

Date: April 9, 2018  
To: Board of Trustees  
From: Director of Education  
Subject: French Immersion Program Review

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Type of Report:  Decision-Making  
 Monitoring  
 Incidental Information concerning day-to-day operations

Type of Information:  Information for Board of Trustees Decision-Making  
 Monitoring Information of Board Policy **XX XXX**  
 Information only of day-to-day operational matters delegated to the CEO

Origin: (cite Education Act and/or Board Policy or other legislation)

- *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2013*, available at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/frameworkFLS.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/frameworkFLS.pdf)
- *The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language – Core, Grades 4–8; Extended, Grades 4–8; Immersion, Grades 1–8, 2013*, available at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/fsl18-2013curr.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/fsl18-2013curr.pdf)
- *The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language – Core, Extended, and Immersion French, Grades 9 to 12, 2014*, available at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/fsl912curr2014.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/fsl912curr2014.pdf)
- APA001 Admissions to Elementary Catholic Schools – [https://www.wcdsb.ca/ap\\_memos/PDF/APA001.pdf](https://www.wcdsb.ca/ap_memos/PDF/APA001.pdf)
- APO012 Transportation [https://www.wcdsb.ca/AP\\_Memos/PDF/APO012.pdf](https://www.wcdsb.ca/AP_Memos/PDF/APO012.pdf)

Policy Statement and/or Education Act/other Legislation citation:

*Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* (2014)  
*School Effectiveness Framework* (2013)

Alignment to the MYSP:

Strategic Priority: Building Capacity to Lead, Learn & Live Authentically

Strategic Direction: Our decisions, actions and stewardship of resources are evidence-based and responsive

Goal: To commit to evidence based, responsive, timely and professionally executed planning and gap analysis in all budgetary decisions

Goal: To ensure all program offerings are tied to student need and stakeholder interests, and that they will equip students to become globally-engaged responsible citizens

Background/Comments:

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Waterloo Catholic District School Board has undertaken a review of its French Immersion program with the specific purpose of developing a proactive plan to set the Board up for success. The purpose of the review was to set a framework for future accommodation decisions, French Immersion program growth, and to ensure that a quality program is offered to all students, regardless of their program.

The following problem statement was used to frame discussions:

*How should the French Immersion program grow and be accommodated over the long term, while ensuring that all students have access to quality programming?*

To align with the problem statement, the following goals were established.

1. To articulate the WCDSB values and beliefs regarding French Immersion program delivery.
2. To ensure that students in French Immersion receive equitable access to quality program.
3. To create a long term French Immersion delivery plan taking into account all WCDSB students and families. The delivery plan should respect fiscal and accommodation realities, the Board's Long Term Accommodation Plan, and provide a predictable and transparent method of locating programs.

A French Immersion (FI) Review Committee consisting of parents and staff was struck to consider the following factors:

- School organization (grade structure, single track, dual track)
- Entry point
- French Immersion boundaries (and registration priorities)
- Transportation (as it relates to school organization)
- Criteria for selecting new FI sites

This report summarizes the findings of the French Immersion Review Committee and the recommendations of staff regarding how to move forward with French Immersion growth and expansion. The recommendations outlined later in this report have been presented to, and accepted by senior management and will serve to provide guidance to support decision-making in future years.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

The WCDSB began French Immersion in the 2015/16 school year and the program is currently offered at three schools: Sir Edgar Bauer, St. Anne Kitchener, and Our Lady of Fatima. The following table shows each school's FI service area ("boundary"), grade offering, and number of FI classes.

School	Service Area	Grades	No. of Classes
Sir Edgar Bauer	Waterloo, Wellesley, Woolwich	Gr.1, Gr.2, Gr.3	4
St. Anne (K)	Kitchener, Wilmot	Gr.1, Gr.2, Gr.3	6
Our Lady of Fatima	Cambridge, North Dumfries	Gr.1, Gr.2	2

## 3.0 PROCESS & CONSULTATION

The French Immersion Review began in October 2017 with presentations to school council at each French Immersion school. A committee was established in November 2017. The FI Review Committee was comprised of:

- Principals (& Vice-Principals) of each French Immersion School (4)
- Superintendent of French Immersion (1)
- Superintendent of Corporate Services (1)
- Manager of Planning (1) (Chair)
- French Consultant (1)
- One FI parent and one English track parent from each FI school (6)

### 3.1 Committee's Work

November 2017

- Reviewed background information provided by staff (see Appendix A: French Immersion Backgrounder)
- Finalized the public survey, which included sections directed at parents, staff, and community members

January 2018

- Reviewed the results of the public survey (see Appendix B: Public Survey Results)
- Determined a preferred priority related to accommodation, to keep front of mind through all decisions
- Prioritized four accommodation solutions to deal with enrolment pressure and completed a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) for each
- Assessed the merits of maintaining the current Grade 1 entry point versus moving to a Kindergarten entry point for French Immersion

February 2018

- Brainstormed and prioritized criteria to use when identifying schools for new FI programs
- Provided feedback on geographic distribution of future FI programs
- Discussed registration priorities

March 2018

- Held public open houses at each of the FI schools. (see Appendix C: Display Boards)
- Reviewed all feedback received through the public open houses, online feedback form, and email (see Appendix D: Public Feedback)
- Finalized recommendations to board staff

### 3.2 Public Consultation

October/November 2017 - School Council Presentations

- A presentation was given to each school council to discuss French Immersion and the review process. School council meetings are open to all members of the school community.

November/December 2017 - Public Survey

- The public survey was open from November 30th to December 15th.
- 388 Responses were received.
- Questions were directed to parents of children in the English Stream and French Immersion, to staff members of WCDSB (both teaching and other staff), and the broader community.

- The information from this survey was used to help the FI Review Committee narrow down options regarding accommodation priorities, accommodation solutions, entry point, school organization, and classroom organization (program delivery via one or two teachers).

March 2018 - Public Open Houses (see Appendix C: Display Boards and Appendix D: Public Feedback)

- Open houses were conducted at each of the three French Immersion schools.
- The invitation to attend these meetings was extended and advertised to all WCDSB schools.

Location	Cambridge - Our Lady of Fatima	Kitchener - St. Anne (K)	Waterloo - Sir Edgar Bauer
Date	March 6, 2018	March 8, 2018	March 7, 2018
Attendance*	16	35	20

\*Note: Attendance numbers are based on the number of people who signed in. In some cases, only one person per family signed in.

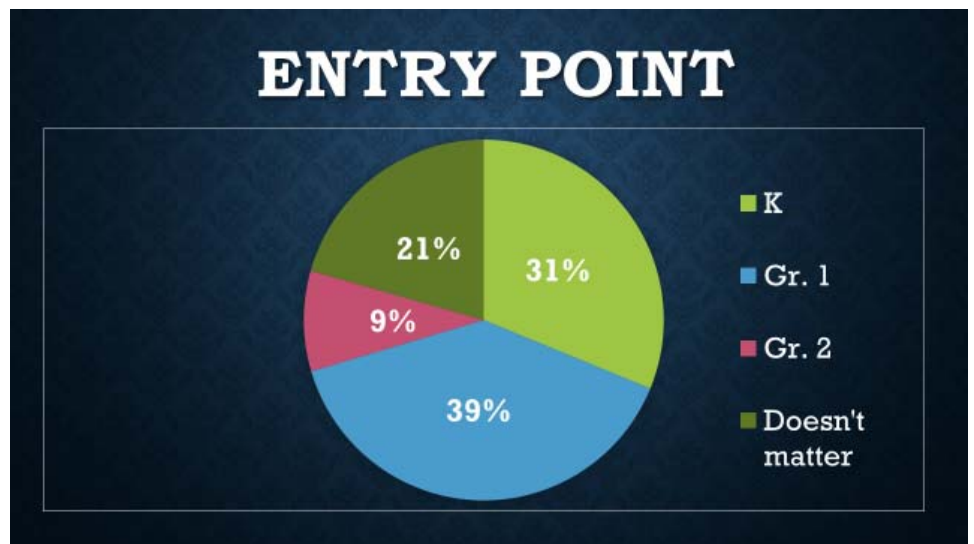
- The FI Review Committee’s work and draft recommendations were shared on display boards. Topics included: scope of work, priorities, strategies to deal with enrolment pressure (accommodation solutions) including the SWOT analysis, criteria for selecting new FI sites, and registration priorities.
- Members of the public were invited to share feedback in two ways: through an online feedback form, and by posting sticky notes to answer specific questions about the information. In addition, the board received feedback via email which was shared with the FI Review Committee.
- All public open house material was posted on the board’s website and the online feedback form was available on the website until March 16, 2018.

#### 4.0 ENTRY POINT

WCDSB’s current entry point for the French Immersion program is Grade 1. However, other boards offer entry points in Kindergarten, Grade 2, Grade 4, and Grade 5, and about a dozen boards offer multiple entry points. It is important to note that a Grade 4 or 5 entry point would not meet the minimum required hours for French Immersion in Ontario, and therefore, is actually Extended French.

A Kindergarten entry point is offered by 38 school boards in Ontario. The FI Review Committee discussed the merits of moving to a Kindergarten entry point and included a question on the public survey to help them understand parental preferences.

The survey results (see adjacent graph) indicated no clear preference. The results were divided fairly evenly between Kindergarten and Grade 1 with a slight preference for Grade 1. The next largest response was “Doesn’t matter”.



Further research was conducted to determine which entry point would be better for students.

The research indicated that oral fluency is strengthened by an early start to second language learning. However, it does not identify any differences specifically between Kindergarten and Grade 1.

Furthermore, a Grade 1 entry point allows students two years of education prior to beginning French Immersion. This enables teachers to identify early predictors of achievement and risk related to speech, language, and literacy before introducing a second language. If a second language is introduced in Kindergarten, then it could delay this identification process.

Since there is no evidence or preference to suggest a Kindergarten entry would benefit students any more than a Grade 1 entry point, the FI Review Committee recommended to staff that the entry point remain as Grade 1.

## 5.0 ACCOMMODATION

As the French Immersion program grows to the full complement of Grades 1 to 8, and as enrolment evolves in the English stream, schools may be faced with enrolment pressure (where enrolment exceeds the school's capacity).

Given that French Immersion is an optional program and the English stream is mandatory, it was important for the committee to advise on its top priority related to accommodation. This priority will be helpful when dealing with future enrolment pressures involving FI.

The three options the committee considered were:

- Keep students in the immersion program at one school from grade 1-8
- Ensure space and services for students in English stream first
- Offer 2 immersion classes per grade level

The committee agreed that running the French Immersion program for Grades 1 to 8 at the same school should be the top priority. The feedback from the public survey supported this.

### 5.1 Accommodation Strategies

The committee considered the following accommodation strategies to deal with enrolment pressure.

- Add portables
- Change boundaries
- Open a new dual track school (add FI to another school)
- Open a new single track FI school
- Limit the number of Grade 1 French Immersion classes at each school to one
- Spread FI over multiple schools (e.g. Grades 1-4 at one school and Grades 5- 8 at a different school)
- End the FI program in 2019 and merge students into the English stream
- Move the existing FI program to another school that can accommodate the dual track model
- Phase in a single-track French Immersion model at an existing school (English stream students would attend a different school)

After much discussion, the committee felt that the first four strategies had merit and put together a SWOT analysis for each. The full SWOT analysis was shared at the public open houses and can be found in Appendix C.

The committee recognized that many of the accommodation strategies could involve changing boundaries. Therefore, changing boundaries was analyzed within the context of moving English stream students to a different school. This was informed by the priority to keep the French Immersion program at one school for Grades 1 to 8. Because WCDSB currently offers FI at only three schools, there is no opportunity to move a portion of FI students to another school (e.g.

can't move 5 FI students per grade to another school because there's no class to merge it with). Therefore, boundary changes as a stand-alone strategy at this point in time would be for English students only.

The Board needs several strategies to deal with enrolment pressure and one strategy may be better suited for a particular school or circumstance than another. There may also be varying degrees of enrolment pressure which would require several accommodation strategies (e.g. portables may be added to a site before a boundary change is considered). Therefore, accommodation strategies were not ranked in terms of priority.

In the committee's final deliberations, they recommended removing "open a new single track FI school" from the priority list. They agreed that a single track school may have merit in the future when the FI program is more widespread and the board has reached a full grade complement in the FI program.

Therefore, it is recommended that adding portables, changing boundaries, and opening new dual track schools should be considered before other accommodation strategies.

## 6.0 EXPANSION

The Board would like to expand its French Immersion program in a way that is ambitious yet pragmatic. The committee was tasked with identifying general geographical areas to add new FI programs. They recommended that the east side of Waterloo, the west side of Kitchener-Waterloo, and the area south of highway 401 in Cambridge be considered.

The FI Review Committee brainstormed potential criteria to use when selecting a location/school to open an FI program and determined that the following criteria should be considered first.

- Empty/underutilized space—sufficient space within the school to accommodate additional students over time (empty classrooms, declining enrolment, etc.)
- Traffic impacts on the school - surrounding road network, drop-off areas, sufficient parking, opportunities for active school travel (walking, biking, etc.)
- Easily accessible location—close to major roads/highway/transit because FI serves an area larger than its school boundary.

Other criteria that were considered included:

- Residential growth (long term planning)
- Interest in the FI program
- Brand new schools as potential FI sites
- Will it help to support a secondary school FI program?
- Ability to handle portables or an addition
- Equity—offer FI in a range of neighbourhoods
- Will it alleviate enrolment pressure at an existing FI school?

Based on the geographic distribution and the site selection criteria, staff are recommending that French Immersion be added to the following schools.

Year	School	Geographic Area
2019	St. Luke	Waterloo - East Side
2019	Holy Rosary	Kitchener-Waterloo - West side
2020	St. Peter	Cambridge - South of 401
2020	New Huron Brigadoon School	Kitchener - West side
TBD	New Southeast Galt School	Cambridge - South of 401

## 7.0 REGISTRATION

WCDSB is recommending expansion of its FI program. Recognizing that existing FI schools serve the municipality, the addition of new sites will require review of the registration process in terms of catchment areas and priorities.

The committee heavily debated prioritizing students living within the school’s English stream boundary. This method has many merits, the primary ones being accommodation and traffic congestion. However, because WCDSB currently has three FI schools serving the entire Region of Waterloo, the committee felt that FI should be available to more than those students at the three schools. As the FI program becomes more widespread, the Board should once again review the merits of prioritizing students living with the English stream boundary.

No changes are recommended to the registration process itself. However, the French Immersion “boundaries” will need to be modified as new FI programs open.

Since each new FI program will begin in Grade 1, no students will be required to change schools as a result of French Immersion “boundary” adjustments.

Younger siblings of students attending the French Immersion program at a current site, would be grandparented to current FI boundaries in the interest of keeping families together at the same school. Families who prefer not to have a younger sibling grandparented to current FI boundaries may submit a request to attend the French Immersion program within the newly formed French Immersion boundaries, and these requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

## 8.0 TRANSPORTATION

WCDSB does not provide transportation (busing) for French Immersion students outside of the school’s English stream boundary.

Transportation was to be considered by the FI Review Committee within the context of school organization (e.g. single track school, Grades 1-4 at School A and Grades 5-8 at School B).

The committee preferred to prioritize offering French Immersion to Grades 1-8 at one school. Therefore, transportation was not contemplated within the context of distributing the program across multiple schools.



A single track French Immersion school was identified as a potential accommodation solution. Within the SWOT analysis, the committee recognized the opportunity to explore centralized bussing. However, the committee did not feel that a single track school would be a viable option at this point in time.

Staff further explored the ability to provide bussing to all FI students (not including those within walking distance of the school). However, it was determined that transportation would be complicated and costly given the large geographic areas that French Immersion schools serve and the fact that French Immersion is not yet offered across all grades (all new sites will start in Grade 1 so there's no ability to bus students to a school close to where they live unless they are in Grade 1).

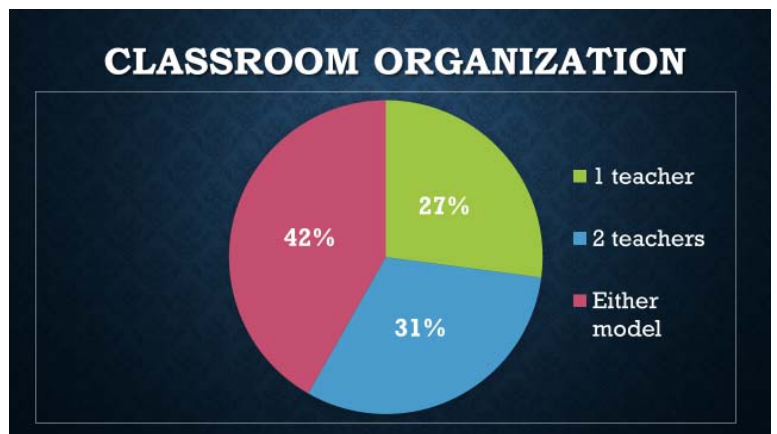
Recognizing that traffic congestion around a school may be amplified by the addition of the FI program, Board staff will work with municipalities and the school communities to identify alternate drop-off/pick-up points to alleviate traffic congestion and safety issues immediately adjacent to the school.

## 9.0 STAFFING

Staffing of the French Immersion program is a challenge across the province. The growth rate of FI is outpacing the availability of French teachers and the ability to recruit high quality French teachers. This has resulted in FI classes with no French teacher or underqualified teachers well into the school year (at other boards).

### 9.1 One Teacher vs. Two Teacher model

WCDSB currently uses a one classroom teacher model, meaning that both English and French subjects are taught by one homeroom teacher. However, due to staffing challenges this year, one school is piloting a collaborative model used in other boards in which English and French teaching partners have a shared responsibility for instruction in two classes. For example, French Teacher A is with Class 1 in the morning, and Class 2 in the afternoon, while English Teacher B is with Class 2 in the morning and Class 1 in the afternoon. Both teachers have a shared responsibility for literacy instruction in both classrooms.



The committee reviewed staffing within the context of the one-teacher vs. two-teacher models and did not have a strong preference for one or the other. The public survey supported this. The committee preferred to leave this decision to the board and schools to determine the model that best serves the needs of the Board/school. Therefore, staff is recommending that the teaching model used in each school be decided on a case-by-case basis, based on the needs of the site.

### 9.2 Hiring Process & Qualifications

Currently, French Immersion teachers are hired in a similar manner to a new school opening - a centralized interview process in advance of regular postings.

French Immersion postings will be added to the first posting for both French and English teachers. This means that interviews will be conducted at the school rather than centrally.



French assessments are used to determine the candidate teacher's level of French. This will continue to be done centrally and will be kept on file so that repeat assessments are not necessary.

WCDSB will now accept the submission of a DELF B1 level certification (Diplôme D'études de Langue Française) in lieu of the French assessment.

## 10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are provided to Executive Council for their consideration and approval.

That the Board update its French Immersion Plan (this plan) by 2023, including a plan related to secondary French Immersion.

That the entry point for French Immersion remain as Grade 1.

That the Board prioritizes offering French Immersion at the same school for Grades 1 to 8.

### **Accommodation**

That to address enrolment pressure, portables, boundary changes, and opening new French Immersion sites are contemplated before any other accommodation solution.

That the following criteria be prioritized when selecting schools for French Immersion:

- Empty/underutilized space
- Traffic impacts on school
- Easily accessible location (close to highways/major road)

That the following new sites be considered for French Immersion:

- Holy Rosary - 2019
- St. Luke - 2019
- Huron Brigadoon - 2020
- St. Peter - 2020
- New southeast Galt school - TBD

That French Immersion boundaries are modified to reflect the addition of new schools.

### **Registration**

That the registration process remains the same until additional sites make prioritizing in-boundary students more practical.

### **Transportation**

That the Board continues to allow students to attend the French Immersion program from outside of the school's English boundary, subject to parents/guardians providing their own transportation. (No bussing will be provided for French Immersion)

That the Board work with municipalities and the school community to identify alternate drop-off/pick-up points to alleviate traffic congestion and safety issues immediately adjacent to the school.

### **Staffing**

That a two-teacher model be used wherever possible for straight grade French Immersion classes and a one-teacher model be used wherever possible for split grade classes.

That the postings for French Immersion be included in the first round of postings in the transfer process.

That French assessments for teaching staff continue to be done centrally and kept on file so no repeat assessment is necessary, and that DELF B1 level certification (Diplôme D'études de Langue Française) be accepted in lieu of the French assessment.

## 11.0 CONCLUSION

The French Immersion Review Final Report is the result of authentic collaboration among various educational stakeholder throughout the Waterloo Catholic District School Board. It reflects, not only the priorities and concerns of Board and parent leaders closely connected to the French Immersion program, but, as well, the opinions (via public meetings and online surveys) of the broader community. The input reflected in this report will provide invaluable reference points as the French Immersion program grows in the WCDSB.

Recommendation:

This report is presented to the Board as information.

Prepared/Reviewed By:     Loretta Notten, Director of Education  
                                      John Klein, Superintendent of Learning  
                                      Shesh Maharaj, Executive Superintendent of Corporate Services  
                                      Lindsay Ford, Manager of Planning  
                                      Jennifer Kruithof, FSL Consultant

\*Bylaw 5.2 "where the Board of Trustees receives from the Director of Education a monitoring report that flows from a responsibility delegated to the Director under Board Policy – *except where approval is required by the Board of Trustees on a matter delegated by policy to the Board* – the minutes of the Meeting at which the Report is received shall expressly provide that the Board has received and approved of the Report as an action consistent with the authority delegated to the Director, subject in all instances to what otherwise actually occurred."