
BRIEFING NOTE

DATE: September 11, 2007

TO: Members of the Program and School Services Committee

FROM: Karen Gravitis, Executive Superintendent
School Services: Special Education and Support Services

RE: **SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN FRENCH IMMERSION/EXTENDED FRENCH PROGRAMS**

Issue/Problem:

The Board decided that staff presents a written briefing on the provision of Special Education and summer school remedial assistance for children in French Immersion (FI), beginning September, 2007, including how the programs will be implemented.

Senior Staff Person Carrying Responsibility:

Karen Gravitis, Executive Superintendent,
School Services: Special Education and Support Services – (416) 393-8937
Nadine Segal, System Superintendent – Special Programs – (416) 395-8237

Background Information:

The Board System Review of French Immersion/Extended Programs indicated that respondents believe that:

- Teachers in French programs counsel students and parents of students with special needs out or recommend they don't apply for admission in the first place
- When students need support in French programs, they are "sent back" to English rather than supporting them in their chosen French program

Data from 2007 regarding students with special needs in French Immersion programs indicates the following for K-12:

- 13,639 students enrolled;
- 216 of these students have an exceptionality i.e. 1.6 %;
 - 140 of the students with an exceptionality are "Gifted" i.e. 64.8 %;
 - 68 of the students with an exceptionality are "Learning Disabled (LD)" i.e. 32 %; and
- 410 students inclusive of those who are exceptional, have Individual Education Plans i.e. 3%

Data from 2007 regarding students with special needs in Extended French programs indicates the following for 4-12:

- 3901 students enrolled;
- 75 of these students have an exceptionality i.e. 1.9 %;
 - 54 of the students with an exceptionality are "Gifted" i.e. 72 %;

- 16 of the students with an exceptionality are “Learning Disabled (LD)” i.e. 21.3 %; and
- 128 students inclusive of those who are exceptional, have Individual Education Plans i.e. 3%.

Action Taken:

- The Demission Protocol recommends School Support Team (SST) intervention (Appendix 1);
- Principals have been informed about the substitution of the mandatory Gr. 9 French credit and recommended school support for struggling students. (Appendix 2);
- The Community Based Resource Model (CBRM) is available in every neighbourhood school in the Board. The staff allocation model that is used to generate both teaching and support staff for 07-08 offers schools the capacity to address the mild to moderate special needs of all of their students, inclusive of FI. CBRM staff, through the Methods and Resource Teacher (MART), have access to specialized training delivered by central special education consultants and coordinators. It is expected that the specific set of strategies learned in these on-going sessions is to be shared with all teachers in the schools, inclusive of FI;
- Implementation of the French equivalent of the DRA ALPHA JEUNE, allows for the identification of language difficulties and opportunities to provide supports in a timely way. Ministry funding has been provided for training of teachers in this assessment instrument and also for development of diagnostic tools for grades 4-8;
- Qualifications and Professional Development: FI teachers are accessing the same rich resources and supports as the English teachers in terms of professional development delivered through cross-department delivery models such as Quest for Excellence, the Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership and Differentiated Instruction as we continue to implement *Education for All*. Many teachers are accessing Board offered Additional Qualification’s where Part 1 courses are inclusive of presenting successful strategies for addressing students with special needs;
- The FSL document “Program Adaptations for Students with Special Needs” has been provided to Teachers and Principals;
- 42 Early Immersion schools were surveyed for the ways in which they support students with special needs:
 - 32 responses were received;
 - 20 of the responding schools offer support to FI students;
 - 16 of the responding schools have a bilingual MART or literacy coordinator to deliver support;
 - The Board has 45 teachers who are dually qualified in Special Ed. & FSL and are teaching in FI classes;
 - 350 teachers are dually qualified in the Board; and
- Special Education and Support Services staff has been in-servicing superintendents, school administrators, central and school staff on strategies to support ALL students with special needs inclusive of students in French Immersion/Extended French programs.

Unresolved Issues:

Although, the Ministry of Education has provided funding for Elementary Summer School in the past, there is no funding for K-6 programs for July 2007. (Direct Line 23 April 2007).

Next Steps:

- We have engaged the support of Apple Canada in accessing software to support French Immersion programs;
- Throughout this year, we have been examining how best to support students in French who have accepted placement in a “Gifted” ISP (Intensive Support Program) or students who remain in French Immersion but are identified with the “Gifted” exceptionality. A writing team will be established for this summer to create and assemble curriculum support materials; and
- We have been piloting a French version of a successful Early Intervention Program for its suitability to assist French Immersion, e.g. Early Reading Intervention Program and Talking for Literacy, currently funded as CODE Special Education projects.

Attachment

IT IS RECOMMENDED that the memorandum be received.

Appendix 1

Addressing Students with Special Needs in the French Immersion Programs

Research to date has provided no evidence that there are certain children who are not suitable for the French immersion programs. On the contrary there is research to suggest that students with problems in a French immersion program would likely have experienced the same problems in a regular English program. Teachers and parents should not assume that a child who experiences difficulties in French immersion would perform better in an English program.

The Ontario Curriculum document entitled *French As a Second Language: Extended French (Grades 4-8), French Immersion (Grades 1-8)*, 2001 outlines on page 8, the need for teachers to examine the needs of the students and to plan program accordingly. It supports the understanding that children in immersion programs can also experience difficulties and we need to individualize their programs accordingly. "It is important that teachers provide appropriate instruction, activities and assignments, as well as resources, strategies, and settings that will help exceptional students achieve their learning expectations."

As part of a school assessment and evaluation policy, student progress is reviewed on a regular basis. This involves numerous steps, which include informal and formal observations, tests and assessments.

When a student is considered "at risk" for meeting the expectations of the immersion program, a number of steps may be taken to help ensure that the student is provided with the support necessary to improve their skills.

These are as follows:

French immersion teacher brings the student's name forward to a discussion of the school team. (Team could include the assistance of the FSL Instructional Leader for particular second language strategies).

Teacher identifies the specific weakness/ area of growth for the student with examples of student work.

Team determines appropriate action:

- Suggestions for the FI teacher for remediation in the FI classroom (this should not include the introduction of English to support comprehension);
- Referral to the MART, if appropriate (there is a bilingual MART or assistant who can support the classroom work);
- Creation of IEP if necessary; and
- Setting of dates for follow up discussions after the support has been put in place=

If it is determined, after careful discussion and after support has been in place for a period of time that it is in the best interest of the student to transfer to the English or to an Extended French program then:

- The Team will make the recommendation to the parent;
- The parent will be informed of TDSB policy that students transferring to the English program may be required to return to their home school by home address or apply to the English program under Optional Attendance – no transportation is provided; and
- Specific transfer dates will be established to have the least impact on the student and the school. (i.e. end of December, end of year).

S19(DemissionProcedure-Append1)ap.



School Services - Special Education and Support Services

5050 Yonge Street, 2nd Floor, Toronto, Ontario M2N 5N8

DATE: September 19, 2005

TO: All Principals and Vice-Principals

COPY: Executive Superintendents, School Services
Executive Superintendent, Special Education & Support Services
Superintendents of Education
Special Education Coordinators
Special Education Consultants
Alison Pearce, Program Coordinator, FSL Programs

FROM: Karen Forbes
System Superintendent, Special Education

RE: EXEMPTING SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS FROM FRENCH

The Ministry of Education policy document entitled *The Ontario Curriculum French As a Second Language: Core French Grades 4-8, 1998*, states that “Core French is mandatory from Grades 4 to 8 for all students in English-language elementary schools” (pg.2) The document entitled *Ontario Secondary Schools Grade 9-12*, states that “students must earn a compulsory credit in FSL for the OSSD”. (Pg. 8).

However, there is the ability for parents or guardians, after consultation with the principal, to request an exemption for their child if they feel it is in the best interests of the child.

Previously, this authority to exempt was conferred on Principals by Ministry of Education, Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 58, which outlined parameters by which Special Education students could be exempted from French. PPM 58 has been rescinded.

The authority to exempt is still within the principal’s mandate and is referred to on page 27 of The Individual Education Plan (IEP) – A Resource Guide 2004.

Exemptions from the Core French should be considered on a case-by-case basis and only after all attempts at supporting the students have been made.

Some students who may be considered for an exemption **after careful review** are as follows:

- Students working on **alternative program expectations**, i.e., not working on academic expectations from The Ontario Curriculum (e.g., DD in special schools or programs), students with autism who have extremely limited or no receptive/expressive communication, and students with severe behaviour disorders/emotional disturbances; or
- Students with severe learning/language disabilities that include significant central auditory processing deficits requiring extensive modifications and accommodations to the English curriculum expectations and language expectations in all curriculum areas.

If an exemption for a student is to be considered, the Principal will provide:

- initial consultation involving the Core French teacher, the classroom teacher, the MART and the administrators of the school regarding the difficulties that the student is experiencing;
- suggestions for modifications/ accommodations to the Core French program, including creating an IEP or adding to an existing IEP, if appropriate;
- program support to the Core French teacher by involving the MART, the FSL Instructional Leader and other teachers and/or by referring to the document entitled *Program Adaptations for Students with Special Needs in the Core French Classroom – A Resource Guide for Core French* available on the Principals' web site); and
- consultation with the parents

The recommendation to exempt a student from French can be done through the School Support Team, on the advice of a teacher or as a result of a parent's recommendation. Regardless of the process, the Principal must consult with the parents of the child to determine if an exemption is appropriate.

If a decision to exempt a student is made, the parents/guardian must provide a written, signed request to the school for the exemption. It must state that the parent understands that Core French is a mandatory program for Grades 4-8 and that there is one compulsory credit at the secondary level. A description of the alternative program the school is offering to the student to replace the Core French Program should also be included.

A copy of the request is kept in the OSR and a copy is sent to the Family of Schools Superintendent. Additionally, the decision relating to the program exemption is recorded in the student's IEP (page 2) with a statement of the educational rationale for the decision. The exemption should be noted in the Consultation Log on the blue *Special Education and Support Services Summary Card*.

Please ensure parents understand that an exemption is not temporary. The Core French program is built on accumulated hours of instruction in the French language. To expect a student to leave and to re-enter the program at a later date is more difficult than to have him/her continue in the program with accommodations or modifications.

At the secondary level, the same process is followed if there is a recommendation to substitute a course for the grade nine French credit.

Further information, questions or concerns can be referred to your special education consultant or to Alison Pearce, Program Coordinator, FSL Programs.

Thank you.

S19(Exemption from French)kf.1516