



Update: French-as-a-Second Language Review

To: Committee of the Whole

Date: 16 October, 2019

Report No.: 10-19-3758

Strategic Directions

- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students
- Transform Student Learning
- Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being
- Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs
- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students

Recommendation

It is recommended that the update on the French-as-a-Second Language Review be received.

Context

The Board of Trustees approved the recommendations of the French-as-a-Second-Language Review on June 16, 2019. The recommendations included:

- I) That intensive French-as-a-Second-Language programs be restructured leading to a single intensive French Immersion program model with two entry points (Junior Kindergarten and Grade 4), and that all other entry points be eliminated;
- II) That minimum intake and a maximum cap be established at entry points, to ensure program viability and to account for attrition rates;
- III) That a Core French action plan be developed;
- IV) That inclusive practices in all FSL programs be ensured;

- V) That the current plan for the recruitment and retention of FSL teachers be strengthened.

The next steps following this approval included a report on a:

- Core French Action Plan
- Implementation of a proposed transportation plan
- Development of a redistribution plan for French Immersion programs to improve equity of access
- Revision of operational procedure, PR597, French Immersion/Extended French.

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

Core French Action Plan

Over the course of the summer 2019, staff created a comprehensive Core French Action Plan to reflect student, parent/guardian, and staff voice elicited from feedback in the FSL Review, Spring 2018.

Currently, more than 90,000 TDSB students are enrolled in the Core French Program. In Ontario, it is mandatory for all students attending English-language elementary schools to receive French instruction in every school year from Grade 4 through Grade 8, and to accumulate a minimum of 600 hours of French instruction by the end of Grade 8. In addition, all students must complete one secondary Core French credit (typically in Grade 9) in order to graduate.

The integral focus of the Core French Action Plan is to support leaders and Principals to build staff capacity and shared leadership regarding programming and strategies for differentiated instruction that accommodate a range of learners and learning needs in Core French programs. In addition, it emphasizes a plan to fund and target professional learning specifically for new and experienced Core French (elementary/secondary) teachers that includes the principles of Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP), and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Fundamental to the plan is the need to identify, share and implement best practices and strategies in Core French through job-embedded professional learning, coaching and mentoring of staff.

The Core French Action Plan consists of the following six (6) areas of focus:

- Central Professional Learning for Core French Teachers Gr. 4-12
- Learning Centre Based Professional Learning for Core French Teachers Gr. 4-12
- On-line Engagement & Communication
- Teaching Resources
- School Environment
- Recruitment & Retention

Central Professional Learning for Core French Teachers Grades 4-12:

During the 2019-20 school year, teachers will have the opportunity to attend sessions around topics such as:

- the CEFR;
- Global Competencies and student engagement;
- inclusive practices and differentiated instruction;
- CRRP in Core French;
- supporting oral communication; and,
- authentic, integrated grammar instruction.

Through these sessions, Grades 4 -12 Core French teachers in TDSB will work together to refine new practices and reflect on existing practices with the focus on improving student learning and engagement. Teachers will become familiar with the CEFR and how it may be used to support effective programming and assessment in Core French. Teachers will discuss how to increase student engagement and support oral communication through the Global Competencies and the use of digital tools. Teachers will explore the Inclusive Design process and key principles of CRRP in the context of the Core French classroom. Teachers will discuss ways in which these foundational concepts influence the building of relationships, program planning, the selection of resources, the classroom environment and assessment practices.

Learning Centre Based Professional Learning for Core French Teachers Grades 4-12:

During the 2019-20 school year, Core French teachers in each Learning Centre will collaborate, network and explore best practices and innovative approaches that are grounded in the principles of the CEFR and the action-oriented approach to learning in FSL. Teachers will use the Collaborative Inquiry process to develop a theory of action and explore a relevant problem of practice in their local context that will guide their professional learning in a supportive framework. These network sessions will be repeated in each of the four learning centres and cater to the specific needs of each network grouping.

On-line Engagement and Communication:

Teachers will have the opportunity to engage in a blended learning course (on-line with some in person contact) around best practices in Core French particularly for those new to Core French. Also, a Google+ Community will be created to provide a virtual network for teachers to ask questions and support each other when and as needed.

On-line communication practices will be enhanced in the following ways:

- Update of TDSBweb and Academic Workspace pages to bring Core French support to the forefront;
- Create TDSB FSL Google site which will be a source of professional support, resources and information for FSL teachers, administrators, superintendents, and all staff who support students working and learning in FSL programs;
- Create a “handbook” section on FSL google site - including fundamental

information for frequent teacher reference;

- Twitter plan - frequent tweets highlighting a Core French best practice or resource using a hashtag with which teachers can engage.

In the FSL Review, Spring 2018, students indicated that, in some cases, they were interested in pursuing Core French beyond Grade 9, but were not able to do so due to timetabling demands or to local course offerings at their schools. The e-Learning, summer and night school offerings in French will be reviewed and the potential for expanding those offerings will be explored. Further, opportunities to teach e-Learning and summer or night school courses in French will be promoted to TDSB teachers via our TDSB FSL Google site, Google+ community and Twitter.

Teaching Resources:

A common theme in the feedback received from stakeholders in the FSL Review, Spring 2018 was around the importance of up-to-date resources for the Core French classroom. Local schools will be asked to review existing Core French programming resources and renew Core French resources to be in line with the revised FSL curriculum. The FSL department will provide support for local schools in resource selection.

The FSL department is also creating a series of CEFR toolkits. Linked to the TDSB FSL Google site will be an information site created to support the engaging use of these materials. Teachers will be able to borrow these kits on-line from the professional library.

There are currently Performance Tasks with student work samples available for Grades 4, 6 and 8 Core French. These performance tasks provide teachers with an external reference tool to support more consistent, high quality assessment and evaluation practices. Performance tasks will be created for Grades 5 and 7 Core French to complete this repertoire of teacher tools.

School Environment:

It is essential for second language learning for students to have an environment that is engaging as well as rich with visual aids and age-appropriate resources. Whenever possible and practical, a dedicated classroom space in a school should be provided for Core French as it is a mandated subject in Ontario for all students in Grades 4 to 9.

Recruitment and Retention:

Effective and intentional recruitment are critical to supporting quality French language instruction in our schools including Core French. We also know that supporting our French teachers so they continue to excel and maintain a desire to teach within our French program offers stability to this programming.

In order to build the roster of qualified FSL teachers, the following measures are in progress:

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- completion and posting to the Employee Services website of the FSL recruitment video that promotes TDSB as an FSL employer <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Employment/Teaching/French-Language>;
- establishment of criteria for French fluency
- closer alignment between the French as a Second Language Department and Employee Services Department to leverage recruitment opportunities;
 - participation in career fairs at universities that have pre-service training programs for French teachers inside and outside Ontario;
 - liaison with these Faculties of Education beyond the career fair opportunities to organize information sessions that specifically address French teacher candidates;
 - active recruitment and interviews of French candidates during actual campus visits at the universities;
 - attendance at the Annual Apply to Education Job Fair and advertisements on Jobs in Education. Given the need for French teachers across Ontario, this job fair invites attendees (prospective teacher candidates) from all over the GTA, as well as from across Ontario, BC, Alberta and Quebec;
 - scheduling of French Occasional Teacher interviews at TDSB Offices on an ongoing (weekly) basis;
 - engagement in the practice of pool hiring of French qualified candidates for permanent contract status; pool hiring is a process by which after successful completion of the interview process, we offer French teacher candidates contract positions in advance of knowing where a specific position might exist in the upcoming school year.

Retention efforts will continue to be supported in the following ways by the FSL Department:

- plan, fund and deliver targeted professional learning specifically for new teachers in FSL roles;
- collaborate with Teachers, Leading and Learning to offer professional learning opportunities that focus on the particular questions, possibilities and challenges facing teachers in FSL;
- collaborate with Teachers, Leading and Learning to ensure there is FSL representation in Exploration Classrooms and Hybrid Classrooms, to support the work of host teachers and connect new teachers to the opportunities;
- provide job-embedded support for new teachers in classroom visits, co-planning/co-teaching and focused support for teachers in their school teams and individually;
- support Learning Centre based Beginning Teacher committees by co-planning and co-facilitating their activities with new teachers within the Learning Centres;
- collaborate with Learning Centre Coaches to ensure school-based support and job-embedded learning with FSL perspective.

Implementation of a proposed transportation plan:

Due to budget constraints, a service reduction to transportation was necessary which resulted in changes to the provision of transportation for students in French Immersion/Extended French programs. Access to transportation for K-8 French Immersion/Extended French programs is currently being reviewed.

Development of a redistribution plan for French Immersion programs to improve equity of access:

The TDSB is committed to equity of access to an intensive FSL program through the redistribution of existing programs taking into consideration the following:

- Impact of transportation
- School capacity at the entry points with flow through until Grade 8 graduation to ensure limited transition points whenever possible
- Secondary school pathways

During the 2019-20 school year, in consultation with key stakeholders, staff will develop a set of criteria to review the existing locations of intensive French programs to improve equity of access for families across the TDSB.

Revision of Operational Procedure PR597, French Immersion/Extended French:

PR597 is the procedure that governs intensive French programs, including the process by which staff manages the application and placement process for these programs.

For the 2019-20 school year, PR597 was reviewed and updated to reflect the differences in processes governing admission to the centrally managed system entry points (i.e., Early French Immersion - SK entry and Junior Extended French - Gr. 4 entry), and the processes managed at the local school level for the additional entry points (i.e., Gr. 7 Entry Extended French, Gr. 6 Intensive Extended and Gr. 4 Middle Immersion). A further review and revision of PR597 is required to reflect the approved changes to intensive French programs as per the Board decision on June 16, 2019, (i.e., Early French Immersion - JK entry and Middle Immersion - Gr. 4 entry). This will be undertaken during the 2019-20 school year in consultation with various stakeholders including FSLAC and staff.

Resource Implications

No additional resources are required to implement these recommendations at this time.

Communications Considerations

Staff will work with the Government, Public and Community Relations Department to determine communication needs and support required to inform parents/guardians, staff, and students.

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

Operational Procedure PR597 – French Immersion/Extended French

Appendices

Not applicable.

From

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