



Toronto District School Board

**TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAM
REVIEW: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Research & Development

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TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAM REVIEW: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

Outlined by the Ontario Ministry of Education, the Vision for French Education in Ontario is *Students in English-language school boards have the confidence and ability to use French effectively in their daily lives* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)¹.

The Ministry of Education supports this vision with three main goals:

1. Increase student confidence, proficiency, and achievement in French as a Second Language (FSL).
2. Increase the percentage of students studying FSL until graduation.
3. Increase student, educator, parent, and community engagement in

Aligned with the overarching vision and subsequent goals are guiding principles intended to foster a common understanding of the importance of FSL in Ontario schools as well as guide policy-makers and educators in their decision making (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)¹.

Currently at the TDSB, there are over 90,000 students in Core French and 28,000 students in French Immersion/Extended French programs. French Immersion programs are designed for students who do not speak French at home. Currently, the TDSB offers Core French, two-system wide intensive French programs (Early French Immersion and Junior Extended French) as well as other intensive French Programs listed below.

Early French Immersion: The Early French Immersion program begins in Senior Kindergarten (SK). It offers 100% French instruction in the classroom until the end of Grade 3, although some specialist subjects may be taught in English. English instruction is gradually introduced beginning in Grade 4 until it becomes a half-day program from Grades 6 to 8. Designated school pathways exist to ensure that students have a continuation of program from the SK entry to the end of Grade 12.

Junior Extended French: The Junior Extended French program begins in Grade 4. Students in this program spend 50% of their day in French instruction from Grades 4 to 8 at the Extended French school. The subjects taught in French are French Language Arts, Social Studies, and The Arts. English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science are taught in English. Designated school pathways exist to ensure that students have a continuation of program from the Grade 4 entry to the end of Grade 12.

Core French: Core French is mandatory from Grades 4 to 8 for all students in English-language elementary schools. Policy and program requirements for elementary school Core French programs dictate that students entering Grade 4 must receive French instruction in every year from Grade 4 to Grade 8 and must have accumulated a minimum of 600 hours of French instruction by the end of Grade 8. There is one mandatory Core French credit required in Gr. 9. Students may continue to study Core French through to the end of Grade 12.

¹ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2013). Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Hawthorne II Bilingual Alternative: Children from Junior Kindergarten (JK) to Grade 3 receive daily instruction in French. This consists of 20 minutes per day in JK and gradually increases with each grade to 150 minutes from Grade 4 to Grade 6. Designated school pathways exist to ensure that students have a continuation of program from the JK entry to the end of Grade 12.

Cosburn Intensive Extended French: This program begins in Grade 6 and offers an 80% model of French instruction in Grades 6 to 8. Designated school pathways exist to ensure that students have a continuation of program from the Grade 6 entry to the end of Grade 12.

Middle French Immersion: The Middle Immersion Program begins in Grade 4 and is available to students in Grade 3 of the English program. It offers 100% French instruction in the classroom until the end of Grade 6, although some specialist subjects may be taught in English. Designated school pathways exist to ensure that students have a continuation of program from the Grade 4 entry to the end of Grade 12.

Intermediate Extended French (Grade 7 Entry): The Grade 7 Extended French program offers students who have successfully completed three years of Core French the option to enter into a more intensive program in Grade 7. These students spend approximately 40% of their day in French classes at the Extended French school. Designated school pathways exist to ensure that students have a continuation of program from the Grade 7 entry to the end of Grade 12.

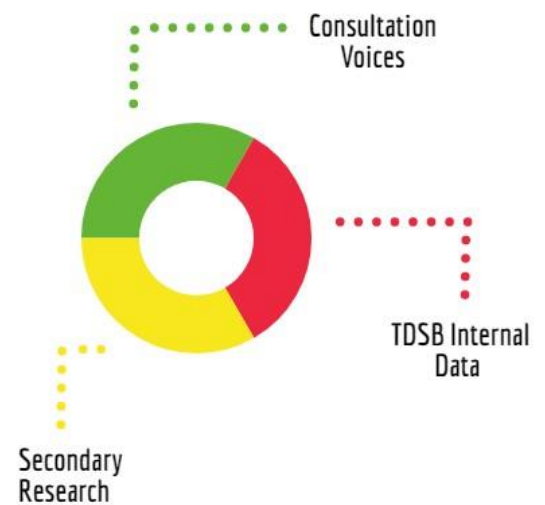
FRENCH REVIEW BACKGROUND and OBJECTIVES

A review of French programs at the TDSB was approved by the Board in June 2017 and was conducted the subsequent spring 2018. This review examined challenges and successes of all three French programs in the board (French Immersion, Extended French, and Core French) from key stakeholders' perspectives. The overarching goal of the review was to investigate:

What are the successes and challenges experienced by all stakeholders (i.e., parents, students, TDSB staff, Trustees, community members) involved in the TDSB's French programming?

This review gathered and triangulated multiple data sources to provide an in-depth, inclusive analysis of the current French programming at the TDSB. Such objectives included:

- Examining the lived experiences of those involved in the TDSB's French programs (Core, Immersion, and Extended) including those that have been able to access the programs and those that have not.
- Measuring how key stakeholders (e.g. parents/guardians, students, staff) report the quality of instruction, inclusive practices, equity of access, staffing, program viability, entry points and reasons for registering and deregistering in the three programs.
- Analyzing how student, staff and parent/guardian characteristics and perceptions interact with each French program (Core, Immersion, and Extended).
- Examining trends and patterns in student demographics, and student learning. Examining enrollment, retention, and attrition patterns as well as student mobility patterns.



CONSULTATION METHODS and RESPONDENT NUMBERS: STAKEHOLDER VOICES

The consultation component of this review was based on the TDSB's Community Engagement Policy PO78, which was informed by best practices within the area of community engagement. The process also draws on the Director's response to the Enhancing Equity Taskforce Recommendations which directed certain review concerns. To capture representative feedback on the TDSB's French Programming, multiple stakeholders were included as well as given multiple opportunities to comment on the TDSB's French programs. In total, the review captured feedback from **10,535 individuals**. Table 1 outlines who we talked to and, how we talked to them. Table 2 outlines the total number of survey respondents and consultation session participants.

Table 1: Consultation Details, Who and How?

Who we talked to?	How we talked to review participants?	
Parents and Community Members	Community Meetings and Online Survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Five community meetings in May: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Danforth Tech CI ✓ Etobicoke CI ✓ Birchmount Park CI ✓ Northview SS ✓ John Polanyi CI 2. Online survey (May and June) for all guardians and community members
Students	Student Forum and Online Survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student Forum in June with Grades 9-12 students from Core, Immersion and Extended programs 2. Student online survey (May and June) for all current and former students of TDSB French programs. Note: Grade 6 to 8 students completed the online survey with the support of EICs.
TDSB Staff	Staff Forum and Online Survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff Forum open to French and non-French TDSB teachers 2. Online survey (May and June) for all TDSB staff
Advisory Committee Members	Focus Groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advisory committee meeting (all advisory groups invited) 2. Meeting of the French as a Second Language Advisory Committee (FSLAC)

Table 2: Consultation Details, Number of Review Participants

Respondent	Survey	Consultation Sessions
Student	6,844	81
Parent / Community Member	1,988	146 (Parents and Community Members), 27(advisory committee members)
Staff	1,427	22

HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS: STAKEHOLDER VOICES

Rooted at the heart of this review is a community of engaged students, parents, and staff. Stakeholders felt passionately about the challenges they faced and their suggestions for improvement. The successes tell a story where most everyone recognizes the benefits of learning a second language, while the challenges and suggestions offer experiential guidance for considerations moving forward.

Overall French Program Successes and Strengths (All Programs)

<p>The vast majority of the Stakeholder community believed that learning a second language is a beneficial educational opportunity.</p>	<p>The majority of TDSB French teachers enjoyed teaching French.</p>	<p>In general, the student population was actively engaged and excited to learn French.</p>
<p>Overall, students had varied opportunities to learn about French language and culture.</p>	<p>In general, students recognized many French teachers as proficient, engaging, and creative.</p>	<p>In general, parents noted appreciation for childcare and/or transportation options.</p>
<p>Overall, stakeholders highlighted the increased enrolment and capacity of French Immersion programs at the TDSB.</p>	<p>The majority of parents were happy with the online application process.</p>	<p>Staff and parents were happy that students had more than one entry points available to be part of French programming, particularly the early entry in senior kindergarten to French Immersion.</p>
<p>The majority of Core, French Immersion and Extended French students felt that everyone was welcome in their French classes.</p>		

Overall French Program Challenges and Areas for Improvement (All Programs)

Overall, there was dissatisfaction in the quality of programming and resources/technology, student learning opportunities, assessment practices, and expectations for learning.	In general, students desired a more engaging, collaborative, and communicative focused French class with more opportunities to build their oral proficiency and participate in French extra-curriculars.	Overall, there was a perceived lack of learning intervention supports for students in French noted; this included students with Special Education Needs, English Language Learners, and students with a learning challenge.
In general, stakeholders felt schools lacked proficient French teaching staff (including occasional teacher coverage, support staff, language resource support, Special Education Needs staff, and Administrators).	Overall, stakeholders stated that French Immersion is best started in the primary grades and Extended French entry points should be streamlined. Some , parents and teachers felt there were too many entry points into Intensive French programs and wanted to streamline program offerings in conjunction with strengthening Core French and offering it from K-12.	An overall imbalance of resources across French programs and schools was rased across stakeholder groups.
A need for additional professional learning and opportunities for collaboration, specific to French teachers' needs, were mentioned by the majority of teachers and administration.	Specific to French teachers, many noted that the 'Coach' model of support was not as effective as the 'Instructional Leader' model from previous years.	In general, stakeholders perceived that French Immersion and Extended French excluded large portions of the TDSB population (e.g., students from racialized and marginalized communities) and should look at ways to engage all members of the TDSB.

Overall Stakeholder Perceptions Across Programs: Quality of Teaching and French Educational Programming

Stakeholder responses to the survey items presented a clear difference between the experiences of families in Core French and the families in French Immersion (FI) and Extended French (EF). However, in saying that, stakeholder comments in the intensive French programs showed dissatisfaction to many of the same areas for improvement suggested by Core French students, parents, and staff. For example, 51% of Core French students were satisfied with the amount, quality and type of French resources available, while 56% (FI) and 62% (EF) students felt the same. Similarly, 14% of Core French parents were satisfied with resources available, while 34% (FI) and 31% (EF) were satisfied. A pattern of lower agreement levels for Core French respondents to satisfaction questions related to quality of teaching, quality of assessments, distribution of resources, student enjoyment and learning opportunities, use of / and confidence in using the French language was evident.

Overall Stakeholder Perceptions Across Programs: Inclusive Practices

A slightly different pattern emerged when examining question items related to inclusive practices. Approximately 80% of students in all French programs felt all students were welcome in the TDSB's French programs, while the percentage was significantly less for parents and staff (Parents - 46% Core, 55% FI/EF) (French Staff - 73% Core, 67% FI/EF). Although a high percentage of students felt everyone was welcome in French programming, less than one-third felt they were represented in French-language

resources. In terms of access to learning supports for students with Special Education Needs, English Language Learners, and students needing support with a learning challenge, all stakeholder groups identified a lack of access across French programs.

In general, stakeholders perceived that French Immersion and Extended French excluded large portions of the TDSB population (e.g., students from racialized and marginalized communities) and should look at ways to engage all members of the TDSB.

CORE FRENCH

Following the guidance of the Ontario Ministry of Education Ontario educators at the elementary level, teach French so that students can “accumulate a minimum of 600 hours of French instruction by the end of Grade 8. At the secondary level, academic, applied and open courses are offered for Grades 9 and 10; university preparation and open courses are offered for Grades 11 and 12” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 1)².

Core French continues to be not only “a basis of Canadian identity, but also an essential tool for ensuring Canadians’ openness to the world. Through second-language education, the Government offers young Canadians a boost toward wider professional horizons and a key to the international stage” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013a, p. 8)². Core French has a deep past in Ontario that predates confederation (Stern, 1986)³ with the very first French class taught in an Ontario high school in 1854 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1974)⁴.

Today Core French continues to be the primary mode of French as a Second Language instruction in Canada with more than three quarters of students in Ontario learning French in Core French programs (Canadian Parents for French, 2017)⁵. This position however has been eroding and attrition is an annual concern, as many students do not continue beyond elementary school offerings (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007⁶; Lapkin et al., 2009⁷; Makropoulos, 2007⁸).

Currently more than 90,000 TDSB students in Core French brings challenges and opportunities for improvement. When comparing the TDSB’s Core French and the two Intensive French programs, there tended to be a divide between the two. There was a consistent theme that noted Core French as undervalued; subsequently it does not have the same resource budgets, staffing priorities, teacher professional development opportunities, student learning supports, and overall importance as other subject areas. In a bilingual country, many felt this to be unacceptable.

² Ontario Ministry of Education. (2018). Parents: French as a second language. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/FLS.html>

³ Stern, H. H. (1986). Second language education in Canada: Innovation, research and policies, *Interchange*, 17(2), 41-53.

⁴ Ontario Ministry of Education. (1974). Report of the ministerial committee on the teaching of French. Toronto, ON: Author.

⁵ Canadian Parents for French. (2017, July). The state of French-second-language education in Canada 2017: Focus on French Language Students [PDF document]. Retrieved from <https://cpf.ca/en/files/State-of-FSL-Education-Report-Final-Web.pdf>

⁶ Canadian Council on Learning, (2007). Lessons in learning: French Immersion education in Canada. Ottawa, ON: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/LessonsInLearning/May-17-07-French-immersion.pdf>

⁷ Lapkin, S., Mady, C., & Arnott, S. (2009). Research perspectives on core French: A literature review. *The Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 12(2), 6-30.

⁸ Makropoulos, J. (2007). Student engagement and disengagement in French immersion programs: A case study in an Ottawa English Catholic high school. (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. NR52764).

Summary of stakeholders’ challenges and suggestions from the online surveys as well as the consultation sessions and forums specifically on Core French are noted below:

Challenges and Suggestions Specific to: Core French

<p>Participation in French Programming</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enrollment and Retention: Overall, the lack of interest in learning French was the main reason why students did not continue with Core French after Grade 9. ● Entry Point: 47% of students and 66% of parents believed Core French should begin before Grade 4. Many suggested that Core French continue past Grade 9.
<p>French Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quality of Teaching: Not all students reported enjoying learning French: 47% of students in Core French enjoyed learning French. ● French Programming: In general, stakeholders felt the Core French program was not fully recognized by the system and requires more system leadership and consistent support at the school level. Many agreed that Core French classrooms should have a dedicated classroom space. ● Student Learning: 79% of Core French students never/rarely used French outside of school. Core French students had significantly lower self-reported confidence levels in using the French language than Immersion and Extended students. Only 3 out of 10 Core French students were striving to achieve the Certificate of Achievement. ● French and My Future: Few Core French students saw French as personally meaningful or relevant to their future.
<p>Inclusive Practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resources: Core French students were the least likely to see themselves represented in French language resources.
<p>Teaching Supports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assessment Practices: Many Core French teachers expressed a need for standard diagnostic tool which measures students’ French progress at each grade level. ● Professional Learning: In general, Core French teachers often felt isolated in their roles. Core French teachers also struggled with classroom management and a disruptive learning environment in the classroom and noted requiring additional professional learning or classroom supports.

FRENCH IMMERSION AND EXTENDED FRENCH

A combined, more detailed summary of stakeholders’ challenges and suggestions from the online surveys as well as the consultation sessions and forums regarding French Immersion and Extended French are noted below^{9,10}.

Challenges and Suggestions Specific to: French Immersion and Extended French

<p>Participation in French Programming</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment and Retention: The vast majority of Immersion and Extended French students noted three main reasons for leaving French programming which included: French is not offered in specialized programs or in many secondary school locations, students struggled academically, and a lack of interest in learning French. • Entry Point: Approximately half of parent respondents were satisfied with current French Immersion and Extended French entry points. Stakeholders stated that French Immersion is best started in the primary grades and Extended French entry points should be streamlined. Eighty-one percent (81%) of parents agreed French Immersion should begin in Grade 1 or kindergarten, while 45% of students felt the same. 27% of parents agreed that Extended French should start in Grade 4. • Students generally expressed that it was more difficult to enter Immersion or Extended programs at later entry points. • Some parents and staff felt there were too many entry points into intensive French programs and suggested streamlining program offerings in conjunction with strengthening the Core French program and offering it from K-12. • Program Location: Many families struggled with access to conveniently located French programs and suggested a review of current locations of Immersion and Extended programs. • Secondary School Pathway: Approximately half of French Immersion and Extended French parents were satisfied with their child’s secondary school pathway.
<p>French Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French Programming: Students desired a more engaging, collaborative, and communicative focused French class with more opportunities to build their oral proficiency. Stakeholders suggested that schools should communicate and/or align community resources and activities for students to engage in speaking French outside of the school day. • Student Learning: Students experienced a lack of subject area courses in French to choose from available at the secondary level. Many were frustrated with their learning and dissatisfied with their fluency and proficiency progression in French. Students suggested teachers provide consistent encouragement to speak French outside of the classroom as well as elaborate on fluency expectations as students’ progress through Immersion and Extended programs. The majority of French Immersion and Extended students did not use French outside of school. Less than

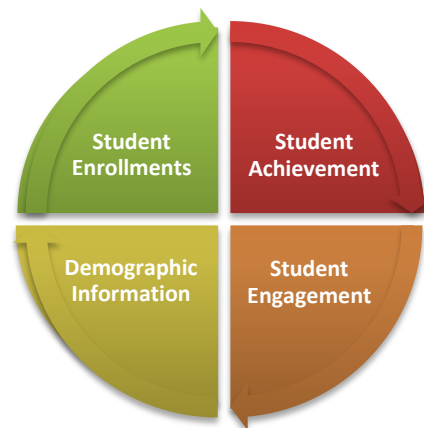
⁹ The points in the summary are not recommendations from research - they are a summary of findings and suggestions provided by stakeholders.

¹⁰ French Immersion and Extended French have been combined as many of the same concerns and issues were noted across the two programs.

	<p>sixty-percent of Immersion and Extended students are striving to achieve the TDSB Certificate of Bilingual Studies in French.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents felt there was a lack of communication about expectations for student learning as well as a lack of supports for Anglophone parents to help their children with French work at home. • French and My Future: Little conversation was happening between students and staff around post-secondary pathways and future career opportunities related to learning French.
Inclusive Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Distribution: Stakeholders experienced an imbalance of resources across French programs. This was twofold. In all three French programs, a lack of updated and relevant resources was noted. Schools that had multiple programs (i.e., English, Immersion and/or Extended) noted that the English program had much better resources than the French programs at the same site. Less than 25% of parents and staff felt English and French Immersion/Extended French students were well served in dual/triple program schools. Stakeholders recommended re-examining the value of dual/triple program sites versus French centres in terms of resource availability, purchasing power, and distribution.
Teaching Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment Practices: Overall stakeholders noted an incomplete repertoire of consistent, high quality formal French assessments and suggested to investigate options for common French assessment and evaluation tools to be used across the system for Core/Extended French programs, including diagnostic tools to determine fluency and measure student progress at each grade level. • Staff expressed a desire for there to be more common French exemplars, standards for assessment and evaluation, and grade expectations for French proficiency. • Learning Supports: Within the intensive programs, staff reported feeling unclear about the process or guidelines on how to advise families whose children were struggling academically.
Other Programming Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child care and transportation: Many parents detailed their frustrations with the lack of childcare options available and the challenging commutes to school many students have.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FINDINGS: TDSB STUDENT DATA

The characteristics of students within intensive French programs (Immersion and Extended) differ from the ‘average’ TDSB characteristics in terms of demographic, achievement, and engagement variables. In general, there tends to be more representation of students with demographic characteristics such as high social economic status (SES) and less representation of students who primarily spoke a language other than English at home; these discrepancies tended to be less prominent in the Extended French program. A variety of achievement measures all suggest a pattern of higher achievement among students in the intensive French programs. Likewise, measures of school engagement suggest a marginally lower rate of suspension, absenteeism, and mobility among students in intensive French programs. A summary of key findings from the section on TDSB student data is noted below¹¹.



Student Demographics and Family Background

Gender	There tended to be a slightly higher representation of female students compared to male students in both French Immersion and Extended French programs compared to the general TDSB demographics. In FSL programs (French Immersion and Extended French), female students currently represent 55-58% of students across the three age brackets, which is an improvement from the 55-63% range in 2011-12. There were minimal differences between Immersion and Extended programs regarding gender. The representation of female students across age brackets, however, suggest the overrepresentation of female students tends to be marginally more prominent in Grades 9-12 in comparison to the other two age brackets.
Language	The French Immersion and Extended French programs tend to differ in their representation of students who primarily spoke a language other than English at home and students born outside of Canada. The Immersion program has an underrepresented population of students speaking other than English at home (34-37%), and students born outside of Canada (6-10%) across all three age brackets. In contrast, students speaking other than English at home (53-59%) and students born outside of Canada (20-21%) are equally represented, or slightly overrepresented, in the Extended program. Both programs tend to have decreased representation of students who arrived in Canada in the past 1-3 years in comparison to the general TDSB demographics. This discrepancy tends to decrease for students who arrived in Canada in the past 4-5 years. Comparisons across the three academic years of data collection suggest that in general these findings have remained

¹¹ These categories primarily utilize descriptive statistics collected from two rich data sources: (1) the TDSB’s School Information Systems (SIS) as well as the data collected from EQAO assessments. These data sources are an accumulation of three academic years: 2016-2017, 2011-2012 & 2006-2007. These descriptive statistics are furthermore broken down into age brackets: (1) Kindergarten to Grade 6 (K-6), (2) Grade 7 to Grade 8 (7-8) and (3) Grade 9 to Grade 12 (9-12).

	consistent over time.
Students with Special Education Needs	The representation of students with Special Education Needs has improved (i.e., increased) in both the Immersion and Extended programs over the three academic years measured. Nonetheless, students with Special Education Needs remain less represented than the overall TDSB demographics across all three age brackets. Specifically, the current representation of students with Special Education Needs in Immersion (7-10%) and Extended (4-6%) programs tends to be lower than their representation in the TDSB as a whole (14-22%).
Student Racial Background	The percentage of students enrolled in intensive French programs varied by student racial background. Minimal differences in percentages were found among students with an Indigenous, Latin American, and Southeast Asian racial background compared to the general TDSB demographics. Students with a White racial background, however, tended to be overrepresented in the Immersion program (48-50%) and, to a lesser extent, the Extended French program (34-35%) compared to the TDSB as a whole (26-31%). The representation of White students in Immersion has marginally improved (i.e., decreased) across the three academic years measured. Both the Immersion and Extended programs have an overrepresentation of student with Mixed racial backgrounds and underrepresentation of students with South Asian racial backgrounds. This pattern was more profound in the French Immersion program than the Extended French program. In contrast, students with an East Asian racial background were slightly underrepresented in the French Immersion program (9-10%), but more represented in the Extended French program (13-20%) compared to the general TDSB demographics (12-16%).
Social Economic Status (SES) Characteristics	The Immersion and Extended French programs tended to differ in their representation of SES and household characteristics, with more proportionate representation being found among the Extended program. The French Immersion program tended to have a higher percentage of students who have parents with a very high SES (50-63%), a university-level education (74-83%), and had parents who were both born in Canada (37-44%). In contrast, students in the Extended program had more proportionate amounts of family with a very high SES (38-41%), parents who have a university level education (62-76%), and parents who were both born in Canada (24-37%), while still being slightly overrepresented compared to the general TDSB demographics.

Student Achievement and Engagement

Student Achievement	Student achievement was measured through report card grades, EQAO and OSSLT results, and credit accumulation. A comparison of intensive French programs to the average TDSB achievement for each age bracket showed a higher percentage of achievement among students in the intensive French programs. The percentage of students who received a level 3 or 4 on their report card in reading, writing, and mathematics was higher in French Immersion (73-87%) and Extended French (83-89%) in comparison to the average TDSB achievement (65-79%). Student achievement in the Extended program tended to be slightly higher than the Immersion program in reading and writing among report card results, but remained similar when using EQAO, OSSLT, and credit accumulation as the achievement measure. Mathematics achievement among both report card and EQAO and OSSLT results remained fairly similar across both FSL programs, but were higher than the TDSB average. On the whole, there was consistently higher achievement across both Immersion and Extended French programs, which has tended to be fairly consistent across the three
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	academic years measured.
Student Engagement	Students in the Immersion and Extended programs were compared on levels of school engagement, as measured by rates of absenteeism, suspension and mobility in Grades 9-12. Although the difference in percentages remained small, students in FSL programs consistently had lower levels on all three measures compared to the average TDSB rates. For example, the absenteeism rates were slightly lower in French Immersion (6.5%) and Extended French (5.2%) compared to the TDSB (8.4%). Both programs demonstrated a slight decrease in suspension and mobility rates across the three academic years measured.

Enrollment and Retention Patterns

Enrollment and Retention Patterns	<p>Overall, there has been an increase in the enrollment in FSL programs in the TDSB from 2002-03 to 2017-18.</p> <p>Similarly, there was a tendency for an improvement in year to year retention when comparing the older cohorts (e.g., 2002-03) to the most recent cohorts (e.g., 2017-18).</p> <p>On average, male retention was slightly lower than female retention, especially in the Early French Immersion, Junior Extended French, and Intermediate Extended French programs.</p> <p>Some grades tended to have higher or lower levels of attrition overall. The most prominent attrition occurred between Grade 8 and Grade 9.</p>
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HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS: RESEARCH LITERATURE

Many of the challenges presented through stakeholder voices, student data, and enrollment and retention data are well known by research scholars. Concerns acknowledged within the literature that impact community stakeholders and French programs at the TDSB include: student enrollment, staffing and recruitment of French teachers, realistic fluency expectations of French programs, inconsistent curriculum implementation, lack of professional development for French teachers, Core French a la carte model, and a lack of remedial learning support in French programs. Table 3 details several challenges for French language teaching in Canada that are also found in Ontario noted by field scholars.

Table 3: Challenges Facing FSL Education Programs¹² Noted in the Literature

Challenges Facing FSL Education Programs	
Lack of appropriate resources (books at the appropriate interest level are too complex linguistically)	Published books are geared to Francophone learners
Teachers need to have had training in language-teaching methodology, and they need to be proficient in French	Shortage of qualified teachers
Because education is provincial/territorial, it is difficult to assess the L2 learning situation in	Transferability of students from program to program within and across provinces/territories; common

¹² Adapted from the Council of Ministers of Education (2015).

Canada; lack of tools for measuring proficiency, especially speaking	terminology needed across provinces/territories; lack of common standards across Canada
Working conditions for Core French teachers; marginalization of Core French	High turnover of teachers; decline in time allocated to Core French; recognition of FSL as mainstream (as important as math)
Student retention in programs	Lack of planning/continuity; no provincial/territorial requirement for FSL
Lack of tools for L2 assessment, particularly speaking	Speaking tends not to be assessed in the early grades

CONCLUSIONS and NEXT STEPS

Provincially, there are challenges, tensions and solutions to be found across school boards. In recent years, many school boards have conducted their own French language program reviews. The experiences of others are not different from those of the TDSB.

For instance, a “majority of boards expressed the challenge of finding qualified and language competent teachers” (Upper Grand District School Board, 2017, p. 4)¹³. The Halton Catholic District School Board has suggested the shortage of qualified teachers is more of a “crisis” than a challenge¹⁴. Some Boards are limiting plans for French programming until the hiring of French teachers is completed and/or current permanent qualified teachers accept a position teaching French. Looking to other school boards for approaches to improvement and policy changes is merited.

Going back to 2006 when the previous French programs review was conducted¹⁵, many of the same themes mentioned exist today. French programs need: system leadership and support, consistent support at the school level, additional learning supports provided to students in French programs, and additional qualified French resources.

This current French programs review provides extensive stakeholder perceptual data, participation trends, research literature which all provide extensive evidence for an informed discussion about advancing the improvement efforts of Core French and the French Immersion/Extended programs. To move forward, the board must examine the internal challenges and conditions within the system that align with stakeholder challenges before moving forward with recommendations.

This French programs review drew on theories of developmental evaluation, which supports the process of innovation within an organization and its activities (Gamble, 2008)¹⁶. As such, it is important moving forward to consider evaluative thinking into the process of developing recommendations and intentional change (Gamble, 2008)¹⁶. In the context of the TDSB, this resembles continued engagement with evidence along the journey (such as conversing with stakeholders, examining student data, examining best practices and case studies), and a collaborative approach to working through problems and challenges.

¹³ Upper Grand District School Board. (2017, June). Report of the secondary French review committee: Planning Department Memo 2017-004. Retrieved from <https://www.ugdsb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Report-of-the-Secondary-FSL-Review-Committee-2017-06-13-3.pdf>

¹⁴ Halton District School Board. (2009, Winter). Comparing the student achievement and learning experiences of elementary French immersion students in dual-track and single-track environments. Burlington, ON: Department of Research and Accountability. Retrieved from <https://bc-yk.cpf.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/Compare-achievement-elementary-Dual-vs-Single.pdf>

¹⁵ Gosling. (2006). Review of French Immersion and Extended French Programs. Retrieved from <http://tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/Leadership/Ward7/Gosling%20Report%2002-06-0905.pdf>

¹⁶ Gamble, J. (2008). A Developmental Evaluation Primer. The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation.