknowledged within the literature that impact community stakeholders and French programs at the TDSB include: student enrollment, staffing and recruitment of French teachers, realistic fluency expectations of French programs, inconsistent curriculum implementation, lack of professional development for French teachers, Core French a la carte model, and a lack of remedial learning support in French programs. Table 3 details several challenges for French language teaching in Canada that are also found in Ontario noted by field scholars.

**Table 3: Challenges Facing FSL Education Programs<sup>12</sup> Noted in the Literature**

<b>Challenges Facing FSL Education Programs</b>	
Lack of appropriate resources (books at the appropriate interest level are too complex linguistically)	Published books are geared to Francophone learners
Teachers need to have had training in language-teaching methodology, and they need to be proficient in French	Shortage of qualified teachers
Because education is provincial/territorial, it is difficult to assess the L2 learning situation in	Transferability of students from program to program within and across provinces/territories; common

<sup>12</sup> Adapted from the Council of Ministers of Education (2015).

Canada; lack of tools for measuring proficiency, especially speaking	terminology needed across provinces/territories; lack of common standards across Canada
Working conditions for Core French teachers; marginalization of Core French	High turnover of teachers; decline in time allocated to Core French; recognition of FSL as mainstream (as important as math)
Student retention in programs	Lack of planning/continuity; no provincial/territorial requirement for FSL
Lack of tools for L2 assessment, particularly speaking	Speaking tends not to be assessed in the early grades

## CONCLUSIONS and NEXT STEPS

Provincially, there are challenges, tensions and solutions to be found across school boards. In recent years, many school boards have conducted their own French language program reviews. The experiences of others are not different from those of the TDSB.

For instance, a “majority of boards expressed the challenge of finding qualified and language competent teachers” (Upper Grand District School Board, 2017, p. 4)<sup>13</sup>. The Halton Catholic District School Board has suggested the shortage of qualified teachers is more of a “crisis” than a challenge<sup>14</sup>. Some Boards are limiting plans for French programming until the hiring of French teachers is completed and/or current permanent qualified teachers accept a position teaching French. Looking to other school boards for approaches to improvement and policy changes is merited.

Going back to 2006 when the previous French programs review was conducted<sup>15</sup>, many of the same themes mentioned exist today. French programs need: system leadership and support, consistent support at the school level, additional learning supports provided to students in French programs, and additional qualified French resources.

This current French programs review provides extensive stakeholder perceptual data, participation trends, research literature which all provide extensive evidence for an informed discussion about advancing the improvement efforts of Core French and the French Immersion/Extended programs. To move forward, the board must examine the internal challenges and conditions within the system that align with stakeholder challenges before moving forward with recommendations.

This French programs review drew on theories of developmental evaluation, which supports the process of innovation within an organization and its activities (Gamble, 2008)<sup>16</sup>. As such, it is important moving forward to consider evaluative thinking into the process of developing recommendations and intentional change (Gamble, 2008)<sup>16</sup>. In the context of the TDSB, this resembles continued engagement with evidence along the journey (such as conversing with stakeholders, examining student data, examining best practices and case studies), and a collaborative approach to working through problems and challenges.

---

<sup>13</sup> Upper Grand District School Board. (2017, June). Report of the secondary French review committee: Planning Department Memo 2017-004. Retrieved from <https://www.ugdsb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Report-of-the-Secondary-FSL-Review-Committee-2017-06-13-3.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Halton District School Board. (2009, Winter). Comparing the student achievement and learning experiences of elementary French immersion students in dual-track and single-track environments. Burlington, ON: Department of Research and Accountability. Retrieved from <https://bc-yk.cpf.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/Compare-achievement-elementary-Dual-vs-Single.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Gossling. (2006). Review of French Immersion and Extended French Programs. Retrieved from <http://tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/Leadership/Ward7/Gossling%20Report%2002-06-0905.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Gamble, J. (2008). A Developmental Evaluation Primer. The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation.

**Blank Page**