Toronto District School Board

Community Advisory Committee Report

Community Advisory French as a Second Language Advisory Committee (FSLAC)

Meeting held on: June 16, 2015

Time: **From:** 7:00 p.m **To:** 9:00 p.m

Location: 5050 Yonge Street – Committee Room A

Chair: Kristina Laperle (Parent Co-chair)

Members present: Dina Pizolinas (W2), David Kim (W3), Michelle Minott (W4), Lauralyn Johnston (W8), Matt Forrest (W9), Sarah Warden (W10), Betheney Maheu (W11), Sharon Kerr (W13), Steph Rickard Chadda (W14), Suzanne Phillips (W15-alt), Sharon Beason (W16), Kristina Laperle (W17), Cheryl Wilson (W19), Kingsley Kwok (W20)

Members not present: Nichole Jonas (W1), Laura Steele-Gunter (W7)

****

Part A: Committee Recommendations

No matters to report.

Part B: Information Only

Topic: FSLAC Parent Co-chair's Year End Report

1. Membership

There are 27 parent members and alternates on the FSLAC from 18 wards, and 1 non-voting community member from Canadian Parents for French (Ontario). Trustee Robin Pilkey is our trustee co-chair. French as a Second Language (FSL) program staff attend all meetings.

The Board created the FSLAC in 2005 and set our mission as "To consult with and advise the Board on French as a Second Language matters. As a Board community advisory committee, the FSLAC will contribute to the work of trustees and staff. This partnership of trustees, staff and parents will foster excellence and growth in FSL programs at the Board."

FSLAC members/alternates are elected by parents in their ward. The term is two years and elections take place in odd years. Trustees are asked to hold elections at their ward meetings by December 2015. To be eligible to be an FSLAC voting member/alternate, one must be a parent of a current TDSB student, have an interest in French and support the mission of the FSLAC and be available to attend (in person or by phone) about seven meetings per year. Trustees needing more information or assistance recruiting members to fill vacancies may contact the FSLAC at fslactoronto@gmail.com . FSLAC information is posted at: www.tdsb.on.ca/fslac .

FSLAC members/alternates receive a Member Briefing Book which is prepared by the FSLAC executive annually and is also available electronically via Google Drive. It explains the work of FSLAC volunteers and provides detailed background material on French as a Second Language programs.

2. FSLAC Activities & Information Sharing

The FSLAC held 7 meetings in the 2014-15 school year, and continues to have an effective working relationship with FSL program staff. Andrew Gowdy, Senior Manager, Planning attended FSLAC meetings twice in 2015-16 to present on the intricacies of Optional Attendance and Capacity, Utilization and Projections. TDSB partner, Edutravel presented at the January FSLAC meeting to share information about earning TDSB French credits while travelling.

Meeting notices, agendas, minutes and FSL resources are posted on the FSLAC page on the TDSB website (www.tdsb.on.ca/fslac). We receive limited administrative support from the Parent Engagement Office to organize meetings and to handle minutes.

The FSLAC receives numerous inquiries from parents and stakeholders at our gmail account: fslactoronto@gmail.com. This includes questions about accessing programs and receiving special ed support, requests for referrals to the appropriate staff member on FSL specific concerns and requests to be on our newsletter distribution list.

The FSLAC newsletter was produced three times in 2014-15. It contains information about new developments in FSL and tips for parents in supporting their children learning French. The newsletter goes to approximately 100 schools with immersion/extended programs, trustees, and over 750 individual parents and FSL stakeholders who have signed up.

During the fall 2014 municipal election, the FSLAC created and disseminated a survey to all trustee candidates. The survey asked three questions about their experiences with learning French and the level of support for FSL programs. Seventy-six out of 120 candidates responded to the survey and responses were circulated to parents on our email list and are posted for viewing in our Google Drive (https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bw_QhSXXOb7laGlIMEJLRF9peUE/view).

3. Engaging Parents: Conferences, Workshops, Ward Forums and Other Parent Meetings

This year we continued to reach out to more parents directly through participation in parent conferences and workshops. FSLAC Members and Canadian Parents for French (Ontario) staffed tables, and provided advice, information, and resources at PIAC's "Parents Make a Difference Conference" in the fall and at both the east and west end Model Schools Conference in the spring.

We also ran four well-attended sessions of our "Help with French Homework…even if you don't speak French" workshop presentation for parents at individual schools upon request and presented our "Intro to the FSLAC" at a Ward Forum. In 2015-16, volunteer time permitting, the FSLAC will continue to offer these presentations at TDSB parent conferences and at individual schools. Both power points are posted at www.tdsb.on.ca/fslac . Inquiries may be directed to fslactoronto@gmail.com.

FSLAC Members attended many immersion/extended information nights to meet new parents and to support the presentations of principals and FSL staff.

4. FSLAC Participation in Board Activities

FSLAC members continued to be involved in PARC and PART meetings related to Lord Landsdowne in Ward 10 and Gledhill/D.A. Morrison/Glen Ames in Ward 16 to support growth in FSL programs and to share information about FSL programs from the parent perspective with the community.

The FSLAC appeared at the Program and School Services Committee in the time reserved for advisory committees twice in the 2014-15 school year. In January, we supported the staff recommendation to include French programs in the Long Term Program and Accommodation Strategy. In May, we responded to 2015-16 Immersion/Extended Enrollment Report. We expressed support for the new Senior Kindergarten French Immersion site and 4 Extended French sites and we also expressed concerns about the schools where applicants had to be redirected away from their English home school even though it is also their designated immersion school.

5. Current Opportunities / Growth and Excellence in FSL Programs in the TDSB

Extended/Immersion Program Enrolment:

The 2015-16 enrolment report shows that enrolment in Immersion (SK and grade 4 entry) as well as enrolment in extended (grade 4 or 7 entry) is continuing to grow. All on-time applicants receive a spot in SK immersion/grade 4 extended/immersion and the system responds by adding new sites as required. However, further refinement to the process is indicated as about 7% of applicants are offered spots at immersion/extended schools that are not closest to their home. About half of those accept the spots and the other half do not. Parents tells us that the common reasons for declining are: bussing and travel times, before and after school care issues and the lack of neighbourhood connection to the school.

Another issue noted in the report is the use of lotteries at immersion schools where there are no feeders and where the schools are over-capacity. Using a lottery to decide who stays and who goes on a bus, when all applicants could walk and have a right to be in the school for the English program continues to trouble immersion parents.

Full Day Kindergarten (FDK):

In September 2014, all SK French immersion (SKFI) programs went full day. The first full day SKFI class was at Parkdale PS in 2010. The implementation of FDK means that class size and staffing will be similar to the years prior to the 20-student cap. Now, about 25-30 students can be in an SKFI class with one teacher and an ECE (previously an Educational Assistant). FSL staff tell us that the increase in the amount of French in full day SK greatly improves readiness for grade one. Educational assistants were a unique expense related to the delivery of the kindergarten immersion program and now, French speaking ECEs are covered in the same way as ECEs in regular English kindergarten.

Continued FSL Needs at the Secondary School Level:

We will continue exploring FSL secondary programs as per the Board's accepted recommendation from the FSLAC (February 2013) to meet "the need for additional sites and opportunities for immersion and extended students at the secondary level and develop a plan for meeting current and future needs in consultation with the FSLAC and stakeholders". We hope that increasing access and variety of courses offered in these areas will lead to better retention between grade 8 and grade 9, as well as through to grade 12 in extended/immersion programs.

Special Education and Core/Extended/Immersion

Parents of students with special needs are asking for access to technology and specialized resources in French and more special education training for FSL teachers, particularly in the primary grades. Ministry and TDSB Policy set the expectation for support to be provided to students to access, remain in and succeed in core/extended/immersion programs. The FSLAC is continuing to explore ways to work with PIAC and SEAC to provide current information and support to FSL parents with special needs children, potentially at 2015-16 SEAC/TDSB parent conferences or workshops.

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the DELF:

The FSLAC continues to support FSL staff in providing the opportunity for some grade 12 students to participate in DELF exams (Diplome d'etudes en langue francaise) with support provided by the Ministry of Education. The DELF is an internationally recognized exam that tests proficiency in French and awards a credential to the student based on the benchmarks of the CEFR. This type of testing provides an external assessment of student outcomes in core/extended/immersion. The Ministry did a study which included the TDSB students which is available here: www.edugains.ca/resourcesFSL/PDF/Research/Synopsis_FINAL-1.pdf

6. Ministry of Education Initiatives

The Wilson Report and the Hall Consultation

The FSLAC responded to the Wilson Report at the special board meeting on January 26, 2015 and also wrote to Minister Sandals on February 13, 2015. We expressed our concern that curtailing the role of trustee, including the loss of constituency assistants would have a negative impact on students and their parents.

At our April FSLAC meeting, we discussed what works and what needs work at the TDSB. This discussion formed the basis of our written response to the Hall Consultation. Several FSLAC members participated in the consultation meetings.

Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines

The FSLAC wrote to Trustee Chen, chair of the TDSB, cc'd to Trustees and the Director and also to Minister Sandals via officials in the Ministry to express concerns about the draft guidelines which allowed for an accelerated process that could bypass meaningful consultation with parents on things like school closures. We were greatly reassured by Trustee Chen's response that the TDSB continues to be fully committed to ensuring parent engagement in accommodation reviews and that the voice of the FSLAC will continue to be welcomed and valued at the table.

7. 2015-16 FSLAC

Kristina Laperle was re-elected at the June 16th meeting as parent co-chair. Betheney Maheu was re-elected and Matt Forrest elected as parent vice co-chairs.

Upcoming meetings: September 24, 2015; October 27, 2015; November 24, 2015

Kristina Laperle, FSLAC Parent Co-chair

****

Report submitted by: Latha John -Committee Assistant, Parent and Community Engagement Office

Submit to Denisse Parra, Administrative Liaison, Governance, Policy & Risk Management, who will ensure that the item is placed on the appropriate standing committee agenda. E-mail denisse.parra@tdsb.on.ca.