

Letter from Cosburn School Council, Ward 15:

Dear TDSB Trustees,

On behalf of Cosburn School Council, we are writing to express concern for changes to the French Immersion program for some classes enrolled in virtual school. In particular, we understand that there was recently a large re-organization in which several classes lost their teacher either 100% or 50%, and some Grade 3 and 4 French Immersion students have been moved to a 50:50 French-English model. We are aware that some RH McGregor students are affected by these changes, and will become part of the Cosburn school community. It is our understanding that these families were never informed officially from TDSB administration until after the change, something that would not happen in bricks and mortar schools.

While we understand staffing changes can be expected, and that the board has had a monumental task of providing safe in-person instruction as well as launching Virtual School (VS), we have concerns about the ongoing lack of communication with our virtual school families and introducing a different type of curriculum for some but not all students. During a pandemic, the needs of children must be considered and we must look to pathways to ensuring the least amount of disruption. This is similarly true for teachers. Teachers in VS are working alone, with long hours, and learning new tech. Some of our Cosburn teachers are in VS and we want to ensure they too are supported with the resources they need, and adequate time to adjust.

We share the concern families have expressed to us about the ongoing burden these changes have placed on our virtual students and their families. Many of the students attending the virtual schools have pre-existing conditions, chronic illnesses or disabilities that make in-person schooling in a pandemic risky as they may experience serious complications if they contract COVID-19. Based on TDSB data, lower-income and racialized families are opting for online learning at a significantly greater rate than white and wealthier families. We know that our online learners are disproportionately more in need of supports and resources with a delayed start, lack of supply teachers when the teacher is sick, lack of specialist/rotary resulting in a shortened day, lack of a class budget, lack of timely response to complaints as there is no phone number to call virtual school admin, and no parent council to bring issues forward. We also agree, that moving some learners to a 2 teacher 50-50 model where half of the number of French language instructional hours will be eliminated sets a dangerous precedent for the TDSB. Some students will receive a full curriculum in their chosen pathway. Others will not, and will likely begin next year behind their peers in French reading and comprehension. We have yet to hear how TDSB will support affected students, or whether this task will be downloaded to their home teacher next year.

No one wants to see their child's education reduced, we ask TDSB to review if there is another pathway to an equitable solution to the problem of the lack of French language teachers. This decision threatens to create a two-tiered system that will only impact current virtual school students, potentially for years to come. If harsh decisions need to be made, then surely, at minimum, the burden should be spread across virtual and bricks and mortar cohorts. We also formally request to know how many additional French speaking teachers have been hired since November 1, 2020.

We ask TDSB to treat all learners the same, and provide to them the same curriculum, and the same resources as their situation requires.

Sincerely,

Cosburn School Council through WARD 15 FSLAC representative