



Date: May 31, 2021
To: Board of Trustees
From: Director of Education
Subject: 2020/21 French Immersion Review – Final Report

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 **IV 010 “Facilities/Accommodations”**
- ☐ Information only of day-to-day operational matters delegated to the CEO

Origin:

The recommendations of the 2017/18 French Immersion Program review concluded that a further update of the board's plans for French Immersion (FI) be completed by 2023, including a plan related to secondary FI. In May 2020, the Long Term Accommodation Plan identified undertaking an update in 2020/21. In October 2020, the 2020/21 French Immersion Review was initiated.

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

IV 010 - Facilities/Accommodations

The CEO shall not permit the establishment of facilities that lack physical signs of our Catholic faith and allowance for sacred space; limit students from fully experiencing the curriculum and do not have relationship with the community.

Alignment to the MYSP:

Promote a culture of belonging and respect, that supports success for all:

- Equitable access to learning opportunities

BACKGROUND/COMMENTS:

The initiation report established that the 2020/21 French Immersion Review Committee (FI Review Committee) would be responsible for providing guidance and advice to the Executive Committee and Board of Trustees related to French Immersion programming and future accommodation issues. Specifically, the following factors were to be re-confirmed or addressed in this review:

- Elementary school organization (i.e., grade structure, single track, dual track)
- Grade 1 entry point
- Approach to Grade 1 application for FI
- Attendance of siblings in FI school



- Impact of transportation, as it relates to school organization
- Establish strategy for delivery of FI courses for grades 9 to 12 to meet secondary FI certificate requirements
- Review and confirm criteria for selecting new elementary FI location(s)
- Identify areas of future consideration for new elementary FI location(s)
- Establish criteria for selecting new secondary FI location(s)

French Immersion Review Committee

The French Immersion Review Committee was comprised of the following members. Parent representatives were selected according to the selection criteria listed in the initiation report, based on applications received:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| • Jennifer Passy | Co-Chair, Manager of Planning |
| • Jennifer Kruithof | Co-Chair, FSL Consultant |
| • John Klein | Superintendent of Learning, Program & School Effectiveness |
| • Nadine Bachour | Parent representative, English voice |
| • Christine Barbeau | Parent representative, French voice |
| • Jennifer Irwin | Parent representative, French voice |
| • Barbara Morrison | Parent representative, English voice |
| • Krista Nolan | Parent representative, French voice |
| • Doreen Weise | Parent representative, English voice |
| • Krista Mooney | Elementary, Principal, Sir Edgar Bauer |
| • Philip Bruni | Elementary, Principal, St. Anne Kitchener |
| • Rob Purificato | Elementary, Principal, Our Lady of Fatima |
| • John Dietrich | Secondary, Principal, St. Mary's |
| • Glenda Leusink | Secondary, Principal, St. David |

The Committee met generally in accordance with the review schedule identified in the initiation report. Meeting #5 was rescheduled due to March Break being rescheduled to April.

Public Consultation

Public Meeting

On March 25, 2021, a Teams Live public meeting was broadcast. The meeting materials were available on-line prior to and remain available to view on the review webpage. The public meeting presentation provided an overview of the scope of the review, timeline, public input opportunities, the committee's draft recommendations on FI school organization, application process, treatment of sibling, transportation, site selection criteria and secondary course selection (Appendix A).

The Teams Live meeting was attended by 9 committee members, 9 staff, 1 Trustee and 15 members of the public.

ThoughtExchange

A ThoughtExchange was launched on March 1 and ran until March 31, 2021. The summary report on the exchange is available [online](#).

The exchange asked: What are some important perspectives we need to consider as we continue to expand access to French Immersion in the district?

There were 76 participants in the exchange who shared 52 thoughts and 544 star ratings. 48 participants (63%) identified as parent/guardians, 25 (33%) as staff members, 3 (4%) as community member or other. Of the parent/guardian participants, it was an even split between those with children in FI and without.



By frequency, the most popular thoughts were about interest in expanding FI to more areas in the district, prioritizing attracting and retaining French qualified teachers, expanding access to FI in existing locations and providing more student supports in French (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Total Number of Thoughts

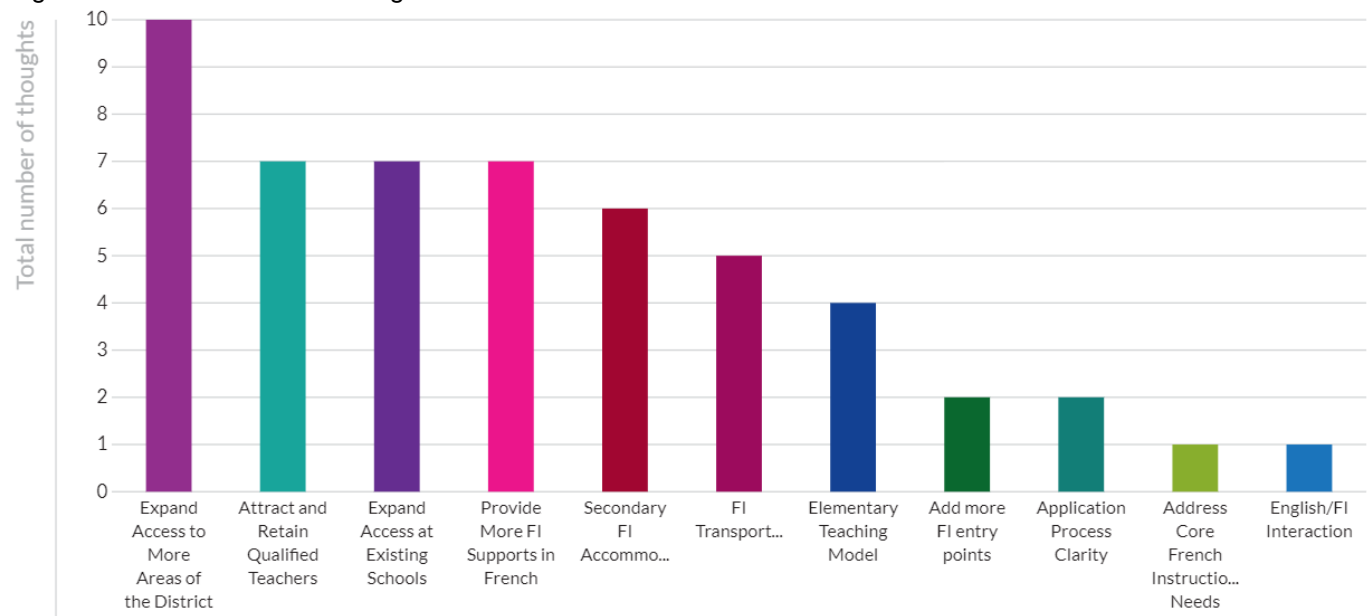
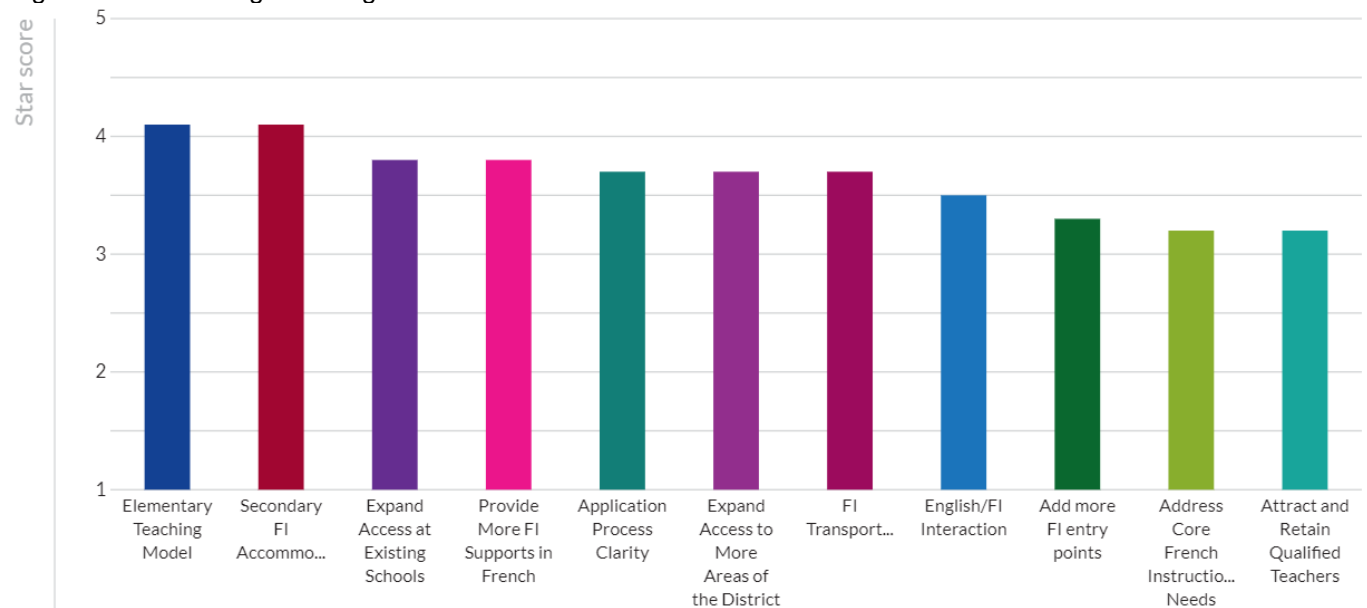


Figure 2 illustrates the star rating of thoughts. The highest rates thoughts focused on the elementary teaching model, secondary FI accommodation, expanded access to FI in existing schools, and providing more support for FI students.

Figure 2 - Star Rating of Thoughts



A more detailed examination of the elementary teaching model thoughts identified opportunity to clarify how the elementary program is staffed. The ideal is for a two-teacher team in elementary, allowing focussed instruction in

French, by French Qualified teachers. However, it is not always possible, based on cohort sizes to balance classes in this manner. The determination of team-teaching partners is a school-level decision made in consultation with the teaching staff. Cohort sizes influence how many classes and teachers are required. There are factors which influence the decisions around staffing and the ideal configuration is not always achievable.

Quality and consistency If you are going to have the 2 teacher team (French/English). Keep it like this for all grades! Parent/Guardian

As a French Immersion teacher, I would like to have a say as to who will be my teaching partner as we are adopting the 2 teacher model. Because I have been blessed twice with 2 incredible working partners that had the same teaching philosophy as I. Why leave it to chance! Elementary Staff Member

With 1 cohort per school per year, as students get to junior, class sizes increase & split classes occur. Teachers can have up to 4 grades in 2 splits Teachers can't be their most effective teaching 4 curriculums to 4 age groups! A max of 2 grades should be allotted. Elementary Staff Member

The first cohort of secondary FI students will start high school in September 2023. A focus of this review has been on identifying course configuration and location criteria for the selection of secondary location(s) for FI. The ThoughtExchange highlighted the intense interest in determining this direction.

Parents need to know what high schools will offer French Immersion. Parent/Guardian

My daughter will be in the first cohort to graduate grade 8 in FI, what are the plans for high school? If the plans are not concrete I will send my daughter to KCI and then three years later my son will also attend KCI. You will lose students. Parent/Guardian

Students should have French immersion option in high school. Parent/Guardian

The high school is close. I.e.- St. David. St. David seems like a great school already and it has room to grow with population. It's important because our 3 kids would stop doing french immersion after grade 8. St. David hopefully is the school that will have Secondary French. Parent/Guardian

The board has benefited from sustained interest in FI since 2015. Parents/guardians continue to express interest in adding more FI sites throughout the district and specifically adding FI capacity to existing sites was a reoccurring priority for many participants. The board must consider the immediate and long term impact of adding FI capacity at existing sites.

Increasing FI enrolment reduces the efficiency in the operation of our schools and places earlier accommodation pressure on those sites, which may drive portable placement. Year to year recommendations regarding Grade 1 enrolment respects the enrolment trends in schools, the sites' abilities to accommodate that enrolment and any temporary accommodation needs.

Focus on offering more FI spots at present FI schools, before opening FI in new locations. Expanding this program at the current FI schools will give access to more people on the wait list, and allow for more grade 1 classes to be offered. Run multiple grade 1 classes where there is interest. Parent/Guardian

As siblings of FI students take up more spots in grade 1 classes, offer a 2nd grade 1 class to accommodate more new families. My child didn't get a spot at Holy Rosary & we feel like we have no real access to FI. Please consider running 2 classes for a more equitable access for new families. Parent/Guardian

Since the classes are far more likely to shrink over the years, start each Grade One cohort with as many students as want the program, no wait lists. Running enough Gr. 1 FI classes means that you will still have a reasonable cohort by Gr. 8. The first pilot class is now very small. Parent/Guardian

Offer smaller class sizes at FI schools, to accommodate more people on the wait list. Holy Rosary has many students on a wait list who, at present, are denied access to the program. Divide the overall number of applicants into 2 classes to ensure an equitable opportunity for all, not just a few. Parent/Guardian

The board has researched and employed best practices in supporting students with an individual education plan (IEP). Student support may be provided by the classroom teacher (in French where applicable), or through withdrawal assistance from a special education teacher (in English), as determined by a student's specific needs.

French teachers in the immersion program, planning time included need to speak be bilingual. This is important to teach students proper pronunciation and a wide variety of words. Parent/Guardian

IEP support for FI students Ensure students who are on an IEP are getting the educational supports they need for the French language. For example, appropriate software enabled. Parent/Guardian

There tends to be a socio-economic division between the French Immersion classes and the English speaking classes. It's important because there are more IEP's (modified) and behaviour concerns in the English speaking classes than the French Immersion ones. Parent/Guardian

More opportunities for enrichment in French Parent/Guardian All parents should feel that their kids are 'good enough' for French Immersion. All levels and abilities should be welcomed. Equity and Inclusion Elementary Staff Member

Program Considerations

Elementary School Organization

The French Review Committee reviewed and evaluated the pros and cons of the board's current elementary school organizational structure. The board currently offers FI in dual track (English and FI) schools and the board's elementary schools are all JK-8. Therefore, FI may be offered for Grade 1-8 in one school.

The Committee's preference is that these principles be maintained. However, the board's proposed Grade 7-12 school may impact the ability to keep Grade 1-8 in one location.

The resultant recommendation from the committee prioritizes dual track schools and Grade 1-8 configuration, where possible. Schools offering FI should offer a grade configuration the same as the English programming in the same facility.

Elementary French Immersion Application Process

Since its start, the board has offered FI starting at Grade 1, together with priority access for siblings of students already in FI, capping of entry cohort sizes based on facility/staffing limitations and conducting a lottery where interest in FI exceeds available space.

The French Review Committee reviewed the pros and cons of the Grade 1 entry point. The Committee identified that language acquisition as early as possible is preferred, Grade 1 remains an appropriate starting point for FI.

Sibling priority presents opportunities and challenges. The Committee grappled with maintaining this principle, based on the extent of interest in FI in existing schools. However, the Committee placed a priority on keeping siblings together, and supports the continued prioritization of FI sibling access in the application process.

As noted previously, staffing and accommodation considerations necessitate placing limitations on the number of Grade 1 FI spaces available year to year. Clearly communicating these limitations ensures that parents/guardians are aware of the parameters for FI applications. The Committee recognized the need to continue to manage FI enrolment and using capping together with an application lottery remains the preferred approach.



French Immersion Out of Boundary Siblings

The board has historically prioritized keeping elementary aged siblings together in the same school. For students in FI this has meant prioritizing the attendance of younger or older siblings of FI students in the same school. Schools may be capped to out of area attendance of English students, however, siblings of FI students may continue to attend. It is suggested that the board continue to prioritize keeping siblings together, but that the administrative procedure which addresses admission of out of boundary students, be reviewed considering this priority relating to siblings of FI students.

French Immersion Transportation

Transportation is not provided to French Immersion students residing outside of the host FI school's Regular Track/English boundary. Neither WCDSB nor Waterloo Region District School Board bus students for FI from outside the school's boundary. Bussing FI students can be difficult and costly based on their dispersal across the Region. The Committee is recommending that the board maintain its current no-bussing practice for non-eligible elementary students.

At this time, students attending secondary optional programs are not provided with bussing if they outside of a school's boundary. The Committee recognized that based on the size of the initial cohorts of FI students and the need to ensure program viability, congregating FI students in one school to start may be necessary. As such, limiting access to secondary FI may compromise the board's ability to offer secondary FI certification. The committee is recommending that the board study the costs of providing secondary FI transportation prior to November 2021 to inform the staff recommendation regarding secondary FI location selection.

Secondary Course Selection

To obtain a FI certificate upon graduation, a student is required to successfully complete 10 credits in French. Four of those credits are French language, and the other 6 are in other subjects taught in French.

There was extensive discussion about the secondary course selection framework. As the board establishes secondary FI programming, it is an opportunity to establish a clear and consistent approach to secondary FI which respects the mandatory course selection obligations of students, protects flexibility for senior students' post-secondary pathways, and ensures that credits required for certificate completion can be delivered by French Qualified teachers.

Figure 3 reflects the preferred secondary course composition. The Committee has not determined the final option in Grade 11, rather has left that course to be determined based on cohort preferences closer to the first Grade 11 year.

Figure 3 - Secondary Course Composition

Grade	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Courses	French Language	French Language	French Language	French Language
	Geography	History	Co-Op (2 credits) or	
	Introduction to Business	Civics & Careers	Leadership & Peer Support and	
			Additional Credit to be Determined	
Credit Accumulation	3	6	9	10

Elementary & Secondary French Immersion Site Selection Criteria

The Committee undertook a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats) analysis to determine site selection criteria to guide staff decision making around future French Immersion locations. The Committee was not tasked with identifying specific locations for future elementary or secondary programs. That is a task left to staff based on the criteria established by the Committee.

For elementary FI, the committee prioritized criteria which alleviate enrolment pressure on existing FI locations, is reflective of where students reside who are applying to attend French Immersion, where long term enrolment patterns support decision making based on declining enrolment or opportunity to locate in future schools where growth is occurring, and to provide equity of access and opportunity to attend FI to minimize physical and other barriers to participation.

Figure 4 - Elementary FI Site Selection Criteria



The Committee has prioritized secondary site selection criteria based on the availability of space in existing schools, maintaining feeder school relationships, long term enrolment trends to avoid adding enrolment pressure to schools forecasted to be over capacity and to support offering FI in a range of neighbourhoods to provide equity of access and opportunity.

Figure 5 - Secondary Site Selection Criteria



Areas of Future Consideration

Based on the site selection criteria identified by the Committee for elementary and secondary FI locations, staff will present information to the Board prior to January 2022 identifying the preferred location(s) of secondary French Immersion. The information will support the communication to the first cohort of FI students who will enter high school in September 2023.

Future Long Term Accommodation Plans will reflect this site criteria and identify opportunities for the board to consider additional elementary school sites for FI based on long term accommodation trends and future capital priorities.

NEXT STEPS/COMMUNICATION:

This report has been posted to the 2020/21 French Immersion Review webpage and subscribers notified. The adopted recommendations will be posted online following the Board's consideration.

RECOMMENDATION:

The following recommendations are provided for consideration of the Board on June 14, 2021.

1. That the Waterloo Catholic District School Board continue to offer French Immersion in Dual Track (English and French Immersion) elementary schools, and prioritize that French Immersion be offered in a Grade 1-8 configuration or a school configuration consistent with English programming in the same facility.
2. That the Waterloo Catholic District School Board continue to provide a Grade 1 entry point for French Immersion, and that available Grade 1 spaces be determined annually, based on facility and staffing limitations, and that a lottery be held, by site, where interest in French Immersion exceeds available space and that siblings of existing French Immersion students receive priority access when applying to attend French Immersion.
3. That consistent with the Board's priority to keep siblings together, the Board review APA003 – Admission of Out of Boundary Students to reflect the admittance of siblings of French Immersion students in a capped school.
4. That the Waterloo Catholic District School Board continue the practice of not providing bus transportation to elementary French Immersion students who reside outside of a school's English boundary.
5. That the Waterloo Catholic District School Board assess the impacts of offering transportation to French Immersion students living outside a secondary school's English boundary, and that a decision on providing transportation to these students be made prior to November 2021.

Prepared/Reviewed By:

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*Bylaw 4.2 "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.”

APPENDIX A

Public Meeting Presentation Slides



**Waterloo Catholic
District School Board**
Quality, Inclusive, Faith Based Education

French Immersion Review Public Meeting

March 25, 2021

Teams Live

Agenda

1. Welcome, Opening Prayer & Land Acknowledgement
2. Introductions
3. Presentation
4. Question & Answer Period
5. Closing Prayer & Adjournment



Feast Day of The Annunciation

Spirit of love, linger long at the door of our hearts. Call to us time and again until we hear your voice and respond to you.

Teach us to listen for you in every corner of our lives and to await your messengers in the most unexpected situations and conditions.

Open our minds and our hearts so that we will respond as your servant Mary did. Help us to give you our “yes” even though our faith groans and wobbles with doubts and concerns.

Encourage us to recognize our fears when they rise up and give us the strength we need. Let us not give in to anxious trepidations when they bombard us with negativity.

Keep nudging us to move toward growth when our resistance holds us back. When we question the impracticality or the seeming impossibility of these nudges, give us wisdom and courage to let go of what restrains us.





Still and quiet our souls. May we hear the whisper of your divine call, asking us each day to accept the treasure of your life within us.

May the gift of Mary's own trustful response sing in our spirits. Gift us with the ability to move forward into the unknown, confident that you will guide and direct us.

Amen

We would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather today is the land traditionally used by the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and Neutral People.

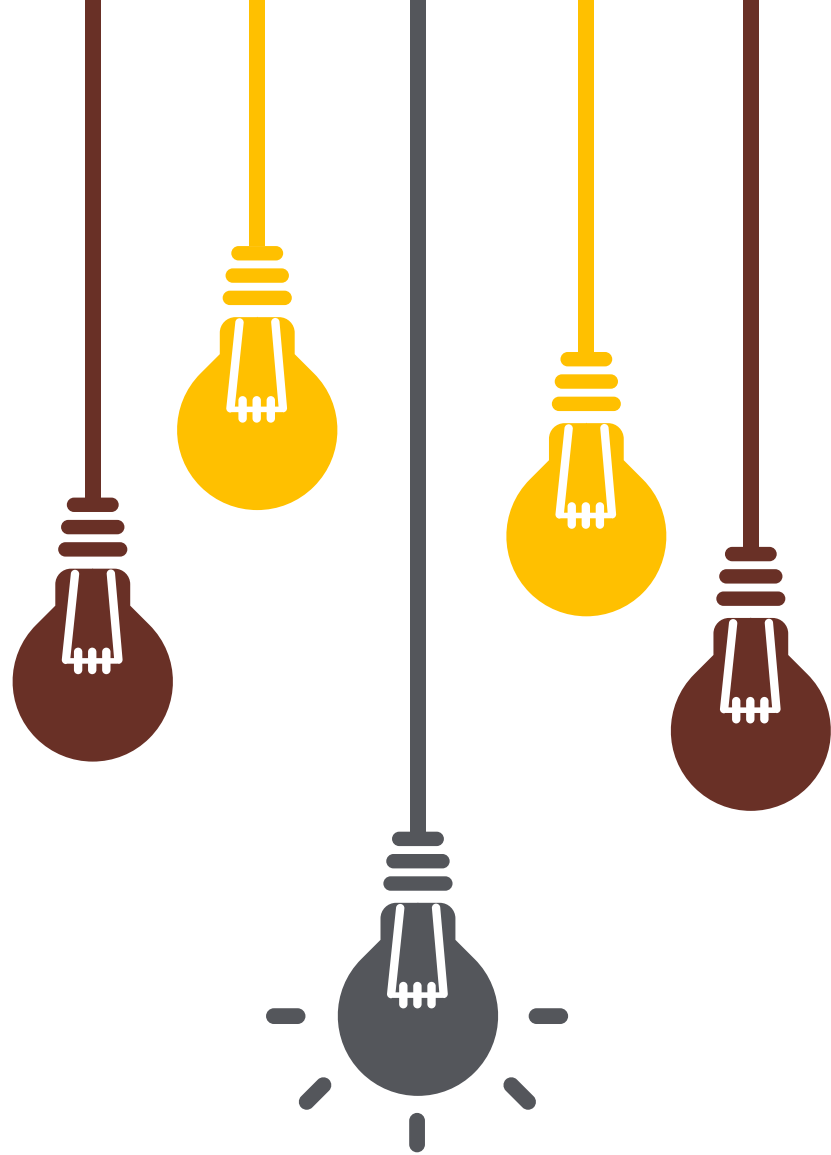
We also acknowledge the enduring presence and deep traditional knowledge, laws and philosophies of the Indigenous People with whom we share this land today.

More Information



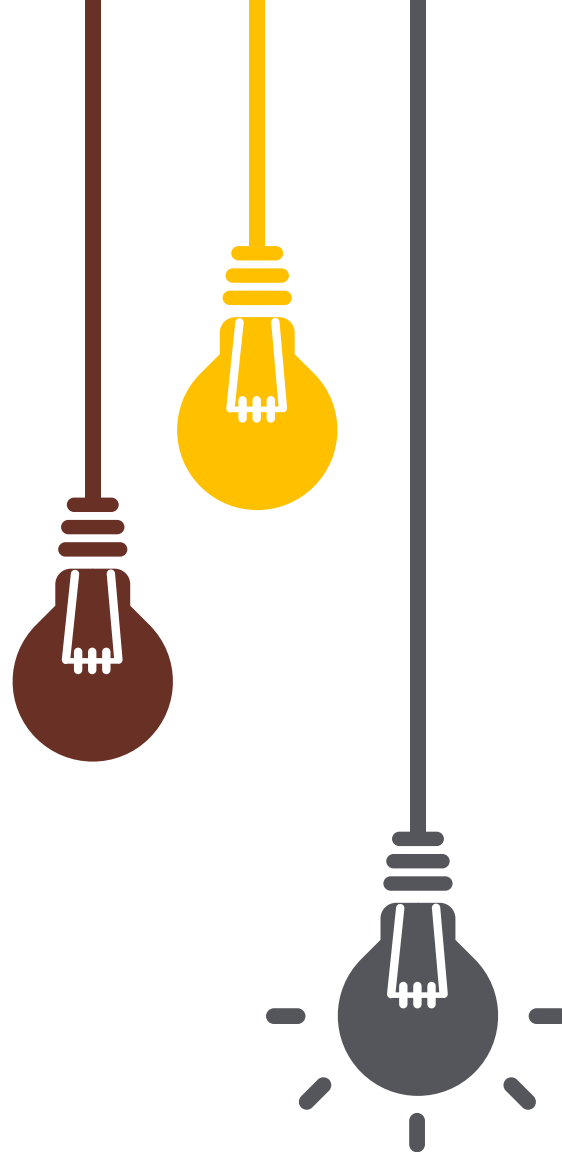
FI Review Website

- Background Information
- Initiation Report
- ThoughtExchange (running until March 31st)



SCOPE – The review is to reconfirm or address:

- Elementary school organization (i.e. grade structure, single track, dual track)
- Grade 1 entry point
- Approach to Grade 1 application for FI
- Attendance of siblings in FI school
- Impact of transportation, as it relates to school organization
- Establish strategy for delivery of FI courses for grades 9 to 12 to meet secondary FI certificate requirements
- Review and confirm criteria for selecting new elementary FI location(s)
- Identify areas of future consideration for new elementary FI location(s)
- Establish criteria for selecting new secondary FI location(s)



GOALS:

- To confirm the Waterloo Catholic District School Board's values and beliefs regarding French Immersion.
- To ensure that students in French Immersion receive equitable access to quality program.
- To update the French Immersion delivery plan which:
 - considers all Waterloo Catholic District School Board students and families,
 - respects fiscal and accommodation realities,
 - provides guidance and structure to future decisions related to program expansion and accommodation
 - is aligned with the Board's Long Term Accommodation Plan, and
 - provides a predictable and transparent method of locating programs.

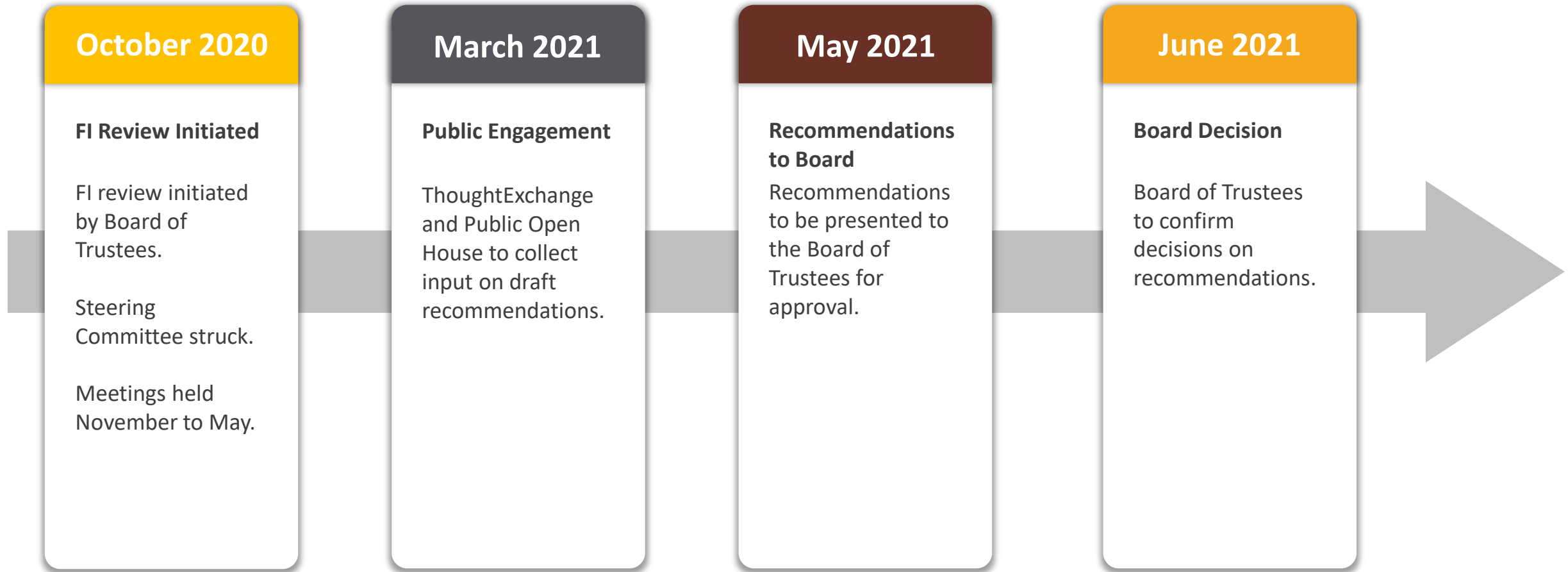
OBJECTIVES:

- French Immersion should enhance a student's educational experience.
- High quality, inclusive learning environment should be maintained for both French Immersion and English track students.

CONSTRAINTS:

- Based on projected enrolment, there may be insufficient space to accommodate students at the six existing French Immersion sites in the future.
- The staffing component related to attracting, developing, and retaining qualified FSL Teachers and support staff will be discussed internally by board staff and will not be discussed by the FI Review Committee.
- The ability to offer a variety of secondary FI courses to support retention of students in FI and achievement of the secondary FI certificate is affected by FI enrolment levels.

FI Review Timeline



Public Consultation

ThoughtExchange
Board-wide
ThoughtExchange to
collect input on FI
programming open until
March 31, 2021.



Public Meeting
WCDSB community
invited to participate in
Public Meeting.



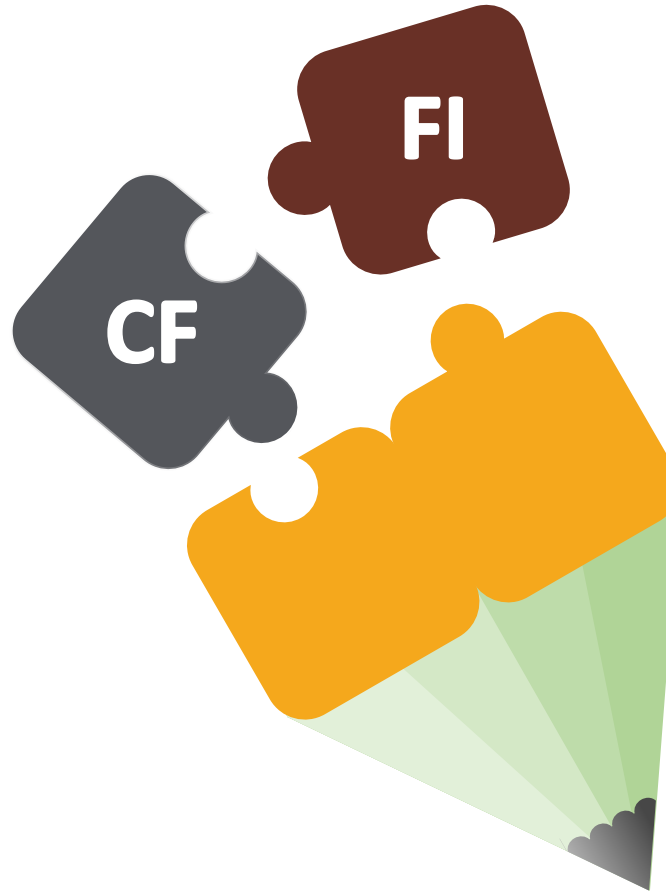
planning@wcdsb.ca



French as a Second Language in WCDSB

Core French

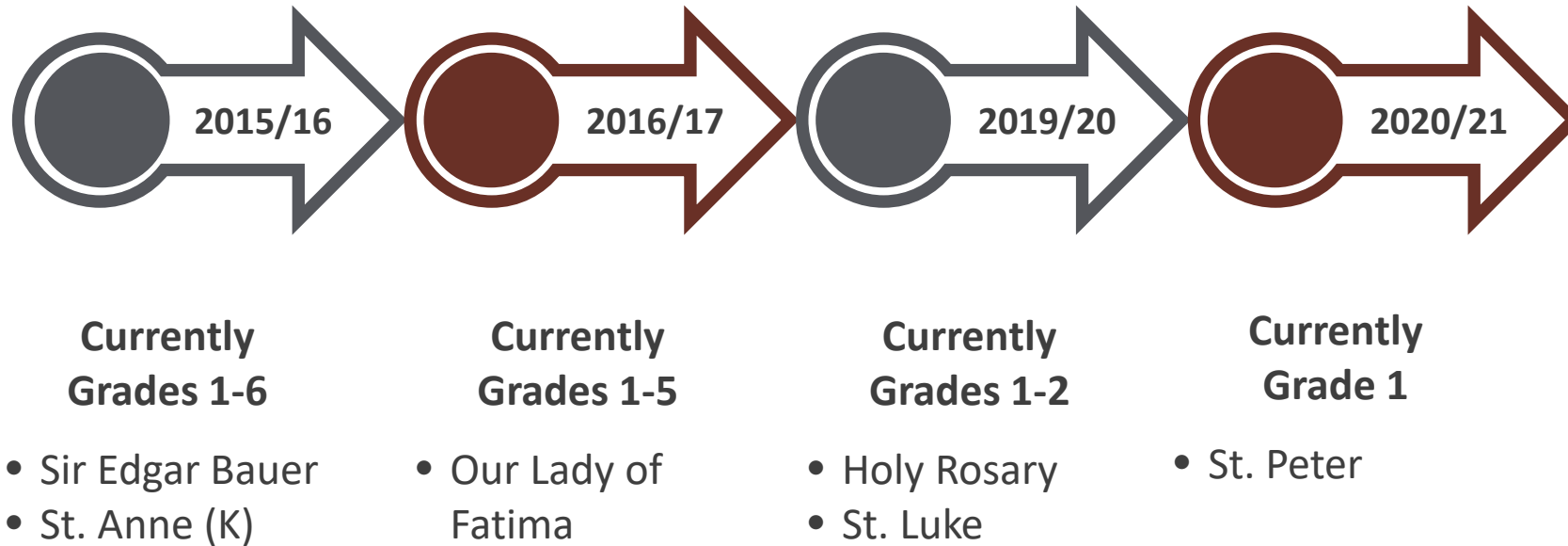
- Students learn French as a subject.
- Elementary students must accumulate a min. 600 hours of French by end of Grade 8.
- In high school, French is mandatory for Grade 9 and offered for Grades 10 – 12.



French Immersion

- Elementary students learn French as a subject, and French is language of instruction in two or more other subjects.
- At the elementary level, at least 50 % of instruction is provided in French.
- At the secondary level, courses are offered for Grades 9 – 12
 - 10 credits in French: 4 FSL 6 are other subjects taught in French

Evolution of FI in WCDSB



Elementary School Organization

Existing

- Dual Track
- Grade 1-8

Proposed

- Dual Track
- Grade 1-8 (where possible)

Draft Recommendation:

That the Waterloo Catholic District School Board continue to offer French Immersion in Dual Track (English and French Immersion) Elementary Schools, and prioritize that French Immersion be offered in a school with Grade 1-8, or school configuration consistent with English programming in the same facility.

Elementary FI Application Process

Existing

- Grade 1 Entry Point
- Enrolment capped based on facility/staffing limitations
- Lottery where interest exceeds available space
- That siblings of existing FI students receive priority access when applying.

Proposed

- Grade 1 Entry Point
- Enrolment capped based on facility/staffing limitations
- Lottery where interest exceeds available space
- That siblings of existing FI students receive priority access when applying.

Draft Recommendation:

That the Waterloo Catholic District School Board continue to provide a Grade 1 entry point for FI, and that available spaces be determined annually based on facility and staffing limitations.

That a lottery be held, by site, where interest in FI exceeds available space and that siblings of existing FI students receive priority access when applying for FI.

Elementary FI Out of Boundary Siblings

Existing

- Siblings of FI students may attend FI school with Out of Boundary permission.

Proposed

- Siblings of FI students may attend FI school with Out of Boundary permission.

Draft Recommendation:

That consistent with the Board's priority to keep siblings together, the Board review APA003 – Admission of Out of Boundary Students to reflect the admittance of siblings of FI students in a capped school.

FI Elementary Transportation

Existing

- Bus transportation not available to students living outside of an FI school's English boundary.

Proposed

- Bus transportation not available to students living outside of an FI school's English boundary.

Draft Recommendation:

That the Waterloo Catholic District School Board continue the practice of not providing bus transportation to elementary FI students who reside outside of a school's English school boundary.

Elementary FI Site Selection Criteria

Location Alleviates Pressure on Existing Sites

Strategically locating future site(s) and adjusting boundaries will address existing and projected pressure on existing facilities.

Equity/Range of Neighbourhoods

Ensuring that future sites provide equity of access and opportunity will address physical and other barriers to participation in FI.



Application Interest

Identifying location of applicants to assess geographic interest in FI will support assessment of future program viability.

Long Term Enrolment Patterns

Prioritizing future sites based on long term enrolment patterns will ensure sufficient space within schools to accommodate enrolment growth.

Note: specific sites are not identified and will not be identified through this process.

Secondary FI Site Selection Criteria

Availability of Empty Space

Prioritizing future secondary school site(s) with surplus space will maximize use of available board resources and support course selection for English students.

Equity/Range of Neighbourhoods

Providing equity of access and opportunity to FI will help address physical and other barriers to participation in FI.



Feeder School Relationship

Maximizing Family of Schools relationship between elementary and secondary school locations will ease transitions and maximize retention of secondary students in FI.

Long Term Enrolment Patterns

Selecting future secondary school site(s) for FI should consider long term enrolment projections and avoid adding enrolment pressure to overcapacity school(s).

Note: specific sites are not identified and will not be identified through this process.

Secondary Course Distribution

Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
French Language + 2 credits	French Language + 2 credits	French Language + 2 credits	French Language
1. Geography 2. Introduction to Business	1. History 2. Civics and Careers	1. Co-Op 2. Leadership & Peer Support	
3 credits	6 credits	9 credits	10 credits

Accumulation of Credits Over 4 Years

FI Secondary Transportation

Existing

- Bus transportation not available to students living outside of an FI school's English boundary.

Proposed

- Bus transportation for FI students living outside a FI school's English boundary be explored to support student retention and program viability in FI.

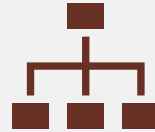
Draft Recommendation:

That the Waterloo Catholic District School Board assess the impacts of offering FI students living outside an FI secondary school's English boundary transportation and that a decision on providing transportation to these students be made prior to November 2021.

Public Consultation and Communication



SCAN ME



Board-wide ThoughtExchange



Public Meeting

2020/21 French Review Workplan



COMMITTEE TO CONTINUE
MEETING



REVIEW INPUT AND FORMULATE
RECOMMENDATIONS



PRESENT FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS TO TRUSTEES



Quality, Inclusive, Faith Based Education