



REVISED RECOMMENDATIONS TO FRENCH INSTRUCTION FOR KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY EARLY FRENCH IMMERSION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Happening with French Instruction in Kindergarten & Grades 1-3 French Immersion?

This fall, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) has been considering changes to the delivery of French as a second language in kindergarten and grades 1-3 Early French Immersion (EFI). In October 2015, parents and staff were asked to provide feedback about the recommended changes to how we deliver these programs. We heard from many people, but we also heard that more time was needed for consultation. Additional consultation is now underway and we would like your input.

Why are changes being proposed?

Currently students move into Early French Immersion in senior kindergarten. This is the middle of the two-year kindergarten program. Moving students in the middle of the two-year program creates additional transitions for some students, separates peer groups, makes it more challenging to organize classes and may result in large differences in class size. The proposed changes are intended to align the EFI program with the two year kindergarten model.

What are the changes being proposed?

There are three recommendations for change.

1. All OCDSB kindergarten students (junior and senior) would receive 50% of their instruction in English and 50% in French (there would no longer be an option of 20 minutes French/day for JK or SK);
2. Students in Early French Immersion would have a change in the language of instruction of mathematics from French to English for grades 1 to 3 EFI;
3. Students in grade 1 Early French Immersion would receive 60 minutes of daily English (as a subject) instruction.

Why was the decision delayed?

We heard from many people who felt that more time was needed for school councils, parents and staff to be aware of the recommendations and to have the opportunity to provide feedback to the Board.

When will a decision be made?

A report will be brought to Committee of the Whole on February 2, 2016 that will include staff recommendations informed by Phase 2 of our consultation. A decision will be made at a board meeting in February, 2016 (date to be determined).

What is going to happen between now and when the Board makes a decision?

Staff was directed to design and plan for more consultation including the sending of information home in students' back-packs, undertaking additional on-line surveys and allowing school councils more time to discuss this at council meetings.

How many people responded to the on-line survey during the first phase of the consultation?

A total of 3891 people responded to the initial survey; 2,958 public - mostly parents and 883 staff, mostly elementary teachers.

What did parents who responded to the OCDSB survey say?

Parent responses to the survey were positive - 66-68% of parents were in favour of the three recommendations (vs. 24-25% opposed) which are outlined in the report. The staff responses to the survey were mixed. More staff were opposed to the kindergarten change (53% vs 36%), but supported the addition of

English as a subject (52% vs 38%), and a slight majority of staff (46% vs 43%) supported the change of language in math instruction. Click [here](#) to read more detail about the survey analysis in the report.

What has staff identified as the merits of these changes?

The full-day kindergarten program is meant to be a seamless two-year program. The current entry point to Early French Immersion at the end of junior kindergarten interrupts the two-year program. The proposed changes would move the entry point of EFI to the compulsory age of attendance in grade one, creating a two-year learning experience in kindergarten.

It is also thought that these changes could enhance equity of opportunity and access for all students to both programs - English with Core French and Early French Immersion. Ensuring a strong foundation in both official languages opens up the possibility of pursuing either the English or French Immersion pathway for all students, including students with special needs and English Language Learners. These changes would provide all kindergarten students with more instructional minutes in French which could enhance their ability and confidence to communicate in both official languages.

The proposed recommendations would also result in benefits from a school organization and staffing perspective. Under the current model Junior Kindergarten students cannot be combined with second year EFI kindergarten students, and students in EFI cannot be combined with students in the Senior Kindergarten English program. Class sizes in kindergarten could be more evenly distributed as there would no longer be sites in dual-track schools with class size discrepancies between the two programs.

How will the English/Core French and the Early French Immersion Programs change if the recommendations are approved?

The following chart outlines the proposed changes to both programs:

Comparison of English with Core French vs Early French Immersion Program Models				
Grade	English with Core French		Early French Immersion	
	Current # Minutes French	Proposed Change	Current # Minutes French (% French)	Proposed Change (% French)
JK	20 min/day	150 min/day	20 min/day (7%)	150 min/day (50%)
SK	20 min/day	150 min/day	150 min/day (50%)	150 min/day (50%)
1	40 min/day	40 min/day	300 min/day (100%)	240 min/day (80%) until Sept 2018 and then would change to 180 min/day (60%)
2	40 min/day	40 min/day	240 min/day (80%)	180 min/day (60%)
3	40 min/day	40 min/day	240 min/day (80%)	180 min/day (60%)

QUESTIONS RELATING TO RECOMMENDATION 1: KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

Why are you recommending a 50/50 model for both years of kindergarten?

Moving to a 50 percent English and 50 percent French model in both years of kindergarten in all schools would ensure all learners would experience a rich foundation in both official languages that would prepare them to continue in either the EFI or the English program in grade 1. A 50/50 program would also address equity of

access to program pathways, and provide parents with richer information on which to select a program pathway (English or French Immersion) for their child at the end of the kindergarten program, rather than in the middle of the program.

Following a two-year 50/50 program, parents can be confident that the strong foundation in French established through the two-year kindergarten program will support the further development of FSL proficiency through Core French. Likewise, students entering the EFI program will continue to develop strong English language skills.

What concerns have been raised about this proposal?

In the first round of consultation, the following were the common concerns raised (in no particular order):

- "it would be too difficult for children that young"
- "it would be too difficult for English Language Learners and students with special needs"
- "it would reduce parent involvement (their choice of program in SK; their ability to help at home)"
- "it would increase points of contact/transitions for students"

A more detailed description of the concerns raised is included in the staff report.

Will all students in kindergarten be affected by this proposal?

Yes. If the proposed changes are approved, all students in the district will experience a 50% French/ 50% English kindergarten program in both years of kindergarten, commencing September 2016. There would no longer be an option of 20 minutes of French per day (the current English with Core French model in JK and SK).

What impact would the proposed 50% French/ 50% English have on English Language Learners?

The proposal would provide English language learners an opportunity to develop a rich foundation in both official languages. While many people have asked about the impact for English Language learners, there is no research evidence to support the claim that introducing French would interfere with the acquisition of the English language. As outlined in the Framework for a Second Language in Ontario Schools – Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2013, trilingualism has many benefits and participation in FSL programs can facilitate the development of English proficiency.

What impact would the proposed 50% French/ 50% English kindergarten program have on students with special needs?

Students with special needs can learn a second language. As with other subjects, some students may need accommodation, but there is nothing inherent in the learning of a second language that precludes students with special needs from accessing the benefits associated with being able to communicate in both official languages.

QUESTIONS RELATING TO RECOMMENDATION 2: INTRODUCTION OF ONE HOUR OF ENGLISH AS A SUBJECT INSTRUCTION TO GRADE 1 EFI

What are the benefits of adding an hour of English as a subject in grade one?

Introducing 60 minutes of English (as a subject) to grade 1 EFI students could provide for continued development of strong English skills in the EFI program for all students. This would be a particular benefit for English language learners who would continue to develop their English language skills alongside their French language skills.

This increase in English instruction in Grade 1 EFI, combined with a 50/50 program in both years of kindergarten, could support opportunities for identification of learning difficulties in both English and French.

In addition, parental comments from the recent survey referred to the following comments: increased ability for

parents to support at home, parents would not be solely responsible for maintaining the English language gains from kindergarten.

What concerns have been raised about the addition of English as a subject in EFI?

In the first round of consultation, the following were the common concerns raised (in no particular order):

- "it would negatively impact student learning of French math vocabulary"
- "it would reduce opportunities for integration across subjects"
- "it would dilute the French Immersion Program; students need to be fully immersed in French"
- "it would increase points of contact/transitions for students"

A more detailed description of the concerns raised is included in the staff report.

QUESTIONS RELATING TO RECOMMENDATION 3: CHANGE OF LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION OF MATHEMATICS IN GRADES 1-3 EFI FROM FRENCH TO ENGLISH

What are the benefits of changing the language of instruction of mathematics from French to English in grades 1-3 Early French Immersion?

This change would result in the alignment of language of instruction of mathematics from grades 1-12 across the district. Math is currently taught in English in grades 4 to 12 in all schools.

Mathematics continues to be an area for focus and improvement at a district level. The revised mathematics curriculum has a significant language component. This change would allow students to focus on the development and application of skills, concepts and understandings without also focusing on the literacy component in a second language.

The research evidence does not provide a clear argument for Mathematics to be delivered exclusively in English. This has been noted among the concerns raised to this proposal.

What concerns have been raised about this proposal?

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A more detailed description of the concerns raised is included in the staff report.

How will my child learn mathematical language in French if mathematic instruction is in English?

Students in the first two years of kindergarten would have the opportunity to learn mathematical language in both English and French as mathematical language/numeracy is embedded across the curriculum. French Immersion students would have opportunities to learn the mathematical language in French through curriculum expectations embedded in science and technology, social studies, history and geography, and the health curriculum.

QUESTIONS RELATING TO FRENCH HOURS AND FRENCH PROFICIENCY

What is the impact overall on the hours of French Instruction for students in the Early French Immersion Program?

Currently, students receive 20 minutes a day of French instruction in junior kindergarten. An additional 130 minutes a day of French language instruction would be added to junior kindergarten for all students. In senior kindergarten, EFI students would continue to receive 150 minutes of French instruction per day.

There would be a decrease of 60 minutes per day of French instruction from grades 1-3 in Early French Immersion as a result of the language of instruction of mathematics being changed from French to English.

In addition, introducing English Language instruction in Grade 1 would result in a decrease of an additional 60 minutes per day of French language instruction for a total of 120 minutes of English instruction (60 minutes of math and 60 minutes of English as a subject). (Please note this change would not come into effect until 2018 at the earliest).

How will the proposed program changes impact the French Proficiency of EFI Students?

We do not anticipate an adverse impact on French proficiency. All our French language instruction programs (Core French, EFI, MFI) can lead to bilingualism. The data from the district's participation in the DELF (Diplome d'etudes de langue francaise), provides interesting information about our students proficiency levels. The DELF measure proficiency by the end of Grade 12. Of particular note, our students who are registered in the Middle French Immersion, which begins in grade 4, are achieving at the same level of proficiency (B2) as our EFI students, who begin in Grade 1.

Can I choose to start my child at his/her home school for Immersion, even if the closest school to my house is an English single track school?

There will be no change to our current practice. If parents anticipate that their child will continue in the Early French Immersion (EFI) Program after kindergarten, they may elect to start their child in kindergarten at the home school which offers EFI beyond kindergarten.

MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS

Will these changes increase the number of teacher contacts for my child?

The number of teacher contacts that children experience should not be adversely impacted by the proposed changes. Currently, students in Kindergarten and Grades 1-3 have at least two teachers - English and French. On occasion, students may have additional teachers, depending on how the preparation time for teachers is scheduled in the school. Most kindergarten classes also have at least two ECEs assigned (a morning and afternoon shift). If the proposals are approved, scheduling/timetabling supports will be provided to schools in order to create timetables that minimize the number of teacher contacts for students.

Will the proposed changes negatively impact the English Language Program Pathway in our schools?

The proposed changes are intended to enrich the English/ Core French, and the Early French Immersion program. A strong foundation in English and French in the two-year kindergarten program will provide parents with the information that they require to choose between two programs. Following a 50% English/50% French kindergarten program, parents who select the English program for their child at grade 1, can be confident that the strong foundation in French established through Junior and Senior Kindergarten will support further development of FSL proficiency through Core French. Likewise, students entering the EFI program will continue to develop strong English language skills.

If parents elect not to send their child to kindergarten, will they be permitted to register their child in grade one French Immersion?

Yes. There will be no change to our current practice.

Are there financial implications related to these changes?

Yes. Although the recommendations were not made for financial reasons, there are implications to both revenues and expenditures. Revenues will increase as a result of the changes to the kindergarten model because the changes will increase our French immersion grant funding. There may also be some savings related to the number of classes. There will be some expenditures in terms of teacher training and the acquisition of learning resources. The overall impact is an estimated financial gain of approximately \$2.7M per year. However, due to staffing constraints, the changes are inter-related – for example it is not possible to only increase the kindergarten French instruction, without decreasing the amount of English instruction in grades 1-3 EFI.