COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)   **21 January 2025**

Report No. 25-002

Comprehensive Report on the Elementary Program Review: Proposed Program Model and Support for Students

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PURPOSE:

1.   The comprehensive report provides an overview of the proposed program delivery model at the elementary level, including support for students and schools, grades 1-8 inclusive. The report also outlines, for approval, a consultation plan for gathering feedback from the OCDSB community - including advisory bodies, students, staff and parents/caregivers - on the proposed program model and support for students in order to inform final recommendations to be presented to the Board of Trustees in the spring of 2025.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

2.   The OCDSB's Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 makes a strong commitment to improving program quality and accessibility. The need to review current elementary programming, service delivery and support structures were recurring themes that emerged during the strategic planning process consultation in the winter and spring of 2023, as described in Report 23-029, 2023-2027 Strategic Plan Consultation Report. Specifically, there were concerns expressed about difficulty accessing programs, particularly French Immersion (FI), at community schools and inconsistent support for special education across programs.

The elementary program review is the first stage of a four-part, multi-year 'vision exercise' being undertaken by the District to ensure inclusive, high-quality and accessible programs and/or services offered by the District. The other stages of the 'vision exercise' include: early years and childcare services; secondary programming, service delivery and support structures; and, adult and continuing education. Each stage is fundamental to supporting the objectives outlined for the strategic pillars of learning, well-being and social responsibility.

CONTEXT:

3. **Current Elementary Programming and Delivery Models**
    The District currently offers a variety of programs and delivery models at the elementary level, including a bilingual (50/50) kindergarten program, English with Core French (ENG), and two French Immersion programs: Early French Immersion (EFI) which begins at grade 1 and Middle French Immersion (MFI) beginning at grade 4. There are also five elementary schools in the District designated as Alternative (ALT), each of which delivers the English with Core French Program using an approach and philosophy that is based on seven tenets. Each of these distinct programs is augmented by support for English-language learners and students with special education needs.

    The elementary programs are delivered through a patchwork of school configurations, which includes eight different school grade structures and a range of program structures: single track (e.g., English with Core French, including Alternative designated sites); EFI; dual track (e.g., English with Core French and EFI); and triple track (e.g., English with Core French, EFI, MFI) combinations, with each program having its own distinct attendance boundary. A number of schools across the District also host one or more special education classes known as Specialized Program Classes (SPCs), or English as a Second Language/English Literacy Development (ESL/ELD) program classes (see Appendix A: Navigating the Future: 2024 OCDSB Elementary Program Review of Report 24-052).

4. **The Program Review To Date**
    As indicated above, the program review at the elementary level emerged as a key piece of work for the District's current strategic plan in response to concerns that current elementary programming and delivery models were not meeting the needs of all students. The elementary program review process was formally launched in the spring of 2024 to think critically about what programming is offered, how and where it is offered, whose needs are being served, and how schools may be redesigned to better meet the needs of all current and future students. The program review, as framed, could lead to several outcomes including maintaining the status quo, adjustments and/or enhancements to the current model, or the exploration of other models.

    Formal consultation to inform the elementary program review took place from April to June 2024, to develop a clearer understanding of the community's views and thoughts on current programming and program delivery. The active community engagement campaign provided several pathways to elicit and facilitate input from the broader community. Input was also sought from key internal groups, including school administrators, site-based staff and others. Input collected was consolidated in Report 24-101, Consultation Report on the Elementary Program Review and presented to the Committee of the Whole in September 2024.

In October 2024, additional information sources, including District-level data and externally-relevant research, were presented to the Committee of the Whole in [Report 24-110, Contextual Report for the Elementary Program Review: District Data and Relevant Research](). Timelines for the review were adjusted to allow for additional consultation with advisory groups and discussions with representatives of the Ministry of Education.

5. **Highlights from Key Sources of Information**

    Three fundamental sources of information were identified from the outset of the program review to inform the process and triangulate any decisions regarding the development of the elementary program model and support for students:

    a) public consultation;
    b) District data (internal); and,
    c) relevant research (external).

    Below is a summary of highlights from each of these sources.

    a) Public Consultation (April to June 2024, and October 2024)

    Seven themes emerged from the initial stage of consultation as follows: accessibility and inclusion; administration and structure; communication; language acquisition; program quality; resources and support; and special education.

    Highlights from the consultation include:
    ● the high value placed on bilingualism in the Ottawa context, underscoring the desire for access to FI programming;
    ● the importance of community schools and being able to attend neighbourhood schools;
    ● the revelation that many parents and caregivers, especially newcomers, were not aware of the program options available beyond those at their local school;
    ● the importance of having consistent access to supports in FI programs; and,
    ● parents of students with special education needs reported feeling that the FI programs are not an option because of the perception that supports are not as readily available.
    Reference: [Report 24-101, Consultation Report on the Elementary Program Review]()

    b) District Data (analysis and synthesis took place during July and August 2024)

    Data at the District level focused on the demographics, achievement, engagement, and wellbeing of students at the elementary level in the various programs.

    Highlights from internal data include:
    ● approximately 40% of OCDSB students in grades 1 - 8 are enrolled in the English with Core French program and 60% are enrolled in EFI;

- provincial assessment and report card data tends to show higher achievement results for students enrolled in FI;
- students with special education needs are more likely to be enrolled in the English with Core French program.

Reference: [Report 24-110 - Contextual Report for the Elementary Program Review: District Data and Relevant Research](#).

c) <u>Relevant Research (analysis and synthesis took place during July and August 2024)</u>

Two distinct literature reviews were conducted by leading external researchers engaged by the District:

i) A literature review related to bilingual programming compiled by Dr. Stephanie Arnott, Associate Professor and Samantha Van Geel, PhD Candidate (University of Ottawa).

Highlights from this review include:
- learning a new language has cognitive, social and economic benefits for all students, including students with special education needs and those who already speak another language other than English;
- students with special education needs perform at similar levels in FI and English programs;
- quality FSL programming requires effective support for students, educators, school administrators and parents and guardians; and,
- some students, including those with special education needs and English-language learners, are often left out or discouraged from enrolling in FI programs because of beliefs about learning a new language that are not supported by research.

Reference: [Appendix B of Report 24-110 - Contextual Report for the Elementary Program Review: District Data and Relevant Research](#).

ii) A literature review related to inclusive education compiled by external researcher Dr. Gillian Parekh, Associate Professor (York University).

Highlights from this review include:
- traditional special education programs and delivery models are built on ableism, or the unfair treatment of people with disabilities;
- inclusive education means creating classrooms where all students are valued;
- research shows that students with disabilities do not perform better when they are in separate (congregated) classrooms or schools;
- decisions to place a student in a special education program are often influenced by identity (e.g., gender, race);
- research shows that grouping students with similar abilities together does not improve their success; and,
- being in a special education program can make it harder to succeed socially and academically in high school and beyond.

Reference: [Appendix C of Report 24-110 - Contextual Report for the Elementary Program Review: District Data and Relevant Research](#).

6. **Policy/Regulatory Framework Guiding the Elementary Program Review**

The review must also consider policy and regulatory frameworks that impact potential program models and delivery structures. This includes not only applicable OCDSB policies, but also the applicability of any Ministry of Education regulations, policies or guidelines, which provide specific Ministerial requirements related to French instruction in English-language public school boards. Discussions with Ministry of Education representatives have been ongoing to ensure alignment between the proposed model and Ministry expectations and requirements.

The following policy and regulatory frameworks were identified in terms of their potential impact on program models or delivery structures:

a) As outlined in OCDSB Policy [P.139.CUR, Changes to Programs and Program Delivery Structures at Elementary Schools](#), the District's elementary program framework indicates that elementary programs and program delivery structures must adhere to the following principles:
   ● equity of access and opportunity for all students;
   ● a 'designated community school model' which seeks to provide programming options for students which are as close as possible to their home; and,
   ● defined geographic attendance boundaries at each school that may differ by program, which means some schools have multiple geographic attendance boundaries, drawing students from different communities, depending on the size of the boundary.

The policy states that Board approval is required in the case of substantive changes to program delivery structures, including system-wide changes to specialized program delivery structures such as ESL and special education, or changes that can reasonably be expected to have a significant effect on school enrolment.

The principles set out in Policy P.139.CUR align with the principles and values of the current program review, including principles based on equity of access to quality English and FSL programming and instruction, connectedness to community and a community school concept, and a student support model that offers a continuum of supports designed to meet students' learning needs.

b) The Ministry of Education's [Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG)](#) and OCDSB Policy [P.118.PLG, Pupil Accommodation Reviews](#) were introduced to provide a structured framework for district school boards to follow when considering changes to school facilities. The focus of the current review is on the District's elementary programming and support model. The review does not contemplate any school consolidations or closures. However, given the scope, there are planning and accommodation implications that require consideration of whether and how they may engage the PARG or OCDSB Policy P.118.PLG, Pupil Accommodation Reviews.

c) The Minister of Education is empowered to provide direction to district school boards on programming, including, parameters related to English and French instruction in programs offered by English-language public school boards, through curriculum documents and other policies issued by the Ministry of Education. For example, paragraph 25 of subjection 8(1) of the *Education Act* specifically empowers the Minister to permit an English-language school board to establish for English-speaking pupils programs involving varying degrees of the use of the French language in instruction, provided that programs in which English is the language of instruction are made available to pupils whose parents desire such programs for their children and impose terms and conditions on the permission. There have been ongoing discussions with representatives of the Ministry of Education to ensure alignment between any proposed options being considered and Ministerial expectations or requirements.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

7. **Overarching Principles Guiding the Elementary Program Review**
   The following three overarching principles continue to guide the work of the elementary program review, and build on the broader guiding principles articulated in Report 24-052, Program Review Process at the Elementary Level:

   - **community based education -** the recognition of each school site as core to the community allows for the localization of programs and/or services related to learning, well-being, and social responsibility, as well as the effective and efficient operationalization of the organization as a system;

   - **dynamic, bilingual teaching and learning environments** - the ability to offer programming in English and French for all students at each school site, along a continuum of bilingualism organized by subject area/discipline, allows for confidence, proficiency and achievement in both official languages; and,

   - **continuum of inclusion -** the provision of support at each school site allows for an array of assistance for all students, including multilingual learners and those with special needs, with the potential for full inclusion, withdrawal assistance, and/or specialized program classes.

   The work of the program review at the elementary level is also guided by the Algonquin Protocols, originating from the Algonquin Round Table, emphasizing the importance of respectful dialogue, active listening, open-mindedness, as well as diverse perspectives. The protocols encourage individuals to engage in discourse thoughtfully, support their arguments with evidence, and maintain a spirit of collaboration and inclusivity.

8. **Proposed Program Model**
   A number of different options for program models were explored and evaluated taking into consideration the information sources, guiding principles and current constraints. A program model was identified that staff believes will provide the best opportunity to make improvements to learning and well-being outcomes for

all OCDSB elementary students. The proposed model consolidates existing program offerings to provide two program pathways for elementary students in grades 1 to 8: Enhanced English (EE) and French Immersion (FI). Of importance to note, both pathways offer varying degrees of English and French as languages of instruction. The benefits of a more streamlined and robust program offering at elementary sites include: improving program quality and accessibility for all students and allowing the District to focus resources (human, financial, capital) more efficiently and effectively, system-wide.

Under the proposed model, kindergarten students will continue to be provided with a 50/50 bilingual program. Upon entering grade 1, students can enroll in either EE or FI. The entry point to the FI program will be fluid such that students will be able to access the program at the start of any of grades 1, 2 or 3. Of note, entry to FI beyond grade 3 may be approved on a case-by-case basis, for example, for students moving into the District in Grade 4 or later who have come from a French-language school board. These decisions would be made at the school level, applying centrally-developed criteria.

As part of the proposed model, the FI program will include more instruction in English at grade 1 from that which is currently in place. This will mean two subject areas, English (new) and Math (continuation of past practice) will be taught in English beginning in Grade 1. As well, the amount of French instruction in the EE program will increase from the current 200 minutes per week to 240 minutes per week. The following chart provides an overview of the English and French instructional minutes in the proposed model, and outlines the change it represents from what is currently in place:

Program/ Grade	English Instruction	French Instruction	Change from Current
Bilingual Kindergarten Program (two-year)*	50%	50%	No change
Enhanced English (EE) Program (Grades 1 - 8)	84% 1260 minutes/week English and other curricular areas	16% 240 minutes/week Core French and other curricular areas	Core French - Increase in French instruction from 200 minutes to 240 minutes/week
French Immersion (FI) Program - Primary/Junior (Grades 1-6)	40% Math/English 600 minutes/week	60% All other curricula 900 minutes/week	FI in Grade 1: Change in English instruction from 20% to 40%. Grades 2-6: No change
French Immersion (FI) Program - Intermediate (Grades 7-8)	50% 750 minutes/ week Math/English and other curricular areas	50% 750 minutes/ week French and other curricular areas	No change

Under the proposed model the current MFI program will be discontinued for new enrolment, and the entry point at grade 4 will no longer be available, beginning September 2026. More information on the transition plan for students currently enroled in the MFI program will be presented as part of the discussion report scheduled for the March 4, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting.

The proposed model also means the discontinuation of the Alternative approach as a distinct and separate offering within the District as of September 2026 for new registrants. The tenets of the alternative philosophy, which are generally consistent with the commonly-held principles of sound pedagogy and which are already in place in many schools not specifically designated as Alternative, would continue to be promoted across the District. More information on the transition plan for students currently enroled at one of the Alternative sites will be presented as part of the discussion report scheduled for the March 4, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting.

In addition to the program changes, other factors have been identified through or coincident with the review, to improve program quality and delivery at elementary sites. This includes revisions to the current Time Allocation Model (TAM) such as standardizing the length of instructional blocks to 60 minutes, to the greatest extent possible, to provide more robust and reasonable teaching and learning periods. At dual-track sites, students in the EE and FI program may be combined during their English and/or Math blocks, if/as appropriate and feasible. This practice of effectively 'destreaming' English and Math, will provide several benefits, including ensuring that students attending the same school have an opportunity to learn and engage with peers across programs. Educators who share responsibility for a group of students will also be encouraged to co-plan using a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach that incorporates Differentiated Instruction (DI), and that is rooted in Culturally-Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP). Capacity building and professional development for educators will be focused in these areas to facilitate desired outcomes for students.

Finally, the tools currently used for early literacy screening, and key assessments in early numeracy, attendance and engagement data will be consolidated into a single tracker. The ability to see, in a snapshot, progress in a given area is essential to ensuring appropriate support and interventions are put in place.

9. **Support for Students**
    Inclusive education practices value all students and their contributions to the learning environment. A structure for student support that is grounded in inclusive education practices ensures that individual student learning needs are understood and a responsive plan is established. Using a multi-tiered approach to interventions, student learning needs are monitored to ensure the appropriate level of support is being implemented.

    The existing structure for serving multilingual learners in the District has been in place for over ten years. Relevant research continues to show that the provision of intensive, targeted support for these learners can accelerate their learning

trajectory and facilitate their successful integration into general classrooms. The majority of multilingual learners are supported in the general classroom with ESL support. Some students, especially those in the early stages of English-language proficiency, may receive support from ESL school staff or centrally-coordinated teams.

With respect to multilingual learners who have had limited prior schooling, there are English Literacy Development (ELD) classes in place across the system. All of these classes are expected to remain in place.

ELD Classes	Number of Classes/Schools
Junior Division (Grades 4-5)	2 ELD classes in 2 schools
Intermediate Division (Grades 6-8)	13 ELD classes in 8 schools

As such, the continuum of inclusion for multilingual learners prioritizes in-class support with withdrawal as needed, yet provides specialized classes for intensive support, as well as intentional reintegration strategies to transition along the continuum based on students' learning needs over time.

The existing model for special education in the District was last reviewed as a whole in 2010. Since that time, research and best practices to support students with disability-related needs have shifted from a sorting of students based on ability to one where every student's profile is valued and can contribute to the learning environment. The majority of students with special education learning profiles are currently being supported in the general classroom. Some students are receiving support from school staff or centrally-coordinated teams outside the classroom but within their community school. Some students, particularly those with the most complex learning needs, are supported full-time in specialized program classes (SPCs), typically located in a school outside of the student's community. This is the least inclusive intervention in the service delivery model continuum. Currently there are 11 distinct, exceptionality-based SPCs at the elementary level, totaling 142 classes. This is not in line with other school boards' approaches across the province, as most districts have significantly fewer specialized classes and a greater emphasis on inclusionary practices.

Limitations of the current model of support for special education include: early placement in programs limits pathway options for students; staffing resources are siloed and concentrated in SPCs; and, a focus on referrals to SPCs, and other related administrative tasks, diverts attention and resources from more inclusive approaches and practices.

There are a number of promising outcomes for an evolved model of student support, including: a shift in services to students, not students to services; early intervention and monitoring to inform programming while keeping options open;

continuum of inclusion, prioritizing in-class support with withdrawal as needed; and, learning environments that support student well-being and adjust to individual needs.

The proposed model includes the gradual phasing out of several carefully selected SPCs, as outlined in the chart below. This will allow for a redistribution of special education resources to be available to support learning in the general classroom.

SPCs Continuing	SPCs Being Phased Out
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Program - Behaviour Intervention Program (BIP) - Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH) Program - Developmental Disabilities (DD) Program (Including Semi Integrated Specialized Sites) - Dual Support Program - General Learning Program - Intermediate - Gifted - Junior/Intermediate - Physical Support Program	- General Learning Program (GLP) - Junior (6 classes; 16 students/class) - Gifted - Primary (1 class; up to 20 students/class) - Language Learning Disabilities (LLD) Program - Primary and Junior (11 classes; 10 students/class) - Learning Disabilities (LD) Semi-Integrated Program - Junior and Intermediate (14 classes; 8 students/class) - Primary Special Needs (PSN) Program (7 classes; 10 students/class)
TOTAL: 103 classes	**TOTAL**: 39 classes

Research has shown that students' placement in self-contained special education classes can negatively impact students' sense of self, experience of belonging, and may unnecessarily limit student pathway options. Inclusive special education practices, on the other hand, provide students with equitable access to education, promote a sense of belonging and promote academic and social-emotional development alongside their peers. The proposed shifts will take a phased and measured approach, ensuring access to appropriate and timely interventions that are responsive to the unique needs of each student. In examining the current model of SPCs, classes that support students with less complex learning needs (i.e., LLD, LD Specialized Intervention Program (SIP), Primary Gifted) will be phased-out over a three-year period as the current cohort of students moves through the program. In the case of PSN and junior GLP, phasing-out these programs disrupts the practice of prematurely making placement and pathway decisions for students at the kindergarten or primary level, which may inadvertently limit their pathway opportunities later in their educational journey.

This is ongoing work that requires continuous review, assessment and revision, as well as a system-wide commitment to: re-evaluating and confirming roles and responsibilities for support educators both in schools and

central teams; formalizing a structured approach to targeted professional development on inclusive practices; and, creating 'Program Guides' for SPCs to ensure quality programming and transparency to parents/caregivers about the program, while shifting away from exceptionality-based labels to a focus on skill development.

10. **Emphasis on Concept of Community-based Schooling**
    The successful implementation of the proposed program model and associated support for students means ensuring, to the extent possible, that all programs and/or services are accessible to all students across the District in a community-based focus. This commitment to program accessibility required a review of current attendance boundaries and school configurations guided by the following desired outcomes:
    - equitable access for all students to programs offered within a designated community school model;
    - better planning and accommodation conditions, wherever possible, to improve the learning experiences of students, including finding opportunities for:
        - reducing grade configurations;
        - improving transitions between feeder schools - there are currently a number of schools where one cohort of students leaving a school are split and fed into two or more schools; and,
        - re-balancing enrolments where possible to provide more stability for low enrolment schools and their communities;
    - community-based schools that are, where possible, dual tracked so that both programs are available, with some schools that will offer only FI and a few that will offer only EE, in various areas of the District, where a dual track option was not feasible;
    - minimizing the number of single-track English-only schools in favour of dual-track schools, providing better access to FI for students in these communities who wish to have that option; and,
    - students served at their designated community school in most cases, learning and interacting with peers from their own community.

    The revised attendance boundaries and grade configurations better align the District's elementary schools with the above outcomes. All schools will remain open and have a catchment area that will, to the extent reasonably possible, provide the best opportunity for appropriate and sustained enrolment. Although there will always be some need to rely on portables in growth areas, there should be less reliance on portables (generally) in older facilities.

    As well, the proposed elementary programs should be more accessible to all students across the District and more students will attend a school in or in close proximity to their neighbourhood. The proposed boundary changes, therefore, have the potential to positively impact transportation planning for the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) by reducing at least some bus runs, and by having more children able to walk to school.

Each elementary school's grade configuration will end at the final grade of a school division, that is, at grade 3, (primary division), grade 6 (junior division), or grade 8 (intermediate division). There will also be fewer school grade configurations overall, system-wide: K-3, K-6, K-8, 4-8, 7-12, 9-12.

The groundwork is also being laid for more coherent families of schools, which means, for the most part, cohorts of students moving schools will be kept together. This also means that where school populations within a community are split between schools, there will be more cases where all of the students transition to the next school as a group.

Specialized Program Classes (SPCs) will, in the majority of cases, remain where they are, where grade configuration continues to align. ESL and ELD support (integrated and specialized classes) will also continue in their current configurations. As is the case now, placement of those supports and programs will be reassessed and adjusted to reflect student learning needs in each school over time. Further, space will be made available in every school to support a more integrated approach to special education delivery.

11. **Alignment of the Proposed Changes with the Overarching Principles**
The following chart provides a summary of the renewed vision for elementary programming within the context of the three overarching principles articulated.

- **Community-based Education:** The recognition of each school site as core to the community allows for the localization of programs and/or services related to learning, wellbeing, and social responsibility, as well as the effective and efficient operationalization of the organization as a system.

1. **Equity of Access:**
   - improved accessibility of programs through the expansion of dual-track programming across the District in a community school model, with some exceptions that will offer only EE or FI;
   - students will be served at their designated school, learning and interacting with peers from their own community, along with greater opportunities for parent/caregiver involvement;
   - greater sense of belonging, increasing walkability, and minimizing transportation barriers, as well as transportation-based efficiencies; and,
   - increased opportunities for expansion of community partnerships (e.g., Boys and Girls' Clubs, community arts' opportunities, athletic events, etc.).
2. **Streamlined School Grade Configurations**:
   - grade configurations at schools that align with the divisions: primary (grades k- 3, junior (grades 4-6) or intermediate (grades 7-8);
   - cohorts of students will move together in more cases through the elementary grades; and,
   - more consistent transition of cohorts of students from elementary to secondary schooling.

- **Dynamic, bilingual teaching and learning environments:** The ability to offer programming in English and French for all students at each school site, along a continuum of bilingualism organized by subject area/discipline, allows for confidence, proficiency and achievement in both official languages.

3. Streamlined Program Offerings:
  - no change to the bilingual (50/50) kindergarten program;
  - a reduction from four to two programs, in grades 1-8, providing a strong foundation in both official languages;
  - where possible, math and language classes are to be combined across dual-track programming, from grade to grade; and,
  - more equitable distribution of resources to support student learning and well-being.

4. Fluid Entry Points:
  - flexible entry into FI, beginning at Grade 1 through to Grade 3;
  - students in junior and intermediate grades (4-8) may continue in their selected program through their remaining elementary years; and,
  - students in FI can choose to move to EE at any point in time.

- **Continuum of Inclusion:** The provision of support at each school site allows for any array of assistance for all students, including multilingual learners and those with special education needs, with the potential for full inclusion, withdrawal assistance and/or specialized program classes.

5. Continuation of Supports for Multilingual Learners and Students with Complex Needs:
  - maintenance of ELD classes, system-wide, as well as capacity building for support staff related to ESL/ELD;
  - focus on building teacher efficacy on inclusive classroom practices, as well as CRRP, DI, and UDL, along with Indigenous ways of knowing and learning that included land-based education;
  - continuation of some SPCs, to support students with complex special education needs which includes the creation 'Program Guides' for SPCs to ensure quality programming and transparency for parents and caregivers; and,
  - learning needs are identified, goals are set/tracked/monitored, transition plans are built around individual next steps.

6. Redistribution of special education resources
  - carefully planned phase-out of some specialized program classes (SPCs) will allow for a reinvestment of 42 teachers and 13 educational assistants to general classroom support;
  - school-based support and multidisciplinary team support will focus on supporting programming for students in the community school instead of assessment and applications for students for SPCs; and,
  - re-evaluating and confirming roles and responsibilities for support educators both in schools and central teams.

12. **Additional Operational Considerations**:
   In addition to the detailed explanation of proposed changes noted above, the following operational considerations have been identified as part of the process:

   ● Childcare**:** The Early Learning Department will need to work through proposed boundary changes and new grade configurations to determine the full impact on current and future childcare services, including those provided by third parties, with a view to providing, to the extent possible, seamless transitions for children and families.

   ● Student Movement: A normal transition year would see approximately 6,000 to 8,000 students moving schools. Although the exact number is still being determined, the changes to school boundaries and configuration will mean more students than normally will experience a change for the 2026-2027 school year. While not insignificant, it is important to balance this one-time move against the numerous benefits of achieving a more equitable and accessible school system.

   ● School Locator: A school locator that will allow parents/guardians to identify their designated school will be released to the public at the end of February 2025, as part of a public package scheduled for discussion at the Committee of the Whole (COW) Meeting on 04 March 2025. The release date for the locator precedes the consultation sessions for parents/caregivers and staff.

   ● Transitional Provisions: In the past, whenever there has been a significant change to a school, or multiple schools' boundaries, the District has tried to minimize multiple transitions for students and keep siblings together through 'grandparenting' exemptions. Given the complexity and scope of the proposed changes, grandparenting will not be feasible.

   ● Staffing: The impact of the proposed changes on staffing levels will need to be further assessed, moving forward. Further analyses and modelling will be required, to identify changes resulting from shifts in enrolment generally and among programs and schools.

   ● Staff Movement: There will be fairly significant staff movement for staff currently working in elementary schools. This movement will need to be fairly and transparently managed in partnership with principals and vice-principals, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) Student Support Professionals (SSP) and OSSTF Education Support Professionals (ESP) and others, through collaborative working groups, taking into consideration current collective agreement provisions, staffing and transfer timelines and processes.

   ● Transportation: The new model creates the potential for more efficient busing. There will also be some initial challenges associated with adapting the transportation system to accommodate the new boundaries and grade configurations. There may also be potential challenges for some families

whose children are currently bused, but find their children walking to their new designated school.

- Site-based Renovations: As noted, some school grade configurations will change in this process. There may be a need to retrofit/resource some schools to accommodate new grade configurations and program(s). For example, to accommodate new kindergarten classes, or new intermediate grades, or dual-track programming for sites that are currently single track. It may also be necessary to move furniture, resources and other equipment among schools to accommodate enrolment changes.

- School Names: A few school names may need to be changed. For example, schools that currently have "Intermediate" or "Middle" as part of their name may have different grade configurations in the proposed model. As well, the schools currently designated with the name "Alternative" will become community schools.

- Small Programs: The reduction in program offerings will mean those being offered should be more robust. However, it is possible that some schools will have small enrolment in the English with Core French program, potentially resulting in less efficient staffing allocations.

- Planning/Enrolment Projections: Planning projections are based largely on trends, which will not exist at least for the first few years of the new model. As a result, it will be necessary to closely monitor the impacts and whether more accommodation changes, hopefully minor in nature, are needed.

13. **Timelines for Decision-Making and Implementation (Critical Path)**

Winter & Spring 2025: Proposed Program and School Support Models
- presentation of comprehensive report to trustees for discussion (January) and follow-up report with attendance boundaries and school configurations for deliberation (February)   - active community engagement campaign continued - - - see below (January - March)   - trustees presented with recommendation(s) for consideration by staff and a decision(s) made by Board on the new program delivery model (April)
Fall 2025: Development of Transition Plan
- formation of transition planning team   - implementation planning for operationalization of decision(s) begins, including development of implementation timelines, resource allocation plans, and communication strategies   - coordination and planning for spring staffing processes, in consultation with school administrators, unions   - provision of information to OSTA; other operational details

Winter - Spring - Summer 2026: Implementation Preparation
- oversight of transition plan implementation: school staffing processes, logistics planning, staff training, curriculum modifications, facility upgrades   - ongoing communications to school communities, system-wide
Fall 2026: Implementation of Program Delivery and School Support Models
- implementation of new program delivery model at the elementary level, phased as required   - ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process, with adjustments made as needed to address challenges and optimize outcomes

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

14. The introduction and implementation of the proposed program model and supports for students represent a substantial shift for the District. A change of this magnitude will require significant re-allocation and/or re-investment of resources (human, material and/or fiscal), including: staffing implications; new learning resources; professional learning; capital improvements; and, other logistical considerations. Below is a preliminary summary of investments that have been identified to date. The Board will be provided with additional information as part of subsequent reports for decision-making processes.

Project Transition Team: A project transition team including administrators, central planners, and communications staff, will need to be established for the upcoming school year to effectively manage various aspects of implementation.

Inclusive Student Support: The implementation of changes to supports for students will require an additional investment in site-based supports, including additional resources and staffing considerations. A portion of these additional costs will be offset over time as specialized classes identified for closure are phased out. The phasing out of the five types of SPCs will allow for the reinvestment of 42 teachers and 13 EAs over three years. In addition, the reduction in administrative tasks associated with applications for the closed SPCs will allow resources to be reallocated to directly supporting students in regular classrooms. There will also be a redistribution of multidisciplinary team resources into schools/classrooms. As above, the specific number of staff required to support the successful implementation of the model is part of the ongoing analysis and will be dependent on a number of factors.

Professional Development/Learning Resources: There will also be a need to invest in professional learning for educators, beginning next school year and into the future. While replacement staffing shortages continue to be a challenge, it will be imperative to invest funds in meaningful learning opportunities. There will also be a need to invest in additional learning resources for schools.

School Reconfiguration Costs: The proposed changes to school grade configurations and attendance boundaries will require both one time and ongoing investment of resources. This includes one time capital investments to support changes in schools such as retrofitting classrooms and school yards, for example, where kindergarten is being added for the first time. Similarly, a change in grade configurations and/or enrolment might cause a need for more/different furniture, learning materials (resources, manipulatives, other). While every reasonable effort will be made to shift resources across schools, as needed, there are also likely to be one-time costs to ensure schools have access to what they need.

Classroom Teachers and Other School-based Staff: Overall, the changes to the elementary program should not result in a measurable change (increase or decrease) in the total number of classroom teachers or other school based staffing levels, apart from those discussed above.

Analyses are underway to identify how much of the additional costs, for example, staff time, purchase of learning resources and materials, can be absorbed within existing budgets. Dedicated funds will need to be allocated in the 2025-2026 budget to support implementation. As noted above, further cost information will be provided in subsequent reports.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION:

15.   A comprehensive program review requires a comprehensive community engagement strategy. As with the initial consultation held in the spring of 2024, this will involve actively seeking feedback from interest holders. To effectively reach all stakeholders, the 'engage.ocdsb.ca' platform will be utilized, as will parent, student and staff updates, school websites, and both in-person and on-line consultation sessions. The engage.ocdsb.ca platform will continue to serve as a central hub for all information related to the elementary program review. Staff will ensure that feedback mechanisms are accessible and inclusive, accommodating diverse communication preferences so that all voices are heard.

16.   **Active Community Engagement Campaign (January-March 2025)**

   i.   Build Awareness: (January 2025)
        On approval of the consultation plan, the District will widely share information about the proposed program model and supports for students and how the community can provide feedback. This will include engage.ocdsb.ca, social media, and updates to inform students, parents/caregivers, and staff. The engage.ocdsb platform will be updated with key information about the review process, including: an overview of the review objectives and timelines, as well as a comprehensive resource guide, including reports, FAQs, and a guide on how to ask questions. A summary of the proposed model has been prepared for widespread distribution to the community, and is attached as Appendix A OCDSB Elementary Program Review - A Proposal for Improved Program Quality and Accessibility.

ii. <u>Feedback from Advisory Committees: (February - March 2025)</u>
Staff will reach out to the District's advisory committees, including Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Alternative Schools Advisory Committee (ASAC), Indigenous Education Council (IEC), the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE), and the Student Senate. Committee members will have an opportunity to provide high level feedback on the proposed elementary program model.

iii. <u>Student Engagement: (February - March 2025)</u>
In addition to leveraging Student Senate to encourage their respective student bodies to engage in the online consultation, further opportunities to hear from students across the District will be sought to bolster student voice in this round of consultation.

iv. <u>Staff Town Halls: (March 2025)</u>
Three staff town halls will be held across the District to offer opportunities for affected staff working in elementary schools to ask questions and provide feedback about the proposed program model and school support model.

v. <u>Community Meetings: (March 2025)</u>
Five meetings will be held across the District (four in-person and one virtual) to offer opportunities for trustees and staff to engage, gather feedback, and answer questions about the proposed elementary program model and school support model.

vi. <u>On-line Engagement: (January - March 2025)</u>
Another online survey will be shared to gather feedback on the proposed program model from the OCDSB community. This virtual engagement opportunity will support participation of students, parents/caregivers, staff, and community members who are unable to attend a meeting, but wish to voice their opinions and engage in meaningful dialogue about the proposed model.

vii. <u>FACE Engagement Sessions with SATE Schools: (February - March 2025)</u>
The District's Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Coordinator will actively support the gathering of feedback from the District's Student Achievement through Equity (SATE) schools that serve students who may face challenges and systemic barriers related to race, ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status. Students and their parents/caregivers from these schools will have the opportunity to share their input on the proposed elementary program model. Translation services will be readily available to ensure equitable access for all.

viii. <u>Indigenous Community Engagement Session: (March 2025)</u>
Opportunities for the Indigenous community to provide feedback on the proposed program model will be offered. This opportunity will be presented in a way that respects and adheres to traditional ways of knowledge sharing and

respectful engagement.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the consultation plan for an active community engagement campaign to take place during Winter 2025 regarding the proposed program model and support for students, as outlined in Report 25-002, be approved.

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Pino Buffone
Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board

APPENDICES

Appendix A   OCDSB Elementary Program Review - A Proposal for Improved Program Quality and Accessibility