

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (Public)
Report No. 15-147

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French Instruction in Kindergarten and Primary Early French Immersion

Key Contacts: Susan MacDonald, Superintendent of Instruction, 613-596-8287
Nadia Towajj, Superintendent of Instruction, 613-596-8211, ext.8886

PURPOSE:

1. To present, for approval, proposed revisions to the delivery of kindergarten and primary French to enhance instructional practice and equity of opportunity for student learning involving the:
 - amount of French instruction in kindergarten;
 - amount of French instruction Early French Immersion (EFI) grades 1 to 3; and
 - entry point to Early French Immersion.

CONTEXT:

2. Kindergarten provides the foundation for future learning for all students. Over the past five years, Ontario has moved to a two year full-day kindergarten program which has the following goals:
 - to establish a strong foundation for the early years by providing young children with an integrated day of learning;
 - to provide a play-based learning environment;
 - to help children make a smooth transition to grade 1; and
 - to improve children's prospects for success in school and their lives beyond school

The new kindergarten model necessitated a review of the delivery of French instruction at the OCDSB, and in particular the senior kindergarten entry point for Early French Immersion. In September, proposed changes to the amount of French instruction in kindergarten and grades 1 to 3 Early French Immersion (EFI) were recommended. The proposed changes were intended to create a two-year seamless kindergarten experience, and help children make smooth transitions between all grades beginning with kindergarten. The changes were also designed to enhance equity of opportunity and access for all students to both program pathways - English and EFI; and ensure that both pathways provide all students with the opportunity to develop competency in English and French.

Throughout October, a public consultation process was undertaken. Extensive and very valuable feedback was received from public and staff about the proposed changes. Overall there was significant support by the public respondents for all three proposed changes. Feedback from staff was mixed: more staff respondents were opposed to the JK/SK change; a majority of staff respondents supported the addition of English as a subject; and the change to Math instruction in English was supported but only by a small majority. Both groups identified concerns which are reviewed in more detail in this report.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

3. **Guiding Principles For Proposed Changes to the Amount of French in Kindergarten, and Grades 1-3 Early French Immersion (EFI)**

The Ministry *Framework for French Second Language (FSL) Programs* (2015) outlines guiding principles, strategic focus areas, and a range of actions that can be applied to strengthen FSL programs. One of the guiding principles is that FSL programs, whether Immersion or Core-French, are for all students. This principle advances a common understanding of the importance and benefits of FSL education. It is realized when FSL classrooms from kindergarten to grade 12 reflect the diversity of the student population, including English language learners and students with special education needs. (*Including Students with Special Education Needs in French as a Second Language Programs, Ministry of Education, 2015*)

In proposing refinements to the delivery of kindergarten and primary FSL instruction, the following guiding principles were established:

- Supporting a two-year kindergarten model – the FDK program is a two-year program, but the current model of French language instruction is based on the former JK/SK structure;
- Enhancing learning opportunities – programming should support and enhance the development of strong oral language skills in English and French in the early years;
- Equity of access and opportunity – ensuring the delivery model provides equitable opportunity for all students to learn French, including English language learners and students with special needs;
- Numeracy – ensuring the program delivery model supports our commitment to enhancing numeracy;
- Supporting Informed Parent Choice – ensuring the delivery model supports parents in making program pathway decisions; and
- Staffing – ensuring the delivery model optimizes the allocation of staff resources and balances class size to the extent possible.

4. **Proposed Program Changes**

[Report No.15-108 to COW](#) was presented to Committee on 21 September 2015. The report recommended the following program refinements:

- Change the delivery model for French instruction in the two-year kindergarten program to a 50% English, 50% French delivery model for all students in both years of kindergarten;
- Introduce English (as a subject) in grade 1 Early French Immersion, adding 60 minutes daily of English instruction; and
- Change the language of instruction of Mathematics in grades 1-3 Early French Immersion from French to English.

The following changes are recommended to the EFI delivery model:

English/Core French Program		
Grade	Minutes of French Instruction	
	Current Model	Proposed Model
JK	20 min/day	150 min/day
SK	20 min/day	150 min/day
1	40 min/day	40 min/day
2	40 min/day	40 min/day
3	40 min/day	40 min/day

Early French Immersion Program		
Grade	Minutes of French Instruction	
	Current Model	Proposed Model
JK	20 min/day	150 min/day (50% French)
SK	150 min/day (50%)	150 min/day (50% French)
1	300 min/day (100%)	180 min/day (60% French) (60 minutes English and 60 minutes Math in English)
2	240 min/day (80%)	180 min/day (60% French) (60 minutes English and 60 minutes Math in English)
3	240 min/day (80%)	180 min/day (60% French) (60 minutes English and 60 minutes Math in English)

The present model for the EFI program in the OCDSB vastly exceeds the number of French instructional hours required by the Ministry of Education. The EFI program in the OCDSB has a total of 5546 hours of French instruction by the end of grade 8, exceeding the Ministry requirements by a total of 1746 hours. With the proposed changes to the number of hours of French instruction in EFI, the OCDSB would continue to exceed, by 1464 hours, the Ministry requirements. If we include the deferral of implementing an hour of English instruction in grade 1 EFI, the OCDSB would exceed Ministry requirements by 1652 hours, for a total of 5452 hours of French instruction by the end of grade 8.

5. **Consultation Overview**

A consultation plan was presented in [Report No. 15-115](#). The consultation plan identified multiple stakeholder groups (parents, educators, students, community

members) as well as multiple methods of communication (websites, school council meetings, electronic surveys, advisory committee meetings, public meetings etc.) to solicit input. Highlights of the consultation included:

- Detailed information posted on the District website;
- Support materials provided to all schools to facilitate discussion at school council meetings in October;
- Presentation at all advisory committee meetings;
- Presentation at Student Senate and Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC);
- Electronic communication to all principals to share with staff;
- Synrevoice communication to all elementary school families;
- Electronic surveys for public, staff, and student input; and
- Four public consultation meetings.

The consultation process was extremely successful in soliciting feedback from parents and staff.

- 5 presentations were made to advisory committees and OCASC;
- Approximately 187 people attended the four public consultation meetings;
- 3841 survey responses were received from parents and staff; and
- Almost 200 emails were sent to chat@ocdsb.ca on this topic.

This has been one of the highest response rates to a single issue consultation process by the District in recent years.

6. **Feedback from the Consultation**

Overall, similar issues and themes emerged from all consultation mediums; however, there were some unique aspects to the feedback depending on the medium. For example:

- the survey generated the highest number of participants and the respondents tended to be more favourable in their responses;
- participants at the consultation meetings were generally less favourable about the proposed changes;
- participants who sent emails tended to have more detailed questions relating to specific impacts of proposed changes;
- discussions at advisory committees and other groups raised similar types of issues as participants on the whole, but often the primary focus of those discussions tended towards the area of focus of the advisory committee/group.

A detailed summary of the survey results is provided in Appendix A. These results are representative of the feedback received in all other mediums.

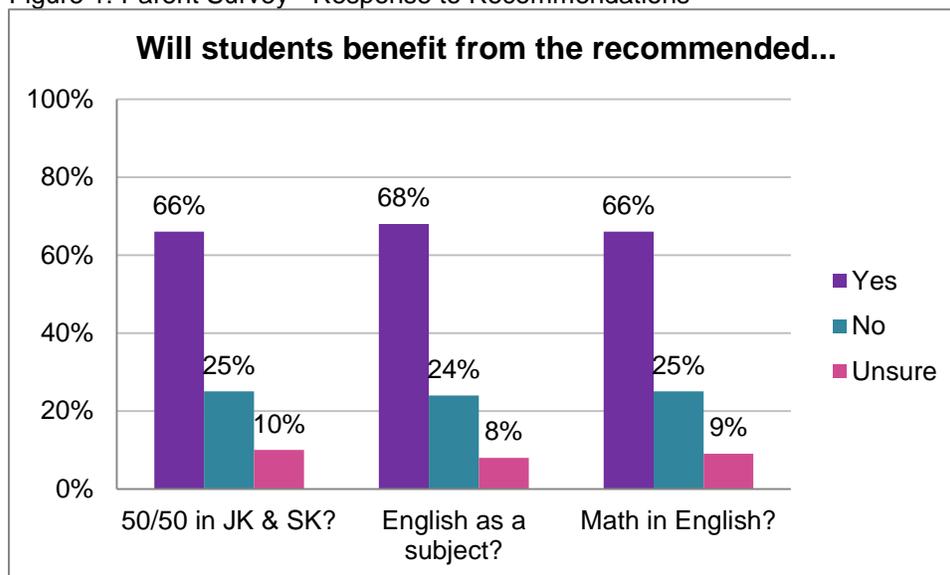
7. **Survey and Email Feedback**

There was an impressive response to the public and staff surveys, with a total of 3841 submissions; 2958 public responses and 883 staff responses.

Public Survey

The vast majority of public respondents were parents. Most frequently, the respondents reported that they had a child in elementary EFI, followed by elementary English with Core French. The parent respondents were very supportive of the proposed changes. The majority of parents, 66-68%, felt that students would benefit from each of the three recommended program changes. Interestingly, as demonstrated in the graph below, the parent support was relatively consistent in response to each of the three changes; although parents were divided on whether they thought the proposed changes would assist them in selecting a program for their child. Full details of the public responses, including data about the number as well as graphs of the results, can be found in Appendix A.

Figure 1: Parent Survey - Response to Recommendations



Staff Survey

The staff survey generated a total of 883 responses; the majority of whom were elementary teachers. This represents 25% of elementary teachers which is a good response rate. Staff respondents primarily indicated an affiliation with elementary EFI, and secondly an affiliation with English with Core French.

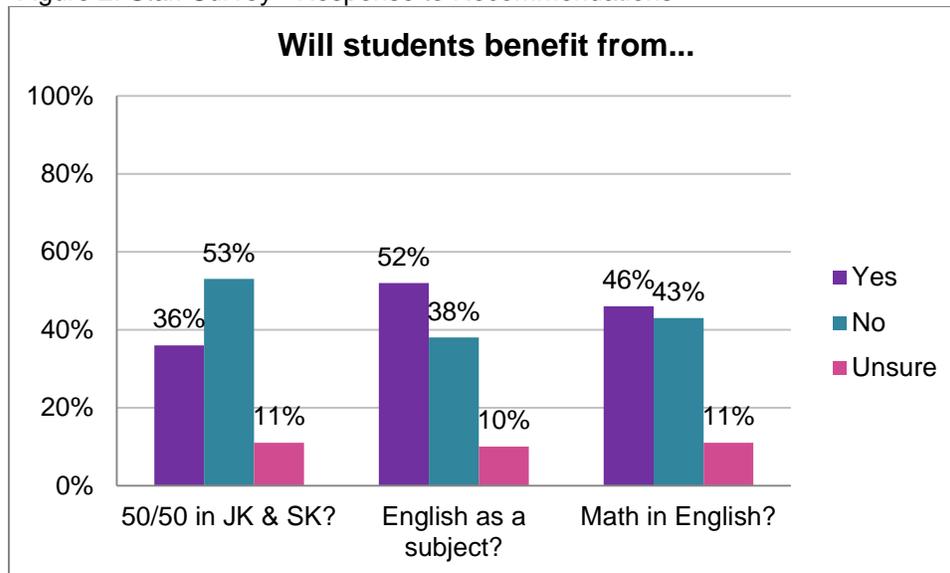
The staff responses were more complex and varied by recommendation:

- The majority of staff respondents, 53%, did not think students would benefit from the 50/50 JK/SK model;
- A majority of staff respondents, 52%, felt children would benefit if English were added as a subject beginning in grade 1; and
- Staff respondents were somewhat divided with a small majority, 46%, feeling that children would benefit if Math were taught in English in grades 1-3.

Generally, staff responded that they did not think the proposed changes would help parents select a program for their child, but were quite divided in their responses. The

graph below depicts the varying levels of support for each of the proposed changes, and full details of the results for the staff survey can be found in Appendix A.

Figure 2: Staff Survey - Response to Recommendations



Email Feedback

In addition to the electronic survey, we received nearly 200 emails from stakeholders who had questions and/or wanted to share their thoughts on the proposed changes (note that respondents may have completed the survey and sent an email). Some emails were from teachers or organizations with a particular interest in the OCDSB French Immersion program, but the vast majority of emails were from parents. The pros and cons of the proposed model that were voiced through these emails were similar to those expressed in response to the survey and are addressed below. A unique concern which surfaced through the email consultation was the question of whether the JK/SK changes would result in a rezoning of schools and/or a change of school for their child at grade 1.

8. **Understanding the Feedback Regarding the Two-Year Kindergarten Program**

The recommendation to move to a 50/50 English/French model in JK and SK is intended to ensure that all learners would experience a rich foundation in both official languages, preparing them to continue in either the EFI or the English/Core French program in grade one; address equity of access to program pathways; provide parents with more information on which to select either the English or French Immersion program for their child at the end of the two year kindergarten program, rather than when halfway through the program; and create opportunities for students to nurture peer relationships over two years of the kindergarten program.

The majority of parents, 66%, responded that children would benefit from this model. Although parents were not specifically asked to identify what they saw as potential benefits to the proposed change, the following are some of the examples they provided:

- children are like sponges; the more we can offer, the more they benefit;

- it would be a great start for children to learn more French;
- play-based learning opportunities in French would give children a solid base for learning the language;
- 50% French in kindergarten would better prepare students for French in grade 1; and
- it would be an excellent way to introduce all students (and parents) to French instruction.

Despite the overall positive response, parents shared many thoughts in response to the question regarding concerns. For example, a major concern of some parents was that the children may be too young for 50% French while in JK, suggesting it might be too taxing on children to be put in an unfamiliar French environment at a time when they are starting to learn routines and social skills. On the other hand, another common concern of parents was that 50% French is not enough exposure to learn a second language and students should be fully immersed in French.

Generally, the parental concerns identified in the survey were similar to those raised in all consultation forums, and tended to fall into three broad categories:

i) Impact on Learning

- 50% French would be too difficult for ELLs and students with special education needs;
- children would confuse French and English;
- this model would negatively impact children's ability to build a strong English foundation;
- learning difficulties would go unidentified; content would be 'watered down';

ii) Implementation

- there would be an increase in points of contact/transitions for students;
- there would be a lack of capable staff to execute the changes;
- it would negatively impact the English and/or MFI programs;
- English-only schools might be adversely affected;
- this would lead to split JK/SK classes;
- a specific cohort would be disadvantaged if all changes were to be implemented simultaneously; and

iii) Parent Involvement

- the model would eliminate parent ability to choose their child's program;
- parents might be unable to support French learning at home.

Staff respondents to the survey raised the same concerns. An additional concern raised by teachers was that having JK in 50% French could make play-based learning more difficult.

Many staff also shared what they considered to be potential benefits of the proposed model. Teachers reiterated the advantages outlined by parents, and also identified the possibility of:

- improving consistency between JK and SK to make for a seamless kindergarten program;
- balancing of class sizes;
- introducing children to French at a younger age while they are less nervous about making mistakes; and
- allowing for earlier identification of children who may be struggling with language learning.

In addition to their concerns for students, staff was asked about concerns for themselves. These concerns tended to fall into the following categories:

i) Job stability and satisfaction

This included concerns regarding job displacement/loss, loss of ownership of a homeroom, more shuffling, less job satisfaction;

ii) Workload

This included concerns regarding teaching multiple classes, communicating with more families, increase in prep load, unfair division of work between French and English teachers, increase in time spent co-planning and working with different teams; and

iii) Implementation

This included concerns regarding scheduling, many ECEs do not speak French and would lose their partnership role, French teachers do not have kinder-specific training, difficulty finding French supply teachers, resources and supports spread too thin, difficulty building community.

9. Addressing the Learning Concerns Regarding 50-50 JK/SK Model

A key question raised in the concerns was whether a 50-50 JK/SK model would create a good learning environment for young children. Not only does the research support this model, but in the Ottawa area we are fortunate to have the opportunity to learn from the experience of the coterminous English board which has had a 50% French and 50% English model of kindergarten in place for two decades. As the Catholic Board serves the same communities that are served by OCDSB schools, their experience suggests that the model is viable and it creates a learning environment in which students can succeed. While the JK/SK models would be the same in both districts, the OCDSB would continue to offer parents a choice of English with Core French, or Early French Immersion, in grades 1 to 3. In comparison all students in the OCDSB partake in English with Extended French (75 minutes daily) from grades 1 to 3, and parents then have the option of continuing in Extended French or Middle French Immersion commencing in grade 4.

Concerns were also raised regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in FSL programs. These concerns are not supported by the research which promotes access to FSL programs for all students. In fact, a 2015 Ministry of Education document provides that *“it is important to note that current legislation and policies in Ontario do not endorse*

exemptions for students with special education needs from FSL programs - it is expected that all students in English-language publicly funded schools will have access to FSL programs.” (Including Students With Special Needs in French As A Second Language Programs, 2015). (Appendix B)

With respect to the concerns regarding English Language Learners in a 50/50 model of kindergarten, it should be noted that Ministry documents state: “*The belief that FSL programs are not suitable for English Language Learners (ELLs) may be based on the assumption that learning an additional language will disadvantage or unfairly burden students who are still working to attain proficiency in English. Requiring students to learn an additional language, it is reasoned, places undue stress on students’ capacity to learn and may even interfere with English language acquisition. There is no evidence to support this claim.*”

(A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2013 p.35).

From an equity and learning perspective, in the Article “*Inclusionary Practices in French Immersion: A Need to Link Research to Practice*”, Renee Bourgoin references studies that show that students from low academic abilities, those from families from low socioeconomic settings and students from minority cultures have been shown to achieve at the same level, if not higher in French Immersion than their counterparts in the regular English program (*Journals for New Scholars in Education/ Volume 5, Issue 1, March 2014*).

Concerns Relating to Parent Involvement

In regards to concerns about parental involvement, and in particular parental capacity to support learning in French it is important to know that parents of students in FSL programs are not expected to know or be fluent in the French language. Parents provide for the development of a second or third language by having high expectations, applauding their child’s efforts in language learning and supporting literacy in their first language. There are also excellent resources available for parents at the district and provincial levels (FSLToolkit-www.fslhomeworktoolbox.ca, Supporting your Child’s Success in French Immersion

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/parentGuideFrench.pdf>) are among the Ministry documents available to support parents.

In terms of program choice, the only change for parents is when the choice happens. Currently, parents have no choice about the JK delivery model, but they can make a program choice in SK. Under the new model the program choice would shift to the end of the two year kindergarten program rather than in the middle of the program.

Concerns Relating to Implementation

Parents and staff have expressed concern regarding the potential for increased teacher contacts for students in the proposed model. These are considered implementation issues as there are a number of strategies which can be implemented to mitigate this concern. Currently, there is a range of teacher contacts in classrooms depending on the size of the school, the number of programs, the number of classes in each program and grade configuration of the school. The minimum number of daily teacher contacts in any kindergarten or primary class is two. This minimum number would not change. The average number of teacher contacts currently is between 2 and 4, depending on how prep time is scheduled. In mock schedules for schools completed to date, the average range of teacher contacts does not change with the implementation of this recommendation.

Similarly, the number of early childhood educator (ECE) contacts - between one and two will remain constant. The number of ECE contacts in kindergarten classrooms is related to the operation of the Extended Day Program (EDP). If the EDP is operated by a third-party provider then there is one ECE assigned to each classroom. In schools where the District operates the EDP, ECEs work in both the EDP and core day, resulting in each ECE working either a 6:45 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. shift, or 10:45 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. shift. As a result kindergarten classrooms in schools in which the EDP is operated by the District have a minimum of two ECE contacts.

Concerns Relating to Job Satisfaction and Workload

Staff raised a number of concerns regarding the impact of the proposed changes on workload and job satisfaction. The specific impact of this recommendation on an individual employee is affected by many variables including, school size, kindergarten enrolment, program options at the school, how staff assignments are allocated, how resource supports are assigned at schools, etcetera. While it is complicated to respond to each of these concerns without addressing the specific school context, the concerns highlight the need for the District to work with the staff to analyze these concerns, and to develop some strategies which will help to mitigate.

A combination of strategies including professional development, resource allocation, scheduling of teaching assignments and student supports will go a long way to ensuring that the staff concerns are addressed and staff is well supported during any transition. More detail regarding strategies for professional development and resource allocation are included in later sections of this report.

An implementation committee will be essential to successful implementation of any of these recommendations. More detail about this is included in the implementation section.

10. Understanding the Feedback about the Introduction of 60 Minutes of Daily English (as a subject) Instruction in Grade 1 EFI

Introducing 60 minutes of instruction in English (as a subject) to grade 1 EFI students would ensure continued development of strong English skills in the EFI program and

increase opportunities for early literacy intervention. This increase in English instruction, combined with a 50/50 program in both years of kindergarten, will provide greater opportunities for identification of learning difficulties in both English and French.

68% of parent respondents thought that children would benefit from 60 minutes a day of English as a subject. Parents also described the following possible benefits of this recommendation, including:

- it would allow children who do not speak French at home to maintain their comfort level;
- it would support more students staying in French Immersion
- it would strengthen the students' English skills;
- it would allow for earlier identification of students with Special Education needs; and,
- it would relieve parents from the full responsibility of maintaining English gains made in Kindergarten.

In terms of parental concerns about this recommendation, the largest concern was that the additional time in English would dilute the French Immersion Program, arguing that children receive sufficient English exposure elsewhere and the goal of immersion is to have children fully immersed for the entire school day. Questions also arose about the research evidence leading to the proposal of the changes, and the motivation behind the new model. Other concerns could be organized by:

i) Impact on Learning

- children would confuse the two languages;
- children would lose interest in French reading if they had English as an alternative;
- it would be stressful for the children;

ii) Implementation

- it would increase in points of contact/transitions;
- it would lead to larger classes;
- it would decrease retention for secondary French Immersion;
- a specific cohort would be disadvantaged if all changes are implemented simultaneously; and

iii) Parent Involvement

- it would lead to more homework.

Staff concerns for students were very similar to those concerns expressed by parents. However, an issue that was common in staff responses was that this change would attract students with more diverse learning needs to the EFI program, and that these students could require additional supports. However, some staff members saw this as a concern, while others viewed it as a benefit.

Staff concerns for the impact on staff can be grouped into the categories of:

i) Job stability and satisfaction

This included concerns regarding job displacement/loss, loss of ownership of a homeroom, lack of consistency in teacher's day, would feel stressed/dissatisfied, teachers with FSL certification would be 'locked in' to teaching French;

ii) Workload

This included concerns regarding teaching multiple classes, communicating with more families, increase in prep load, need to manage confusion of students learning two languages; and

iii) Implementation

This included concerns regarding scheduling, resources and supports spread too thin, moving of materials with teacher from class to class, difficulty integrating units of instruction, day would be too short/rushed for teachers to cover EFI curriculum.

Staff members reported similar advantages as those expressed by parents in terms of the benefits of teaching English as a subject in grade 1. In addition, staff made note of the potential for:

- improving Early English Literacy Interventions;
- improving children's self-esteem;
- attracting more families to EFI;
- increasing opportunities for ELLs; and
- closing the writing gap.

Perhaps the most compelling concern raised about the amount of English instruction in grades 1 to 3 EFI is that students currently enrolled in kindergarten will not have had the opportunity to benefit from a 50% French and 50% English program in kindergarten, and they would receive less French instruction in grades 1 to 3 if they select the EFI pathway. In consideration of this cohort of students, staff is recommending a phase in of this recommendation, delaying implementation for two years regarding the decision to introduce an hour a day of English (as a subject).

11. The Change in Language of Instruction of Mathematics From French to English in Grades 1 to 3 EFI

Changing the language of instruction of Mathematics from French to English for students in grades 1 to 3 is intended to provide students with a stronger foundation in Mathematics by ensuring consistency in the language of instruction in Mathematics from K-12 throughout the district.

In the survey feedback, 66% of parents responded favourably to the idea that children would benefit from Math being taught in English. Parents identified a number of advantages to teaching Math in English, such as:

- many students have difficulty with Math and having it in English would make it easier for them to understand;
- it would make for greater consistency across the grade levels;

- it would give children Math knowledge in the universal language used for Math and sciences;
- it would make it easier for parents to assist with homework; and, among other benefits,
- it would retain children in the French Immersion program who find Math in French too difficult.

The most common concern was that the addition of English would dilute the existing French Immersion program. The responses also revealed that there is some misconception among parents about the language of instruction for junior elementary Math. Some parents expressed concern that Math in English for grades 1-3 would make the transition to grade 4 Math in French too difficult. Unfortunately, we are unable to determine whether the stance of those parents would have been different if they were aware grade 4 Math is taught in English.

Other concerns expressed tended to be about:

i) Impact on Learning

- children would be deprived of French Math vocabulary
- less integration across subjects;
- devalue French by implying that hard/ core subjects should be taught in English and;

ii) Implementation

- it would increase points of contact/transitions for the children.

There were also questions about any research evidence indicating that the proposed change would benefit students, as well as concern for the time and money spent on EFI Math training and resources.

Staff reported similar concerns and benefits to Math being taught in English. In addition, staff thought there would be other potential benefits such as:

- the ability to identify students who are struggling in Math, compared to those struggling with learning Math in French;
- a possible increase in EQAO Math scores;
- continued improvement of English foundation; and
- Special Education accommodations in French Immersion.

The staff concerns were similar to those raised in response to the other recommendations:

i) Job stability and satisfaction

This included concerns about job displacement/loss, French teachers being unable to teach their area of expertise/passion, loss of ownership of a homeroom, more shuffling, less satisfaction, English teachers who have become FSL certified being 'locked in';

ii) Workload

This included concerns regarding teaching multiple classes, communicating with more families, increase in prep, increase in time spent communicating with other teachers; and

iii) Implementation

This included concerns regarding difficulty integrating across subject matter, less time with students making it harder to identify difficulties, difficulty keeping students on task in French, scheduling, and wasted French Math PD and resources.

The recommendation to move to Math instruction to English in the primary grades originated from the parental feedback during the elementary phase of the FSL Review done in 2007. In the survey associated with that review, parents were somewhat more likely to indicate a preference for Mathematics to be taught in English than in French (i.e., 41-45% versus 28-34%; OCDSB, 2007, p. A30), and had expressed concern with the lack of consistency across the district with respect to the subjects being taught in French (OCDSB, 2007, p.14). In this current survey, parental preference for Math instruction in English in EFI has increased from 41-45% to 66%.

The research evidence does not provide a clear argument for Mathematics to be delivered exclusively in English, but rather suggests that greater exposure in the target language can positively influence achievement outcomes for students (Bournot-Trites & Reeder, 2001). Nevertheless, there is a lack of consensus in the research literature as to what constitutes the optimal time allocation to produce bilingual graduates. In fact, MacFarlane (2005) claimed that all FI programs lead to a high level of French proficiency at the end of secondary school. Evidence of high levels of French proficiency skills for OCDSB students enrolled in both the EFI and MFI program have been documented (OCDSB, 2013). An analysis of scores on the B2 level of the DELF over the past few years has yielded no statistically significant differences between students enrolled in:

- EFI vs. MFI programs in grade 8; or
- Extended vs. immersion French language course in grade 12.

A change to the delivery model to provide Mathematics instruction in English in primary EFI (grades 1-3) would also facilitate the ease of transition from the primary division to the junior division and create alignment in terms of language of instruction of Mathematics from grades 1 to 12 across the district.

In consideration of the concerns raised in the survey, students would have the opportunity to learn Math vocabulary in the first two years of kindergarten in both French and English. Students in French Immersion would then continue to build their Math vocabulary in French through the integration of numeracy across curriculum areas including Science, Health, Social Studies, Language, Geography/ History and the Arts. With reference to the concern that a change of language of instruction in primary EFI would result in an increase in teacher contacts, it should be noted that the range of

contacts would remain the same, particularly in grades 2 and 3. The actual number of contacts will vary depending on the contextual factors mentioned previously in the report.

12. **Equity For All Learners:**

A culture that continually balances equity of opportunity and access for all is one of the district's strategic priorities. Despite the recognized advantages associated with learning a second language and being able to communicate in both official languages, not all identified groups of students have been represented equally in French Immersion programs. For example, national studies have demonstrated that a greater proportion of families of high socio-economic status enroll their children in French Immersion as compared to English programs. Data from international assessments also shows a higher percentage of girls enrolled in immersion, which is consistent with OCDSB data indicating that the proportion of girls to boys in EFI is up to 10% greater (OCDSB, 2007, p. vii).

Students with special needs are represented at a lower rate of enrolment in immersion as compared to the English program at district and national levels, despite research evidence that supports their participation in FSL programs. Specifically, Archibald (2006) argued that students with special needs can learn second languages; as with other subjects, they need accommodation, but there is nothing inherent in the learning of a second language that precludes students with special needs from being successful (as cited in *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, 2013, p.36*).

Despite research to the contrary, misconceptions persist that FSL programs are not suitable for English Language Learners (ELLs). In fact, research indicates that exposing ELLs to FSL has a positive impact on their English language acquisition, and learning a second language facilitates the learning of a third language (Lapkin, Mady & Arnott, 2008, Hoti et al., 2011 as cited in *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, 2013, p.35*).

Considerable work has been undertaken in our District to address these issues. Updated information from our Student Information System suggests that there has been substantial progress in promoting the inclusiveness of FSL programs.

Comparison of Enrolment Patterns in FI Programs		
French as a Second Language Review	2007	2015
Elementary Enrolment (Oct 31/06 vs Oct 31/14)	47,330	47,990
% of Elementary Students enrolled in EFI	31%	45%
% of Elementary Students enrolled in MFI	2%	5%
ELL Student Enrolment (as a % of Elementary Enrolment)	25%	27%
%ELL students enrolled in Immersion (EFI, MFI and LFI in 2007) (EFI and MFI in 2014)	22%	36%
Special Education Student Enrolment (as a % of Elementary Enrolment)	14%	16%
% Spec Ed students enrolled in Immersion	12%	23%

In SK alone, the proportion of students enrolled in the EFI program has grown from 54% to 68% over this time period, suggesting that this is a desirable program for many OCDSB families.

English Language Learners comprise approximately one-quarter of elementary enrolment (i.e., 25% in 2007, and 27% in 2014). The proportion of ELLs enrolled in the EFI and MFI programs over this time period, shows a significant shift. Specifically, 22% of the ELL population in 2007 was enrolled in an immersion program (EFI, MFI, and LFI combined) compared to 36% (EFI and MFI combined) in October 2014.

Similarly, students with special education needs (i.e., those who have been formally identified through the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) process, as well as those who are receiving special education support as a result of an Individual Education Plan) comprised 14% of the overall elementary enrolment in October 2007, and 16% in October 2014. Of the entire population of students with special needs, 23% were enrolled in an immersion program in October 2014, compared to only 12% in 2007.

13. **Implementation Planning**

Changes to a program delivery model involve significant implementation planning. In order to implement the change for September 2016, several things will have to happen following the decision, including:

- communication of the changes to parents and guardians of children currently attending OCDSB schools;
- all kindergarten information materials and communications to be updated prior to the registration period at the end of January;
- acquisition of resources required to support the implementation of the changes, and facilitate professional learning sessions for staff.

The most important aspect of implementation is careful and collaborative planning. If the recommendations are approved, the District will develop an implementation team comprised of administrators, teachers, early childhood educators and central staff to collaborate on implementation plans. This committee would assist in the development of more detailed implementation strategies to address areas of concern raised through surveys and public consultation meetings. (i.e., timetables, learning support for French Immersion, collaborative planning in kindergarten, impact on workload).

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

14. Professional Resources

The proposed revisions will require additional one time central funds to augment the resources in schools to support the instruction of English in grade 1 and Mathematics in English in grades 1-3 as follows:

- English: approximately \$1000 per grade 1 EFI classroom in order to purchase a range of resources to complement Comprehensive Literacy implementation in the classroom, as well as \$250 for teacher's guides/support materials; and
- Mathematics: approximately \$1000 per grades 1-3 EFI classroom in order to purchase a range of resources to complement Balanced Mathematics instruction in the classroom, as well as \$250 for teacher's guides/support materials.

In many instances, the central funds will be utilized to purchase resources that complement the series of existing resources already in place for other grades in the school.

The total estimated cost to augment resources in support of the instruction of English in grade 1 is \$187 500. The total estimated cost to augment resources for the instruction of Mathematics in English in grades 1-3 is \$551,250.

15. Professional Learning

Using the Framework for Comprehensive Literacy, K-12, professional learning sessions will be provided to primary teachers new to the instruction of English in grade 1. These sessions will be differentiated based on the needs of participants and recognizing that many primary teachers will have provided the instruction of English to students in other grades (grades 2 and 3, for instance).

Using the Framework for Balanced Mathematics, K-12, professional learning sessions will be provided to teachers new to the instruction of Mathematics in English at the primary level. These sessions will also be differentiated based on the needs of participants as some of these teachers may have provided the instruction of Mathematics in English to students in other grades (junior grades, for example).

The total estimated cost is \$206,500 (comprised of three half-day sessions per teacher).

A focus on differentiated instruction will be woven into all professional learning sessions offered at the district level. Learning Support Services will also review how school level

resources are allocated to ensure that students in all program pathways have access to learning support aligned to our District's tiered intervention model.

Professional learning for kindergarten educator teams (teachers and ECEs) would continue to focus on collaborative planning and assessment rooted in inquiry, and play-based learning.

16. **Human Resources - Staffing**

The recommendations are also expected to result in benefits from a school organization and staffing perspective. Based on the 2014-2015 enrolment data, adopting the 50/50 model in both years of kindergarten would result in an overall reduction of 5 kindergarten homerooms, which equals a savings of approximately \$500,000.

Under the current model, additional classes are sometimes required because first year kindergarten students cannot be combined with second year EFI kindergarten students, and students in EFI cannot be combined with students in the second year of the English kindergarten program. This can result in unevenly distributed class sizes, particularly in dual track schools. A standard JK/SK delivery model would align with the two-year program and would allow for more evenly distributed classes. (This potential reduction of kindergarten classrooms would not result in a greater number of kindergarten classrooms with large class sizes).

Using the 2014-2015 enrolment numbers, the 50/50 kindergarten model would result in a decrease of 101 English FTE teachers and a gain of 95 FTE FSL teachers. This change would be mitigated through the proposed change in language of instruction of Mathematics at the primary of EFI level (grades 1-3) and the introduction of English as a subject in grade 1.

The recommendation to defer the decision regarding the introduction of English as a subject in grade 1 EFI would have a minimal overall impact on staffing, resulting in the decrease of 12 FTE English staff and the requirement to hire 12 FTE French staff. In consultation with Human Resources, it has been determined that the decrease of the 12 FTE English staff would be addressed through retirements.

At the District level, a review of best practices from a staffing/ timetabling perspective at the kindergarten/primary level would take place followed by further support to principals regarding implementation in order to minimize the number of educator contacts.

The implementation of full-day kindergarten posed a challenge in terms of the recruitment and retention of ECEs for districts throughout the province. There is a shortage of bilingual ECEs province-wide. We currently do not have French-speaking ECEs supporting all of our EFI kindergarten classes, and like other districts, we would not have enough French-speaking ECEs to staff all French kindergarten classes in the proposed model. Currently, in our District and in other districts, ECEs model the phrases that are explicitly taught in the classroom. They engage in pedagogical documentation by capturing examples of student thinking through observation, photographs, and video. ECEs can also co-plan the inquiries and assessment with their

partner teacher, while the teacher focuses on language instruction and modelling of the language related to the inquiry.

17. **Financial - FSL Funding**

An unexpected benefit of the recommendations is the positive financial implications associated with the adoption of a 50/50 kindergarten model. Based on the current FSL grant calculation, the proposed changes would result in an addition \$2M annually based on 2014-2015 enrolment data. Some concern was raised about whether the change in delivery model in JK/SK would adversely affect enrolment at the OCDSB. This is not expected as our coterminous English board also offers a 50/50 program in both years of kindergarten.

Summary/ Conclusions

18. Careful consideration has been given to all of the input/feedback that was received from parents and staff through the consultation process, and in reference to the research provided by Canadian Parents for French.

In terms of the move to a 50/50 JK/SK program delivery model, there was very strong parent support for this change. It was also clear that those parents who are opposed to this recommendation are very passionate in their opposition. The staff feedback was not supportive of this change, which makes the final recommendation more challenging, and puts considerable emphasis on the need for careful implementation planning. Based on the fact that the kindergarten program is a two-year model, and that research supports early learning of French for all learners, the staff recommendation is to proceed with a change to a 50-50 English/French delivery model for JK/SK.

Regarding the change of the language of instruction for Mathematics, there was strong support for this change by parents. More staff respondents were supportive of this recommendation than opposed, but the difference between those in favour and opposed was slim (46% to 43%). Based on the strong parental support, which has grown considerably over the past 8 years, as well as the belief that this will further support the District's numeracy strategy, the staff recommendation is to proceed with a change to the language of instruction for Mathematics in grades 1 to 3.

In terms of the addition of English as a subject, parents and staff both expressed concern about the impact of this change on students currently enrolled in kindergarten who will not enjoy the benefit of increased French instruction in kindergarten and would also lose 60 minutes of French in grade 1 EFI. For this reason, as explained earlier, staff is recommending a phase-in of this recommendation, delaying implementation of one hour a day of English (as a subject) instruction in grade 1 until September 2018 when the 2016 junior kindergarten students would be in grade 1.

Detailed research by leading Canadian academics has established that immersion programs with the best results in French proficiency have these three elements: *intensity, total time in French, and an early start.*

Intensity

The revised recommendations maintain the intensity element by allowing for a phased-in approach to the introduction of 60 minutes of English as a subject in grade 1 EFI over the next two years. During this period, the grade 1 EFI program will be 80% French. When the current kindergarten cohorts have completed grade 1, the intensity element will then be accomplished through the combination of a 60% French program in grade 1, and the significant increase of French language instruction in the first year of kindergarten.

Total Time in French

The second element, total time in French, is accomplished by the addition of a 50/50 program in JK which ensures that the OCDSB EFI program continues to have one of the highest numbers of instructional hours in French in the province and in the country. e.g., 1652/1464 hours over the minimum number of hours stipulated by provincial policy.

Early Start

The third element, an early start, is accomplished by expanding the amount of French instruction in the first year of the two-year kindergarten program from 20 minutes per day to 150 minutes per day.

COMMUNICATION:

19. Should the recommendations put forward in this report be approved, program changes would be communicated to current parents through direct communication with parents as well as newsletters, school council meetings and, District and school websites. Information regarding the revisions to the model of kindergarten and EFI would also be shared in the kindergarten registration support materials and media campaign.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

20. The District is committed to its strategic plan to reduce barriers to learning to improve equity of access and opportunity for all students, and to improve and increase access to the educational pathways for every student.

RECOMMENDATION

Be it resolved THAT the following changes be approved:

- i) Effective September 2016, the delivery model for French instruction in the two-year kindergarten program become a 50% English, 50% French program for all students in both years of kindergarten;
- ii) Effective September 2018, English (as a subject) be introduced in grade 1 Early French Immersion, adding 60 minutes daily of English instruction; and
- iii) Effective September 2016, the language of instruction of Mathematics in grades 1-3 Early French Immersion change from French to English.

Susan MacDonald
Superintendent of Instruction

Jennifer Adams
Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board

Nadia Towaj
Superintendent of Instruction

APPENDICES

- Appendix A French Instruction in Kindergarten and Primary Early French Immersion
Electronic Consultation Survey Results
- Appendix B References



French Instruction in Kindergarten and Primary Early French Immersion

Electronic Consultation Survey Results

Consultation Surveys

The medium of consultation which received the largest participation was the online surveys. There were two surveys administered: one for the public and one for staff. Below is a summary of the results, based on analysis of feedback from both surveys.

Public Online Survey

Those who completed the public online survey were asked:

- If they were a parent/guardian, OCDSB Advisory Committee Member, or other;
- The number of children they have attending a school in the OCDSB;
- Their child's grade group;
- Their child's program;
- If they feel students will benefit from each of the recommendations;
- If the changes will assist them in choosing a program for their child; and
- Any concerns they have for students in relation to each of the recommendations (open-ended).

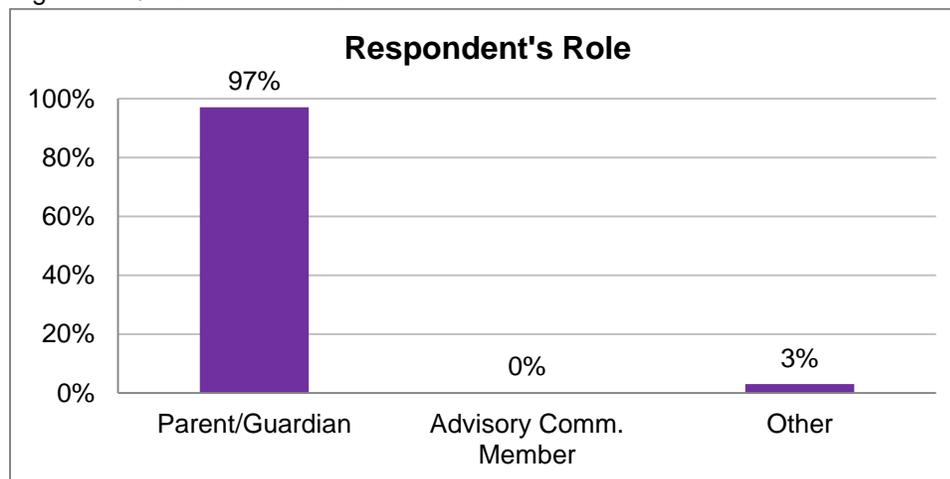
Results

There were 2958 public responses. The following graphs provide a proportionate breakdown of these responses¹. Open-ended questions were qualitatively coded, for which the trends among the responses are also outlined.

Question 1

Select from the options below: Parent/Guardian, OCDSB Advisory Committee Member, Other.

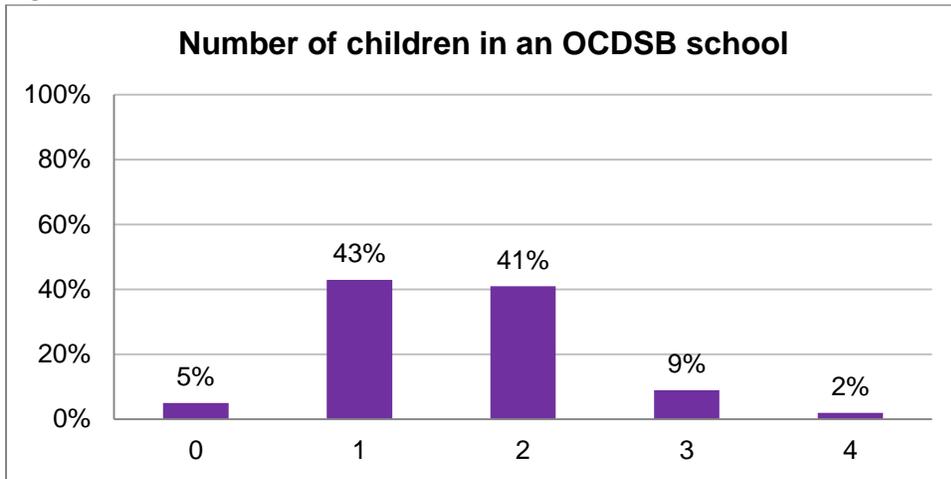
Figure 1: Question 1 Results.



Question 2

Please indicate the number of children you have attending a school in the OCDSB.

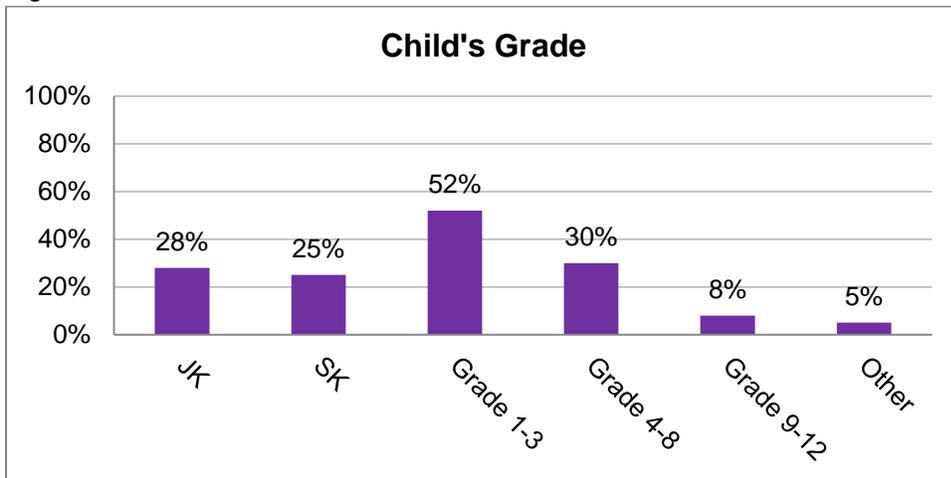
Figure 2: Question 2 Results.



Question 3

My children are in: JK, SK, Grade 1-3, Grade 4-8, Grade 9-12, Other.

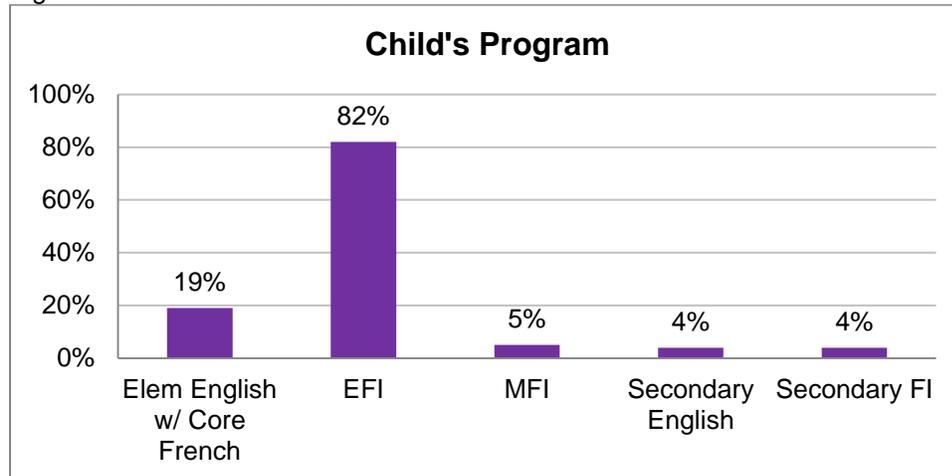
Figure 3: Question 3 Results.



Question 4

My children are in: Elementary English with Core French, Elementary EFI, Elementary MFI, Secondary English with Extended French, Secondary FI.

Figure 4: Question 4 Results.

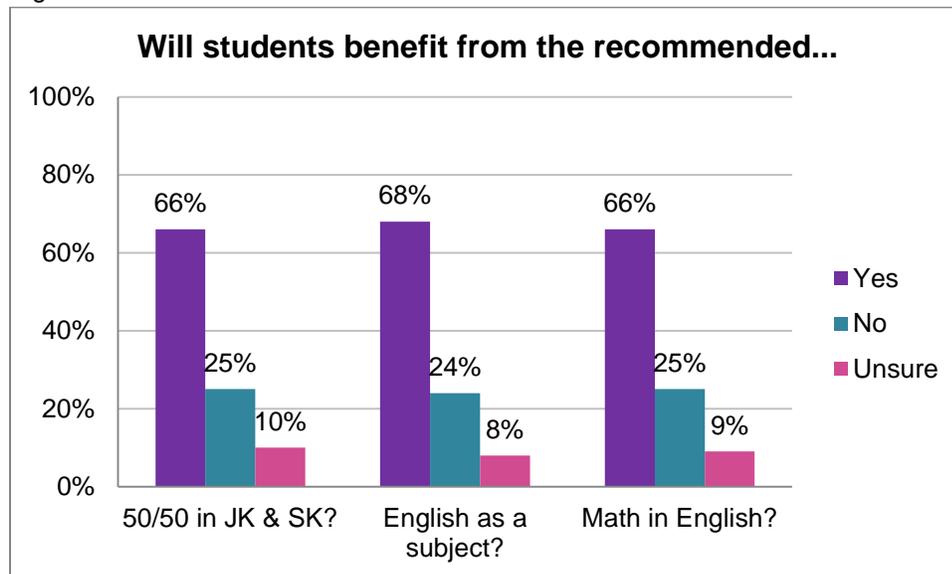


Question 5

Do you feel students will benefit from the recommended:

- *50 percent French/ 50 percent English model for both JK and SK?*
- *Introduction of 60 minutes of English daily taught as a subject in Grade 1 EFI?*
- *Change of the language of instruction of mathematics from French to English in the Grades 1-3 EFI program?*

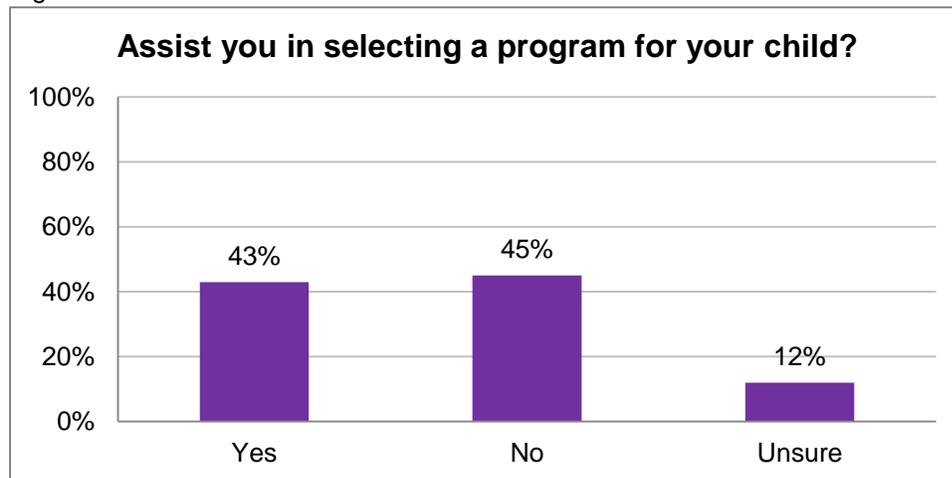
Figure 5: Question 5 Results.



Question 6.

Will these changes assist you in selecting a program (English/Core French or French Immersion) for your child?

Figure 6: Question 6 Results.



Question 7

What are your concerns for students in relation to the recommendation to introduce a 50 percent French/ 50 percent English model in both Junior and Senior Kindergarten?

By far, the most commonly voiced concern was that the children are too little and this would be too much French for them at a time when they are just starting to learn routines and social skills. On the other hand, another concern was that 50 percent is not enough time spent in French and they would like to see more. Another common concern was that 50 percent French would be too difficult for ELLs and students with Special Education needs.

Other reoccurring, but less frequent, concerns were: the lack of choice for parents; the need for a strong English foundation; increase in points of contact/transitions; lack/inability of staff to execute; inability of parents to support at home; that students would confuse French and English; that this would lead to JK/SK split classes; that learning difficulties would go unnoticed; that this would lead to 'watered down' content; that a specific cohort would be disadvantaged if all changes were implemented simultaneously; concern for English-only schools; and that this would lead to the downfall of English and/or MFI programs.

Question 8

What are your concerns for students in relation to introducing 60 minutes of English as a subject in Grade 1 French Immersion?

Based on the responses, it was very clear that the main concern was that the proposed change would dilute the French immersion program; that students get enough English exposure in the rest of their day and they are in French immersion to spend the maximum amount of time in French.

Other, much less frequent concerns were that: kids would confuse English and French; this would not be enough English being added to the day; it would increase points of contact/transitions; the changes are being made without research evidence; children would lose interest in French reading; it would be stressful for the children; a specific cohort would



be disadvantaged if all changes were implemented simultaneously; it would lead to more homework; it would lead to larger classes; and it would decrease retention for secondary French Immersion.

Question 9

What are your concerns for students in relation to changing the language of instruction of mathematics from French to English in Grades 1-3 Early French Immersion?

Again, the main concern was that the proposed model would dilute the French Immersion program. The next largest concern was that it would deprive children of French math vocabulary.

Other concerns were that: the changes are being made without research evidence; it would increase points of contact/transitions; the change does not include science, which is also desired to be taught in English; it would make for less integration across subjects; it would devalue French by implying that hard/core subjects should be taught in English; and concern about the time and money spent on EFL math training and resources. There was also some concern that the proposed model would make the transition to Grade 4 math in French more difficult, demonstrating a misconception among respondents given that Grade 4 math is currently taught in English.



Staff Online Survey

Those who completed the staff online survey were asked:

- Their position;
- The program they are affiliated with;
- If they feel students will benefit from each of the recommendations;
- If the changes will assist parents in choosing a program for their child;
- Any concerns they have for students in relation to each of the recommendations (open-ended);
- Any concerns they have for staff in relation to each of the recommendations (open-ended); and
- Any recommendations for successful implementation.

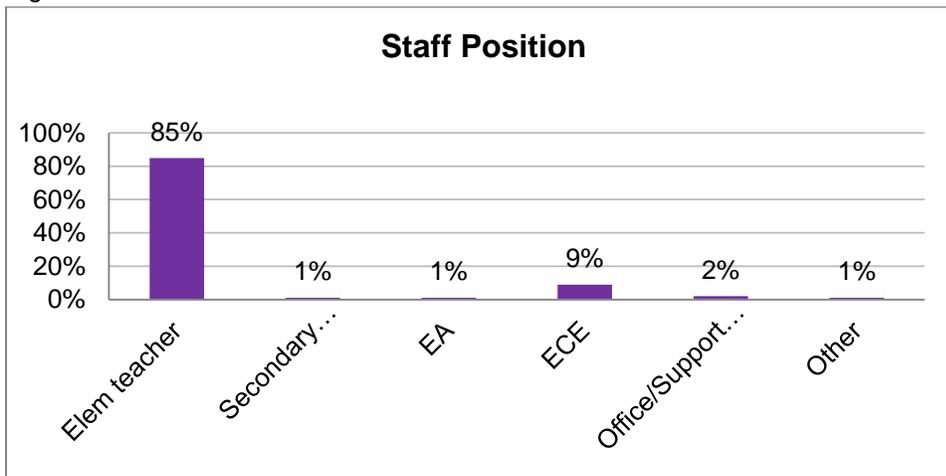
Results

There were 883 staff responses. The following graphs provide a proportionate breakdown of these responses¹. Open-ended questions were qualitatively coded, for which the trends among the responses are also outlined.

Question 1

Please indicate your position.

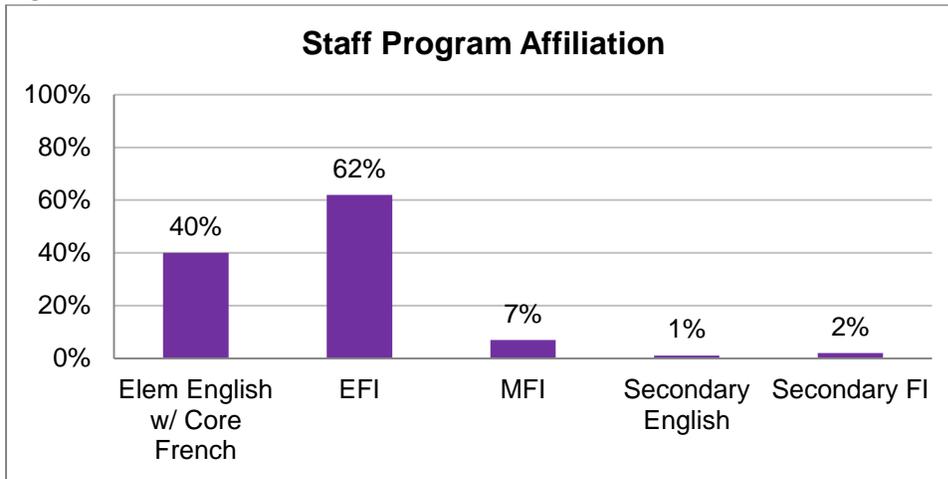
Figure 7: Question 1 Results.



Question 2

Please indicate the program you are affiliated with.

Figure 8: Question 2 Results.

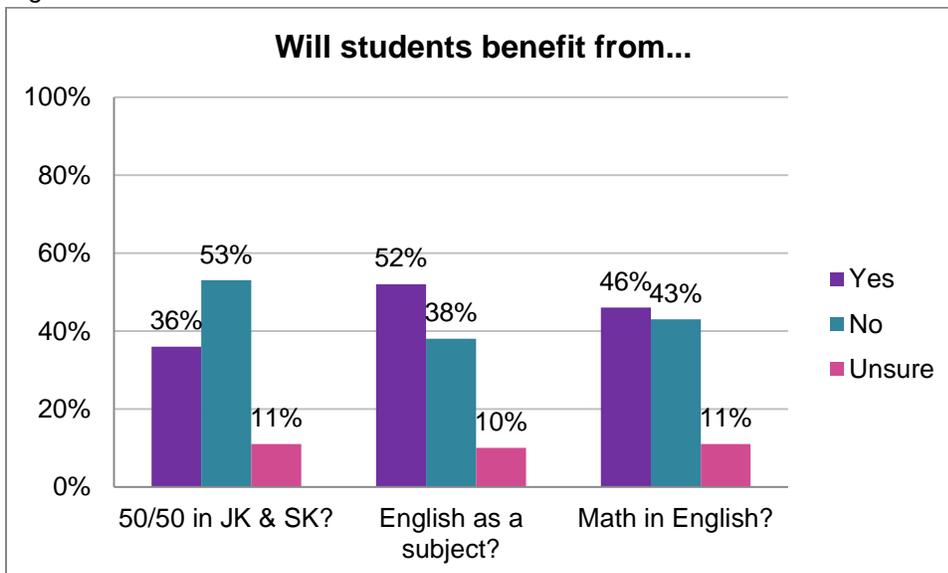


Question 3

Do you feel students will benefit from the recommended:

- 50 percent French/ 50 percent English model for both JK and SK?
- Introduction of 60 minutes of English daily taught as a subject in Grade 1 EFI?
- Change of the language of instruction of mathematics from French to English in the Grades 1-3 EFI program?

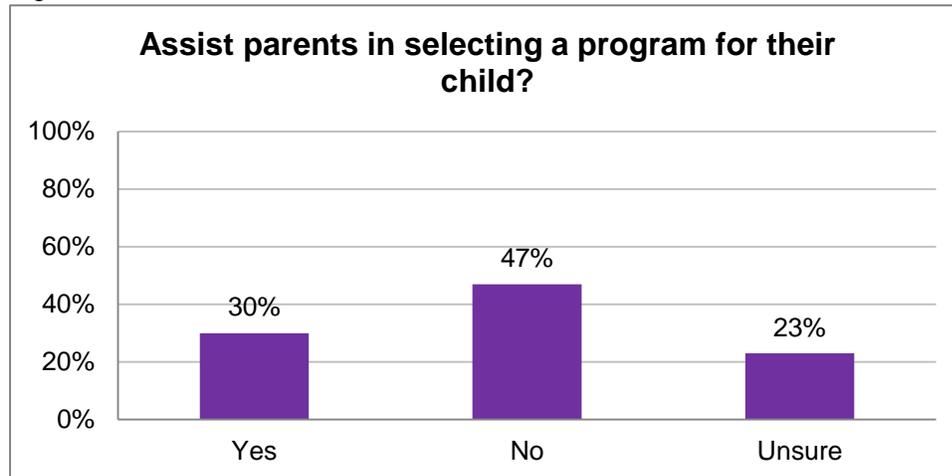
Figure 9: Question 3 Results.



Question 4

Do you feel these changes assist parents in selecting a program (English/Core French or French Immersion) for their child?

Figure 10: Question 4 Results.



Question 5

What are your concerns for students in relation to the recommendation to introduce a 50 percent French/ 50 percent English model in both Junior and Senior Kindergarten?

The most frequent concern expressed by staff was that the children are too little and the adjustment to school is difficult enough without the addition of an unfamiliar language. As with parents, it was also common for staff to voice that 50 percent is not enough time spent in French. The other main concern was that 50 percent French would be too difficult for ELLs and students with Special Education needs.

Other concerns were: the lack of choice for parents; the need for a strong English foundation; increase in points of contact/transitions; lack/inability of staff to execute; that students would confuse French and English; that it would be stressful for the children; that this would lead to JK/SK splits and/or larger classes; that learning difficulties would go unnoticed; that this would lead to 'watered down' content; that a specific cohort would be disadvantaged if all changes were implemented simultaneously; and that this would lead to the downfall of the English program.

Question 6

What are your concerns for staff in relation to the recommendation to introduce a 50 percent French/ 50 percent English model in both Junior and Senior Kindergarten?

The most common staff concerns were around job loss/displacement and teacher workload. Teachers voiced concerns that the proposed model would result in them losing ownership over a homeroom, shuffling between multiple classes, and therefore an increase in students to teach and families to communicate with. Concerns about teacher workload included prep load, the division of work between English and French teachers, and the additional time needed to co-plan with the multiple educators involved in a given class. There were concerns that this would impact teacher job satisfaction.



There were also concerns about: scheduling/timetables; resources/supports being spread too thin; difficulty implementing play-based learning and building classroom communities in French; and the lack/inability of staff to execute (specifically the lack of French ECEs, lack of French supply teachers, and lack of Kinder-trained French teachers).

Question 7

What are your concerns for students in relation to introducing 60 minutes of English as a subject in Grade 1 French Immersion?

The most frequently heard concern from staff was that the addition of English would take away from valuable time spent learning the French language and dilute the French Immersion program. There were arguments made that hours being added at the JK level would not be of the same quality as the hours of French being removed from primary. On the other hand, some staff voiced that there should in fact be *more* time spent in English. The concern for increase in points of contact/transitions was also very common.

Other concerns were: that children would confuse English and French; that they would lose interest in French; that it would lead to ‘watered down’ content; that it would create more homework; and that it would attract students with more diverse learning needs to EFI and therefore additional supports could be needed.

Question 8

What are your concerns for staff in relation to introducing 60 minutes of English as a subject in Grade 1 French Immersion?

Again, the most common staff concerns were around job loss/displacement and teacher workload. Teachers were concerned that this change would result in them losing ownership over a homeroom, teaching multiple classes, and therefore an increase in prep as well as an increase in parents to communicate with. Teachers also voiced concerns about the impact on their job satisfaction, citing factors such as lack of consistency in their day and stress from having to rush in order to cover the French curriculum in a reduced amount of time. There were also concerns that FSL-qualified teachers would be ‘locked in’ as they would not be permitted to teach English classes.

Other concerns were: scheduling; managing students’ confusion between English and French; moving of materials between classes; difficulty integrating units of instruction; and resources/supports spread too thin.

Question 9

What are your concerns for students in relation to changing the language of instruction of mathematics from French to English in Grades 1-3 Early French Immersion?

The main concern that staff expressed for students was that the proposed model would dilute the French Immersion program. As with the parents, another very common concern that was learning math in English would deprive children of French math vocabulary. There were concerns among the staff about the motivations behind the change and the research evidence suggesting it would be beneficial. Teachers also frequently commented that the change would increase points of contact/transitions for students.

Other concerns were: the change does not include science, which is also desired to be taught in English; it would make for less integration across subjects; it would devalue French by



implying that hard/core subjects should be taught in English; the lack/inability of teachers; and concern about the time and money spent on EFI math training and resources.

Question 10

What are your concerns for staff in relation to changing the language of instruction of mathematics from French to English in Grades 1-3 Early French Immersion?

The main staff concerns were around job loss/displacement and teacher workload. Teachers voiced their concerns that they would be forced to take on additional responsibilities associated with teaching multiple classes (e.g., communication with multiple families, co-planning with other teachers, additional prep, etc.), and that they would lose ownership over their homeroom. Teachers also voiced concerns about the impact on their job satisfaction, citing factors such as being 'locked in' if they are FSL certified and being unable to teach math (which many cite as an area of passion/expertise).

Other concerns were: scheduling; it would give staff less time with students, and make it more difficult to identify difficulties; difficulty integrating units of instruction; difficulty keeping students on task in French; and concern about time and money spent on EFI math resources.

Question 11

What should we consider as a district that will assist in the successful implementation of these changes?

The responses to this question will be analyzed in the event that the proposed changes are approved by the Board, at which point staff input would serve as a valuable resource for developing an implementation strategy.

¹ *Note.* Statistics above are based on the percentage of those who responded to that particular question, and not the total number of respondents to the overall survey. In some cases, it was possible for



respondents to select multiple options, in which case values exceed 100%. All results were rounded to the nearest percentage, and therefore even single-choice questions may not total an exact 100%.

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