

Appendix A

Issues Raised by the French as a Second Language Advisory Committee

**Special Meeting December 6, 2005
on the
Review of French Immersion and Extended French Programs**

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**Appendix A:
Issues Raised by the French as a Second Language Advisory Committee**

FSL AC held a special meeting on December 6, 2005 for the purpose of presenting information for the review. Committee members identified those issues which the committee had dealt with over the last three years. Issues raised and requests made follow.

1. The Role of FSL AC

FSL AC should have opportunity to consider and comment on matters affecting French Immersion and/or Extended French Programs prior to matters proceeding through board committee process.

- When matters are addressed by the staff of the board, the committee and/or parents must bring the issues forward – Committee want staff to be more pro-active
- Committee want matters affecting FSL to come to their committee – currently that is not the regular practice
- Concern about process issues
- Information about follow-up to board and committee motions not available to committee
- Want to work with the board to ensure everything is ‘healthy’ for FSL programs

2. Access

All parents should who choose French Immersion or Extended French programs for the child should have access to the program.

- Admission to the programs by lotteries is unacceptable
- Information on last year’s waitlist has been requested but not provided
- Board should adopt a policy of “everyone who wants in, gets in”
- Suggest that families have access to early immersion school for Junior Kindergarten?
- Need to revisit procedure for admitting Francophone students
- Areas in Scarborough and Etobicoke are under-served

3. Barriers

FSL AC perceive barriers for parents and committee exist and anticipate removal of barriers.

- There is a need to address parents' feeling "It's all about barriers"
- Committee believe they do not have access to senior staff

4. Entry Points

Less rigid procedures regarding entry points should be the practice.

More choice should be available at all entry points.

- If a parent misses the SK entry point for Immersion program, the next opportunity is at Grade 4
- Observation that survey process is flawed
- Result of survey is the reducing the opportunities for Immersion while increasing the opportunities for Extended
- Committee believes a range of programs should be provided

5. PART Process

The Program Area Review Team should involve parents more and at an earlier stage in the decision making process.

- More parent participation in PART process is encouraged by Committee

6. Resources

Some French Immersion and Extended French programs suffer inadequate resources.

All French Immersion and Extended French programs should have more resources.

All French Immersion and Extended French programs should have better resources.

- Variability in resources for programs across the board requires attention
- Insufficient funds are provided for resources
- There must be base line resources for each program
- Collections in some school libraries is small and, in some cases, dated
- Resource Guide distribution appears uneven
- How budget allocation is spent should be tracked but that is not possible under current procedures
- Text books are in short supply and/or in poor condition
- Each school should have an experienced teacher advising other staff of curriculum based material
- Mentoring of teachers is inconsistent across the board
- Is the report on the review of Library Resources adopted at February 23, 2005 meeting of the board available to FSL AC?

- As new programs are not located in schools with existing programs, resources are spread more thinly

7. Secondary School Programs

Solutions to low enrolment in secondary programs are necessary.

More variety in courses should be available to students.

Courses should be more 'mainstream' subjects and more rigorous.

- More course choice for students
- Need for more challenging programs for French Immersion students

8. French Immersion Centres

French Immersion Centres are successful learning settings for students and the board should consider opening additional sites.

There should be at least one French Immersion Centre in each area of the city.

- There is a need for more French Immersion Centres
- There should be at least one centre in each area of the city – if locations are not available in all areas, tie the identification of sites for new centres to the facilities review process
- More centres will help resolve waiting list issues

9. Program Outcomes

Clearly stated program goals are needed.

Parents need to know program outcomes.

- There is need to articulate the goals of the programs, levels of success, what level of proficiency
- There is need to clarify the different outcomes for French Immersion and Extended French to help parents

10. Data Collection

Collecting data will improve program delivery.

Exit interviews will aid understanding of attrition and suggest strategies to reduce attrition.

- Data collection must be a focus
- Need exit interviews with parents who withdraw their children from programs

11. Certification for Students

Until the low enrolment/small course selection issues can be resolved, some certification should be provided earlier.

- Some certification should be provided to students at the completion of Grade 8

12. Facilities

Program decisions are often facilities-driven.

Innovative solutions are needed to ensure access to programs for all who choose French Immersion or Extended French as their education pathway.

- There is a disconnect between reason for waitlist is limited space and the board's excess space in schools
- Is program expansion denied to protect the English stream?
- Committee questions the logic of there being no space if student chooses French Immersion or Extended French and space available if the same student chooses English
- Issues of capping in dual track schools of concern
- Program expansion is prevented, in some cases, by the way individual schools choose to use space

13. Core French

Providing Core French at an earlier level will ensure better decisions about programs with entry points at Grade 4 or later.

Core French is not part of this review process. However, the committee did present the following:

- The committee supports beginning Core French at grade one

14. Funding

Clarification regarding program funding is urgently needed.

French Immersion and Extended French programs are under-funded.

More transparent budget procedures are needed at both system and school levels.

- There is a need to clarify why \$27 million is received and 6 to 8 million is spent
- Committee believes allocation shortchanging students
- Committee members presented brief "French Second Language Funding in Ontario and the Toronto District School Board: Accountability and Transparency for \$27 million" to the Minister of Education February 21, 2005

15. Staffing

Staffing for French Immersion and Extended French programs must be a system priority.

More effective strategies to attract, retain, mentor, train staff are necessary.

Adult modeling is crucial to second language learning for students and should be staffed to ensure the optimum learning setting is provided in French Immersion and Extended French.

a. Teachers

- Increased focus on recruiting, retaining French teachers is required
- Mentoring for teachers from out of province and out of country is essential – not just for program issues, but to help them settle in to a new culture and a new approach to working with students
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b. Occasional teachers

- There is urgent need for increasing the number of occasional teachers available
- Occasional teachers for French Immersion/Extended French must be fluent in French

c. Educational assistants

- Procedures, protocols for allocating need to be standardized
- Adult modeling is a very important part of the program
- Every Senior Kindergarten class should have a French speaking Educational Assistant

16. Transportation

Transportation issues need more attention.

Transportation policies have different impact on families across the city.

- Parents are looking at education options outside of TDSB due in large part to transportation issues (timeliness, break-downs, ...)

17. Isolation of Programs, Students and Parents

Parents feel they are the only advocates for the programs.

The system must position programs as valued and important.

System leaders must demonstrate support for programs.

18. Special Education

Support for students with learning difficulties should be provided within the programs.

Parents of students with slight learning difficulties should not be counseled to withdraw their children from French Immersion and extended French programs.

- Special Education support for students varies across the system
- “Dyslexia is dyslexia in either language”
- Tool being developed for use in French language school boards may be useful

19. Class Size

Many French Immersion and Extended French classes are too large and discourage parents and students from enrolling due to the discrepancy in class size between French and English language programs.

20. Public consultation

A more open, comprehensive process for consultation should be in place.

The committee hopes that the current Review of French Immersion and Extended French programs will be open and parent-friendly.

21. System Responsibility

The system must take responsibility for the issues facing French Immersion and Extended French programs.

22. Use of the word “Optional” in referring to French Immersion and Extended French as “Optional French Programs”

Although the term “optional” is used by the Ministry of Education, the term should not be used in TDSB.

Continued use of the word “optional” marginalizes the programs.

The programs, once selected at the education pathway, are not optional.

- Urge that use of the word ‘optional’ be discontinued and that the program names French Immersion and/or Extended French be used
- Programs are the only program students experience – not optional
- Suggestion that use of ‘optional’ marginalizes programs

23. Leadership

System and school leaders must support French Immersion and Extended French programs.

24. The Future of FSL at TDSB

