



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



Consultation Report

April 8, 2025

2024-2025 OCDSB ELEMENTARY PROGRAM REVIEW



Report No. 25-022 (Appendix B)

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The perspectives and opinions outlined in this report reflect the feedback received through the consultation about elementary programming. Please be aware that these views may not accurately represent the actual operations of OCDSB programs and structures nor do they always accurately reflect the nature of the proposed changes.

Consultation Overview

The consultation for the elementary program review sought to be inclusive and respectful of all members of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) community, staff, and students. The purpose of this stage of consultation was to receive feedback from the OCDSB community about the proposed elementary program model that aims to improve program quality and accessibility for all students. To capture fulsome and representative feedback on the proposed elementary program model, multiple consultation pathways were used. In total, the review **captured input from 10,458 respondents**. It is important to note that these respondents are not necessarily unique. Groups were asked specific questions that differed only slightly based on their identified demographic group (e.g., parent/caregiver, OCDSB staff, student, community member). The consultation pathways resulted in ample feedback that was synthesized and compiled for each respective pathway utilizing backend tools that are offered through ThoughtExchange as a platform and an OCDSB data analyst as well as a ThoughtExchange research analyst.

Consultation Pathway	Respondents (n)
Online Survey	9,224
Advisory Committees	130
SATE Sessions	243
Community Zone Meetings	861
Total:	10,458

Table 1: Consultation Participation



Methodology

All consultation pathways resulted in qualitative data. Relying on qualitative data allowed for a more thorough, in-depth, and complex understanding of the views, beliefs, and opinions of participants (Creswell, 2003). Given the breadth of data, a thematic analysis was undertaken to extrapolate key themes from the various consultation pathways. Thematic analysis “is a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (‘themes’) within qualitative data” (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 297; see also Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Thematic analysis was especially useful due to the rich and copious data. The aim of thematic analysis is not “simply to summarize the data content, but to identify, and interpret, key, but not necessarily all, features of the data” (p. 297). As such, the themes present are among the most common that emerged in this process. It was not within the scope of this consultation period to employ interpretive frameworks or theoretical approaches to analyze and interpret the themes themselves. As such, this thematic analysis sought to generate semantic themes. With semantic themes, the data analyst “is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84; see also Byrne, 2022). The production of semantic themes is a descriptive analysis of the data, aimed solely at presenting the content of the data as communicated by the respondents. In addition to the themes represented in the report, where possible, select quotes are included from respondents to supplement and further ground the themes in the voices of those who participated. These quotes further exemplify the themes that emerged throughout the analysis of the data.

To streamline analysis of the qualitative data, the District used ThoughtExchange’s AI Advisor tool, a platform that combines human-informed analysis with artificial intelligence (AI). This tool uses AI similar to systems like ChatGPT, but with some key differences in how it works and the type of data it uses. The process of analyzing the information collected through ThoughtExchange followed a clear, step-by-step approach designed to get the most useful and detailed insights.

Given the multiple consultation pathways, and in particular, the numerous participant groups involved (e.g., parents/caregivers, staff members, community members, students, etc.), it is common that themes from one group may conflict with those of another, and sometimes, even within the demographic group itself. This is common among semantic theming as it presents the content of the data as communicated by the respondent. It is imperative to report on and share these themes for the sake of transparency, regardless of any contradictions that may emerge between and amongst them. Sharing these thematic contradictions also minimizes the potential for any confirmation bias from the thematic analysis as it presents numerous lenses and positions that afford a fulsome view of participant experiences and opinions.



Analysis

To extrapolate the aforementioned themes, the AI Advisor tool carefully reviewed all the contributions from participants. In this first step, it used algorithms (a set of rules or instructions) to find important patterns in the data, including the overall feelings of participants and any responses that stood out. The AI also looked at both what people said directly and what might have been implied by their answers. To make the insights even more relevant, the analyst provided additional information about the District, which helped the AI better understand the local context, priorities, and history of the educational environment, particularly as it pertains to the elementary program.

After this initial review, the AI system created easy-to-understand summaries of the most important insights from the participants' input. These summaries grouped the findings in a way that made the complex information clear and useful for decision-makers.

During this process, the data analyst worked closely with the AI, giving it specific prompts to explore certain parts of the data more deeply. The analyst also carefully checked each theme and matched them with the raw data to ensure accuracy. This process was further supported by a ThoughtExchange analyst to ensure consistency and reliability and avoid confirmation bias. This teamwork between the AI and the data analysts allowed for improvements and adjustments, ensuring the final conclusions were relevant and aligned with the school board's goals of authentic feedback. The AI Advisor's analysis was limited to District participant data rather than pulling information from all over the internet, thus ensuring focused and relevant insights aligned with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board's specific questions and community feedback.

Practical Benefits and Implementation

This approach allowed the District to quickly turn the data into useful insights, cutting down the time typically needed for in-depth analysis, while still keeping the information detailed and relevant. By combining AI-powered analysis with human oversight and engagement, the District was able to efficiently identify important patterns in complex data. Using this method, the District now has a repeatable and reliable way to understand the views of the community, which will help guide future decisions in education and support the Board of Trustees in their decision-making.



Overall Themes

There were a total of **111 themes across all consultation pathways**. Through further analysis, all of these themes can be grouped into **seven overarching thematic categories** that encompass the feedback for this phase of the consultation process. Below, the seven themes are listed along with their descriptions:

1. Community and Social Structures:

This theme examines how proposed changes affect school communities, including the potential separation of students and siblings, and the broader implications for social connections and community cohesion.

2. Student Well-being and Transitions:

This theme addresses the emotional and academic effects on students resulting from school transitions, grade reconfiguration, and the provision of stable and supportive learning environments.

3. Equity and Access to Education:

This theme focuses on ensuring fair access to French Immersion and other educational programs, addressing disparities and reputations between schools, and supporting diverse learners, including students with special needs and English Language Learners.

4. Support and Resources for Students with Special Education Needs:

This theme evaluates the adequacy of support, resources, and specialized programs for students with diverse learning needs, and explores the concerns with integrating students into mainstream classrooms.

5. Operational Logistics and Implementation:

This theme addresses the practical aspects of proposed changes, including transportation, school schedules, childcare, staffing, infrastructure, and the overall feasibility of implementation.

6. Transparency, Communication, and Consultation:

This theme provides a focus on transparency and communication of information pertaining to the elementary program review process as well as the perception of the consultation process.

7. French Immersion Program Changes:

This theme pertains to the potential impacts of proposed changes to the French Immersion program, including considerations of program quality, accessibility, and entry points.



Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Sessions

Students who attend schools participating in the Student Achievement Through Equity ([SATE](#)) Inquiry face heightened challenges and systemic barriers associated with race, ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status. Recognizing there is a discrepancy between students' academic achievement in the English program compared with students in the French Immersion offerings in these schools, seven sites were selected for consultation.

Focus groups were scheduled and conducted by the Family and Community Engagement coordinator, the SATE system principal, and two community education liaisons. Focus groups were conducted with parents/caregivers, posing the same questions that have been used across the consultation, though they were both simplified and translated. Further, translation services (e.g., Nepali, Arabic, and Somali) were provided at these focus group sessions as well as translated brochures in six additional languages, allowing for accessible discussion and conversation. **A total of 243 parents/caregivers participated.** The following schools participating in the SATE Inquiry were selected as locations for the focus groups:

- Carleton Heights Public School
- Carson Grove Elementary School
- Charles H. Hulse Public School
- Pincrest Public School
- Queen Mary Street Public School
- Robert E. Wilson Public School
- York Street Public School

On the following page are the key themes and some relevant quotes captured across the consultations at the aforementioned schools participating in the SATE Inquiry:



What are your thoughts on the advantages of the proposed program model?

Participants from these sites are pleased with the increased accessibility to French Immersion programs and for their children to stay within their community while gaining valuable language skills:

Increased Accessibility to French Immersion

Participants appreciate that the new program model offers more opportunities for their children to learn French. The availability of French Immersion programs closer to home is seen as a significant benefit, reducing travel time and keeping children within their community. The model allows for siblings to attend the same school, which is convenient for families, especially for girls who have foregone the opportunity to attend French Immersion schools further away in order to support their families.



"It's good to have 50/50 French close to my home. It's an excellent choice for us. It keeps us closer to home. Less travelling for my children."

"I like that most schools will have FI. It is hard for kids to move schools and lose friends. This will make it better."



Community and Continuity

Participants noted that the model represents an improvement, as keeping children in their local schools helps preserve friendships and provides a sense of stability. They emphasized the value of educating children within their community, which strengthens their connection to the local environment. This aspect was especially important for families facing challenging socioeconomic circumstances and who depend on some of their children for familial support.



"We like to have my kids being at the same school. Some of my kids missed the opportunity to be in French Immersion."

"Students being in the same community they live will be good."



Language Skills Development

The availability of French Immersion at the nearest school is viewed positively, particularly in a bilingual country like Canada. Participants recognize French as an important skill that will benefit their children in the future, both personally and professionally. They expressed enthusiasm about the opportunity for their children to learn French without disrupting family dynamics or creating additional challenges.

“

“I have ‘never been happier’ that French Immersion is now going to be an option, especially because being able to communicate in French is important in Ottawa.”

”

“French is important because of the country we live in.”



What are your concerns or reservations with the proposed program model that should be considered?

The themes below highlight the primary concerns participants have regarding the District’s proposed program model, focusing on access to French Immersion for older students, support for students with special needs, behaviour management, and logistical and financial aspects:

Limited Access for Older Students

Participants mentioned feeling disappointment that their older children, particularly those in higher grades, may not have the opportunity to join the French Immersion program. They worry that children who are currently in grade 2 or higher will miss out on the chance to enroll in French Immersion and expressed dismay that this model had not been implemented sooner.

“

“My child in grade will not be able to attend FI. A school refused me closer to my home to enroll my child in FI.”

”

“The earlier for children to enter French immersion the better it is. My older children will not be given the opportunity to do French Immersion.”

Support for Students with Special Needs

Participants raised questions and concerns about how the new program model will support students with special needs. Participants questioned the ability of teachers and educational assistants (EAs) to address the needs of students with special education needs while also supporting the entire class. The potential elimination of specialized program classes (SPCs) for students with autism and those with complex learning profiles is a major worry. Participants are apprehensive about the increased demands on educators to manage more behaviours in an integrated classroom setting. There is a fear that the education of both students with special education needs and their peers may be negatively impacted.

“

“How are you going to ask a teacher (with 1 EA) to support all children with specialized support while at the same time supporting the whole class. The other children will also suffer.”

“How are you going to keep students like my daughter safe & other children safe, without hers & other students’ education being impacted?”

”

Logistics and Financial Concerns

Participants have raised questions about the financial implications of the new program model, including the cost savings from reducing transportation services. Participants are uncertain about how the District will manage the logistics of integrating students with special education needs and the overall implementation plan.

“

“How much will you save from the reduction of vans/ busing?”

“How long will it take for the school board to be out of debt?”

”



Advisory Group Sessions

Participation was encouraged through existing structures and groups that exist within the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. Each session was structured similarly in that advisory groups received a short presentation on the proposed changes brought forward by the District to the elementary program model. Advisory group members then had an opportunity to ask questions of the director designate who provided comments of clarification or explanation.

Following this discussion, to gather comprehensive insights for the proposed elementary program model, the District then solicited feedback from committee members through “Interview”, an AI-enabled qualitative research tool by ThoughtExchange that facilitates one-on-one conversations with participants. This platform allowed for the conduct of detailed, confidential interviews with advisory group members simultaneously, enabling in-depth exploration of complex topics. By providing a private, flexible environment, Interview prompted participants to thoughtfully iterate and refine their responses, ensuring that nuanced perspectives and emerging themes were captured that might be missed through more traditional feedback gathering methods for groups. A **total of 130 advisory group members participated**. Altogether, the following six advisory groups provided feedback:

- Advisory Committee on Equity
- Alternative Schools Advisory Committee
- Indigenous Education Council
- Parent Involvement Committee
- Special Education Advisory Committee
- Student Senate

Below, each committee’s collective responses, main ideas, and some relevant quotes are captured based on the feedback that members submitted:

► **Advisory Committee on Equity**

Language Opportunities

Participants highlighted the importance of improved language opportunities, emphasizing cognitive development, cultural understanding, and future prospects. They believe that the proposed Enhanced English and French Immersion programs can empower students and support long-term career and personal growth.

However, concerns about the availability of French teachers and equitable access to these programs were also raised as potential barriers.

“

“From my point of view, the prime advantage of the proposed model is: Two Program Pathways of Enhanced English and French Immersion.”

“Improved language opportunities are vital because they foster cognitive development, cultural understanding, and future prospects.”

”

Resource Allocation

The allocation of resources, including quality staffing, proper monitoring, and technical support, were a significant concern. Participants stressed the need for adequate staffing and training to ensure the effectiveness of the proposed model. There were worries about the ability to meet the diverse needs of students.

“

“Ensuring equitable quality of education for all schools, and student populations.”

“Serving the students and their needs is primary: are we solving some problems while creating others?”

”

Community and Equity

Participants were concerned about the potential loss of established communities and the challenges of rezoning. They pointed out the disparities between schools in affluent neighbourhoods and those in marginalized areas, emphasizing the importance of providing equal opportunities for all students.

“

“Advantages include equitable opportunity for students across the Board with the 2 streams. Disadvantage is there is a shortage of French Teachers and how can the Board hire all those teachers.”

“Schools in poor income neighborhoods are poorly built and need more renovations to bring them to the standards of schools in high income neighborhood.”

”

Special Needs Support

Participants expressed concerns about the support for students with special education needs. They highlighted the need for specialized programs and resources to ensure these students receive the necessary support. There were fears that the proposed changes may lead to the exclusion of students with special needs from mainstream education.

“

“Families of students with special needs, or families with low income often require more support from their community and sometimes older siblings.”

“Children will be excluded based on safety or ability to provide quality education across the board at all community schools.”

”

Teacher and Behavioural Support

The availability of qualified teachers and the need for specialized behavioural support were flagged. Participants noted the shortage of French teachers and the challenges in hiring and retaining them. This was raised as a significant concern for the future and tied to the proposed model. In addition, participants flagged that not all EAs can handle behavioural needs, stressing the importance of dedicated behavioural support workers.

“

“Teachers and staff will leave, leaving the school unable to meet the required staff to keep doors open, making classrooms larger, and making children unable to attend schools at all.”

“Not all EAs specialize in behavioral needs. The scope of an EA is broad to support medical, behavioral, cognitive, and mental health (situational or permanent).”

”

Financial and Future Concerns

Participants acknowledged the need to address financial issues but were concerned about the impact on educational quality. They questioned whether the proposed model takes into account changing demographics and the increasing number of new Canadians.

“

“The District is operating with a structural deficit that must be addressed.”

“The demographics of the city are about to change. Has that been taken into account? As well as the number of new Canadians that are present in the schools is sure to change based on the immigration mandates of the federal government.”

”

► **Alternative Schools Advisory Committee**

Alternative Program Benefits

Participants frequently emphasized the program’s positive impact on students’ mental health, social cohesion, and academic success. Many parents and educators noted that the program’s unique tenets, such as no-homework policies and multi-age groupings, foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment. The program is seen as crucial for students who do not thrive in traditional educational models.

“

“The multiage groupings have been AMAZING for my children. Being mentored, and then mentoring younger students already happens in alternative schools.”

“The program is life-saving for students like my son. It must survive and CAN survive amidst proposed changes for French Immersion.”

”

Community Disruption

Many participants expressed concerns about the loss of social cohesion and the negative impact on students’ mental health and emotional stability. The sense of belonging and community built within the Alternative Program is highly valued and seen as irreplaceable. Participants fear that breaking up these established communities will lead to long-term negative consequences for students.

“

“My son will be losing the social cohesion he has gained post-COVID with his cohort.”

“The proposed changes will force students into learning environments that do not support their emotional and social development.”

”

Equity and Inclusion

Participants are worried that the proposed model will fail to meet the needs of diverse learners, particularly those who benefit from the flexible, student-driven approach of the Alternative Program. There is a perception that the new model will not support marginalized and neurodiverse students adequately. The elimination of the Alternative Program is viewed as a step backward in terms of this equity and inclusion.

“

“The Alternative Program strongly supports diverse learners by providing a flexible, student-driven approach that is not readily available in mainstream classrooms.”

“The elimination of the alternative model is especially troubling. Increasing the amount of ‘supported’ spec ed within mainstream classrooms will further alienate and isolate scores of the students and parents already being grossly underserved in the current funding model.”

”

Financial Efficiency vs. Quality Education

Some participants acknowledged the potential cost savings from the proposed changes, such as reduced transportation expenses. However, this financial efficiency is often seen as being prioritized over the well-being and educational needs of students. Many believe that the focus on cost-cutting undermines the quality of education and fails to consider the long-term benefits of the Alternative Program.

“

“This entire process appears based on the needs for fiscal efficiencies, and nothing at all to do with the whole-of-child approach to learning and development.”

“I don’t see any advantages to the proposed model other than the board is going to save money on bussing. Nothing else seems to mean that there will be better education in the board.”

”

Parental Choice Reduction

Participants value the ability to choose educational programs that align with their pedagogical philosophies and their children’s needs. The proposed model is seen as limiting options and forcing all students into a one-size-fits-all system. This reduction in choice is viewed as detrimental to the diverse needs of the student population.

“

“The proposed model will not meet the needs of all children, and there will be no option within the OCDSB for students who don’t suit this model.”

“It is crucial for parents and caregivers to have a choice in sending their child to a school that fits with their pedagogical philosophy and practices.”

”

Special Education Impact

Participants noted that the Alternative Program, while not specifically designed for special education, serves many students with special education needs well. The lack of a clear plan to support these students in the new model is troubling for many parents and educators in this committee.

“

“40% of alternative students have IEPs versus an average of 6% at other school; it is not okay to proceed without a plan to support these children.”

“Although the Alternative Program is not by design intended for spec ed students, it serves many of them well.”

”

► Indigenous Education Council

Indigenous Education

Participants emphasized the need for more opportunities to learn about Indigenous history and knowledge from Indigenous people. They believe that Indigenous organizations and communities should have more input into the educational model. There is a strong call for better support and resources for Indigenous students, including culturally relevant, decolonial programs.

“


“I think all students should have more opportunities to learn about Indigenous history and knowledge from Real Indigenous people.”

“There should be more input from Indigenous orgs and communities about the model.”

”

Classroom and Special Needs Support

There is a consensus that teachers need more help in classrooms, especially when dealing with students with a variety of needs. Participants suggest that



additional trained EAs are necessary to make the current and proposed model work effectively. There is also a concern that students with special education needs may be overlooked if their parents/caregivers are not advocating for them, highlighting the need for comprehensive support.

“

“Teachers need help in classrooms because they are used to sending students elsewhere when they become a challenge.”

“Additional trained EAs will be required to make it work.”

”

Equity and Systemic Issues

Participants highlighted the importance of an equity lens approach, particularly for inner-city schools that require more services. They believe that services should be distributed equitably, considering the socio-economic conditions of different areas. The current system is seen as needing a more equitable and streamlined approach.

“

“We need to get back to equitable across-the-board services for those that need it.”

“Understanding that inner city schools are going to need more services in the suburban schools.”

”

Funding and Fiscal Responsibility

Funding is a recurring theme, with participants calling for more financial support for Indigenous students with disabilities and various school initiatives. Fiscal responsibility is also a key concern, with participants acknowledging the difficulty of making everyone happy. They believe that making fiscally responsible decisions is crucial for the sustainability of the model.

“

“Fiscal responsibility is the important thing right now because if you’re not, if you don’t, the province is going to cut.”

“You’re never gonna make everybody happy and for the people that already have the services and they may lose those services.”

”

Community Hubs

The idea of community hub schools is seen as fiscally responsible and beneficial for disadvantaged communities. Participants believe that bringing services to these

schools would be more equitable. There is an acknowledgment that not everyone will be happy with the changes, but fiscal responsibility is deemed as crucial.

“

“I think having a school first or community hub school, and bring services to those schools is more physically responsible.”

“Bringing more services to the school would be actually a benefit and more equitable.”

”

Graduation Rates

Participants are concerned about the low graduation rates in certain inner-city schools compared to the provincial average. They believe it is the board’s responsibility to address this discrepancy by following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommendations. Support from community organizations is seen as vital in improving graduation rates.

“

“Support from community organizations is seen as vital in improving graduation rates.”

“When you have graduation rates of less than 60% and the province average is 89% that is a 29% discrepancy.”

”

► Parent Involvement Committee

French Learning

Participants discussed the advantages of providing children and youth with more opportunities to meet individual French learning needs. They believe that integrating students of all abilities into a classroom helps develop empathy and skill-building. There were concerns about the ability of rural schools to offer multiple levels of French education and the need for adequate support for students with special education needs.

“

“An advantage is the multiple access points for learning French allow children to enter when they are ready.”

“Providing children and youth the opportunity to have more individual French learning needs met is a great aspect of the model.”

”

Community and Family Impact

Several responses highlighted the benefits of having children attend schools within their communities, including increased social opportunities and reduced pressure on the transit system. However, participants raised concerns about the logistical challenges for families, particularly those with children of different ages, managing different school start and end times, and before and after childcare options.

“

“Beneficial to children and families to have friends in proximity to their school.”

“Many families are already struggling with balancing work/life and will struggle more if they are required to ensure children are delivered/picked up from different locations at different times.”

”

Special Education Needs Support

Participants raised concerns about the loss of supportive placements and the potential for increased exclusion, bullying, and othering of students with special education needs. They emphasized the need for proper supports to ensure the well-being and success of students with exceptionalities.

“

“There are already under supported kids in the classroom, how will they support more kids with learning barriers if there are fewer special classrooms.”

“I am concerned about the impact these proposed changes will have on these students, both educationally and re: Mental health and wellness.”

”

Implementation Concerns

Participants expressed concerns about the lack of transparency and communication regarding how the changes will be executed. There are also questions about the impact on current school structures and the need for transition plans.

“

“Tell me how you will implement these proposed changes. There has been no transparency about how this will be implemented.”

“There needs to be adequate supports for any Spec ED youth who are reintegrating into the classroom.”

”

Mental Health and Wellness

Participants, including mental health professionals, were worried about the educational and emotional effects of the proposed changes on students with school-related anxiety and other mental health issues. They stressed the importance of considering these factors in the planning process.

“

“As a mental health professional working with students with exceptionalities and those with school-related anxiety, I am deeply concerned about the impact these proposed changes will have on these students.”

“I am concerned about the exclusion, bullying, and othering of students with special needs/exceptionalities who are integrated into a mainstream classroom without proper supports in place.”

”

Educational Quality and Inclusion

Some participants believed that the proposed changes could negatively impact the quality of education, arguing that forcing students into more rigid learning environments may not be beneficial for all learners. However, a few participants supported the idea of inclusion, believing that restructuring the environment, pedagogy, and learning partnerships can benefit all students. They emphasized the need for proper support to help families navigate enrollment decisions.

“

“Forcing kids into more rigid learning environments is a convenience for educators, not learners.”

“Radical Inclusion benefits all students. It starts with restructuring the environment, the pedagogy, and the learning partnerships.”

”



► **Special Education Advisory Committee**

School Transitions

Participants expressed concerns about the disruption caused by school transitions, especially for students with special needs. They emphasized the need for clear communication about how many students will be affected and what accommodations will be made. The perception is that the current plan lacks sufficient detail to address these concerns effectively.

“

“Not clear how many students will have to transfer schools and how disrupting that will be especially for those children with special needs.”

“Schools transitions are extremely disruptive, especially for those with special needs.”

”

Special Needs Support

There is a strong emphasis on the need for adequate resources and support for students with special education needs. Participants believe that inclusion in mainstream classrooms can only be successful if proper accommodations and resources are provided. The proposed model is seen as insufficient in addressing these needs, potentially leading to negative behavioural outcomes.

“

“Without the proper support/resources/disability specific knowledge, kids will develop difficult behavioural responses and end up in complex needs classes like they are now.”

“Many research studies have shown that inclusion in classrooms only works when adequate resources are provided.”

”

Diversity and Inclusion

Participants highlighted the importance of cultural competency and the need for a whole-organization approach to achieve it. They believe that the proposed model does not adequately address diversity and inclusion, particularly in terms of programming and support for exceptional learners. There is a call for more emphasis on cultural learning and diverse perspectives.

“

“Cultural competency takes a whole of organization approach, with buy-in at all levels as well as the resources to support the changes.”

“More cultural content is needed be it in languages French/English, or Indigenous topics across subjects.”

”

Resource Allocation

Participants are worried about the allocation of resources, particularly in relation to the integration of students with special needs into mainstream classrooms. They believe that the proposed model does not provide enough resources to support these students. There is a call for more specialized staff and better training for teachers.

“

“Providing proper support to children with special needs integrated into normal classrooms. 42 teachers freed up to support 115 elementary schools does not add up.”

“The model requires more staffing and more specific staffing. There are multiple reasons kids have learning challenges.”

”

Exceptional Learners

A few participants felt that the needs of exceptional learners, particularly gifted students, are not being adequately addressed. They suggested that these students require specialized programs and teachers with expertise in handling their unique needs.

“

“Exceptional kids have clearly been left out and not been addressed adequately from my experience across school boards, not just OCDSB.”

“Disappointed to see that the primary gifted program is being discontinued. The cut off for this program was 99.6%ile.”

”

Communication and PR

Participants stressed the importance of clear communication and a strong public relations campaign to reassure the public about the proposed changes. They believe that the OCDSB needs to emphasize that this is not a cost-cutting exercise

and that support levels for students will be maintained. Consistent messaging is seen as crucial to gaining public trust.

“

“The OCDSB proposed program model requires a strong PR campaign and consistent messaging to reassure the public that this is NOT a cost-cutting exercise with respect to SPCs.”

“The Director of Education made it very clear that with respect to Specialized Program Classes, this is not a cost-cutting exercise and that any ‘drawing downs of SPCs will be offset by supports given to the students’.”

”

► **Student Senate**

Community Engagement

Participants emphasized the importance of students engaging with their local community and peers. They believe that close neighbourhood schools benefit social connections and community building. This aspect of the proposed model is perceived positively as it fosters social foundations and memories in elementary school.

“

“Close neighbourhood schools benefits social connections and community for students.”

“Community is a huge part of the social foundations and memories we form in elementary school.”

”

Flexible Pathways

The flexibility in academic pathways, particularly the Enhanced English and French Immersion plans, was highlighted as positive. Participants appreciated the ability to enter the French Immersion program at different grade levels, providing families with more options. This flexibility is seen as beneficial for reducing opportunity costs and accommodating late decisions to learn French.

“

“I really like how students can enter the French Immersion program at the beginning of Grades 1, 2 or 3.”

“The flexibility will give the child a chance to learn French.”

”

Student Success

Increased student engagement through clubs and new activities is seen as a way to improve skills and ensure success. Participants believe that providing more experiences and learning opportunities will help students on their educational paths. This category is viewed positively as it supports academic growth and personal development.

“

“Increased students engagements, to keep them more successful by improving their skills, like going to clubs or learning new activities.”

“Giving students more experience.”

”

Teacher Availability

A significant concern is the lack of teachers to support the proposed changes. Participants are worried that the shortage of qualified French teachers may hinder the effectiveness of the proposed program model. This issue is perceived negatively as it could lead to undue stress on existing staff and impact student learning.

“

“There’s a lack of French teachers.”

“The shortage of qualified teachers may hinder the effectiveness of the new programs.”

”

Specialized Programs

There are mixed feelings about phasing out specialized programs. While some believe it could free up resources and reduce student isolation, others worry about the potential negative impact on students who benefit from these programs. This category is perceived with caution, highlighting the need for careful implementation.

“

“Phasing out of specialized programs may be detrimental to students targeted by those programs.”

“Certain programs like primary talented could occupy important teacher resources.”

”



Program Implementation

The implementation of new programs and their real impacts are a concern for participants. They worry about the challenges of integrating phased-out programs into existing structures and the potential loss of support for students with disabilities. This category is perceived with caution, emphasizing the need for thorough planning.

“

“The challenges do not seem to have been solved prior to the implementation of the new program.”

“If these programs are not integrated well into the remaining structures, then pre-existing supports for students with disabilities could be lost.”

”



Online Survey

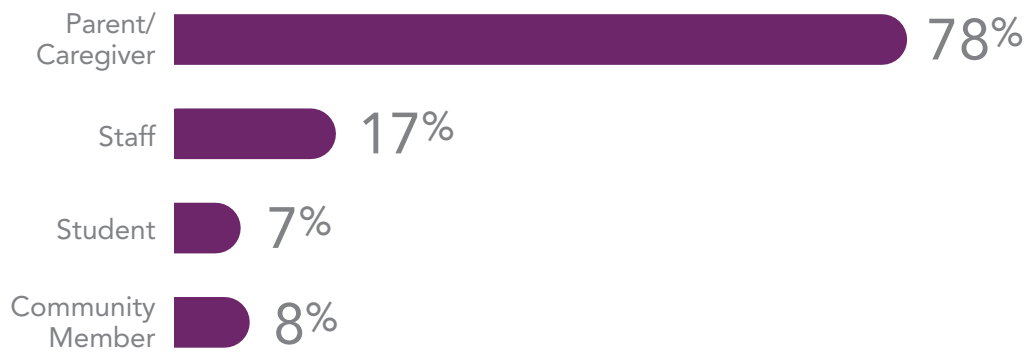
The OCDSB conducted an online survey that was open to the public from January 29, 2025 to March 25, 2025. In total, **9,224 contributions were collected through the online survey**. This survey sought feedback from parents/caregivers, students, staff, and community members on the proposed elementary program model. Each demographic group was prompted with the same questions, except staff who were prompted with one additional question. The OCDSB community was able to complete the survey more than once and all feedback was anonymous. The data was analyzed and themed consistently and reiteratively throughout the survey period, with results continuously shared with various OCDSB departments to support capacity to respond to and/or address feedback. Additionally, this continued process of analysis allowed the District to monitor how public discourse was shifting and changing.

It is important to note that discourse shifted following the release of boundary and grade configurations on February 28, 2025. Prior to the release of the boundaries, the OCDSB community generally supported most aspects of the model that they believed would build community, such as reducing the number of school transitions by reducing the amount of grade configurations and increasing the number of students who attend neighbourhood schools. Staff also agreed that stronger community ties and increased school connection are an advantage of the proposed model.

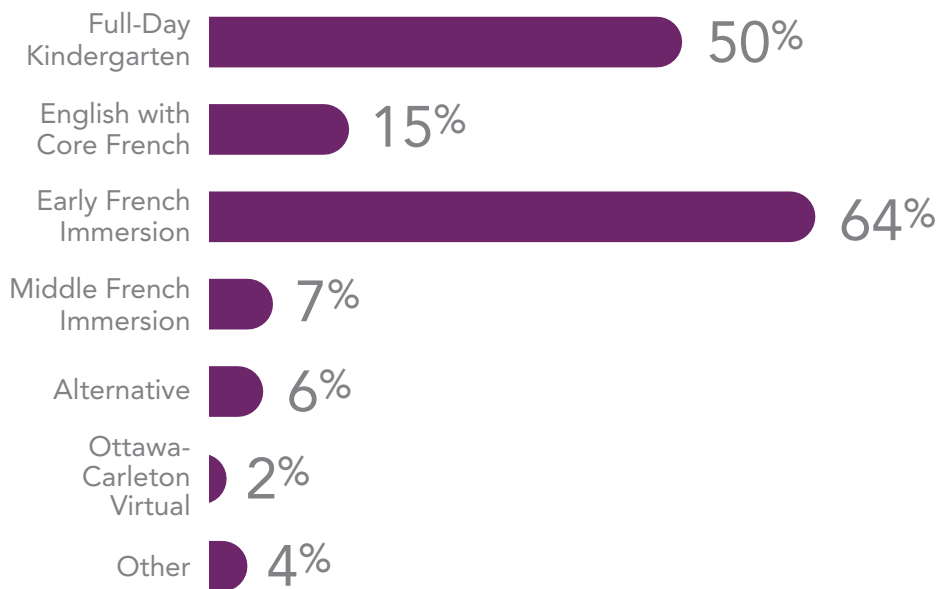
In addition, discourse prior to the release of the revised boundaries and grade configurations supported the increase of access to French Immersion programs across the majority of school sites, and greater flexibility for students to enter French Immersion in grades 1, 2, or 3. Parents/caregivers, students, and community members all identified the expansion of French Immersion as an advantage of the new model. Staff appreciated the flexibility to enter the program at varying grade levels and the benefit for English language learners. Some students and staff agreed that the model would lead to an overall improvement in the quality of education.

Conversely, prior to the release of the revised boundaries and grade configurations, respondents were concerned about the quality of French Immersion declining with the introduction of flexible entry points and reduced French instruction time. The elimination of specialized programs, such as those for special education needs and Alternative education, raised alarms about inadequate support for vulnerable students and increased pressure on teachers. These concerns remained consistent across the entire consultation period. In addition, respondents were concerned about the availability of qualified French teachers and the overall impact on students' mental health and well-being. The overarching sentiment before and after the release of the revised boundaries and grade configurations was that the proposed changes prioritized cost-saving measures over the educational and emotional needs of the District's students.

1. How are you connected to the OCDSB? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)



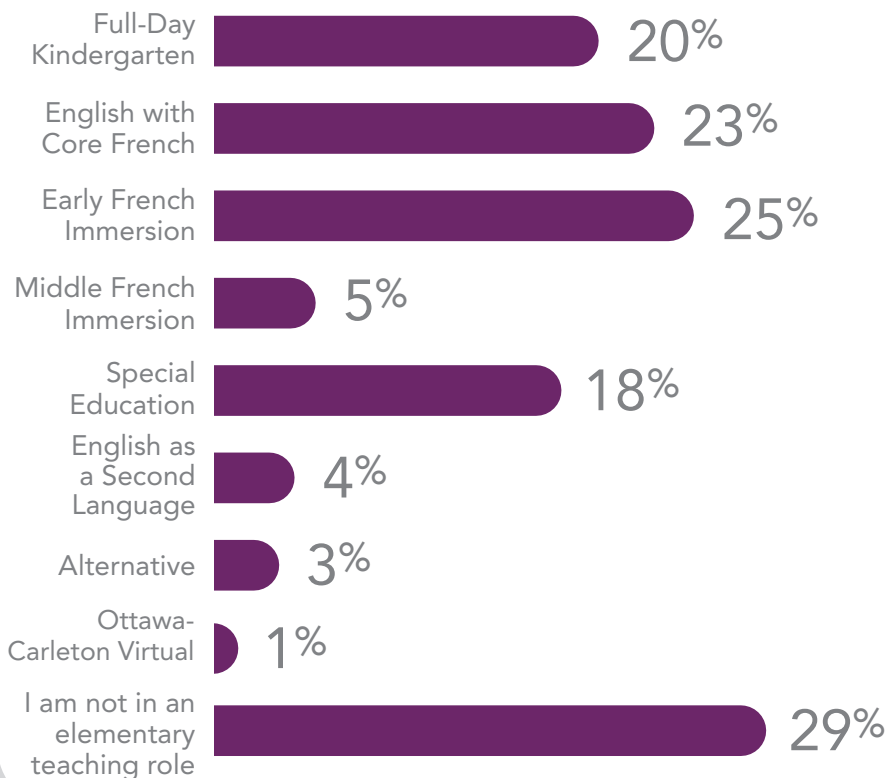
2. Which program(s) does/did your child attend in elementary school? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)



Numbers may total more than 100% due to respondents included in multiple categories.

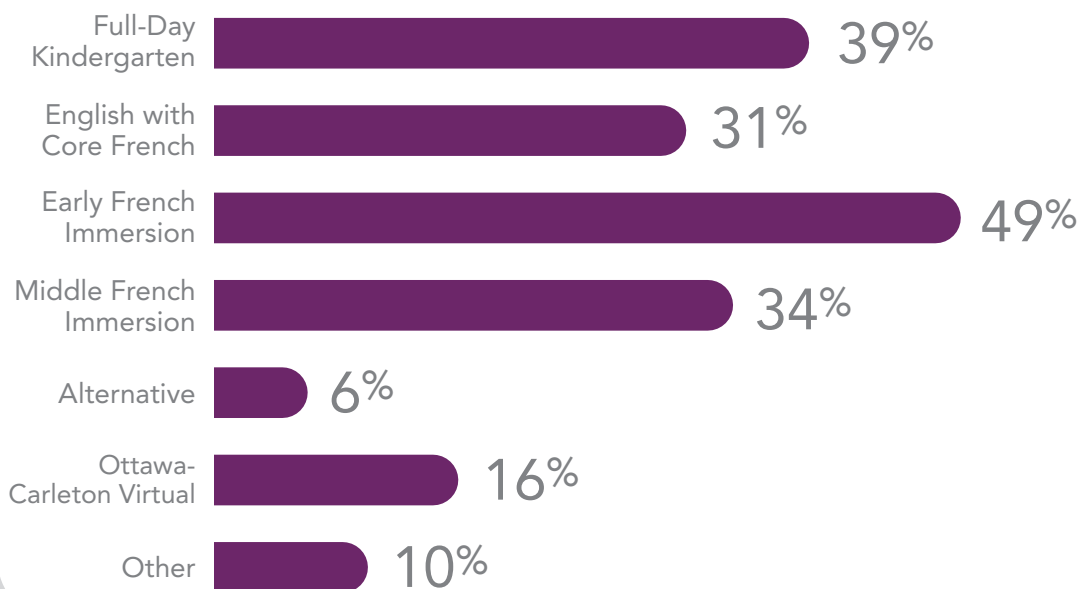
STAFF

3. Which program(s) do you teach? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)



STUDENTS

4. Which program(s) do/did you attend in elementary school? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)



Numbers may total more than 100% due to respondents included in multiple categories.

► **PARENTS/CAREGIVERS**



What are your thoughts on the advantages of the proposed program model?

Parents/caregivers believed that there were certain advantages in the proposed elementary program model, in particular, they highlighted the advantages of community-based schools, reduced reliance on busing, and expanded access to French Immersion. Below, a table represents the common advantages that were identified amongst parents/caregivers, descriptions of those advantages, and some examples pulled from the raw data.

Advantage	Description	Examples
<p>Increased Access to French Immersion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French Immersion available at all schools • Students can start French Immersion in different grades (1, 2, or 3), offering more flexibility. • More schools offer French Immersion, reducing the need for students to transfer schools for French programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Having two streams as an entry to French instruction seems very logical and practical. The flexibility of entry up to Grade 3 is also encouraging/reassuring.” • “I think it’s a great idea to have a more flexible entry into the French program to allow for slower learners to catch up and join the program at a later date if possible.”
<p>Community-Based Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids attend schools near their homes, reducing travel time. • Builds stronger community ties as kids attend school with neighbours. • Encourages walking to school, benefiting health and reducing traffic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I like the concept of more kids going to school in their communities and being able to walk.” • “I like the community based/ learning approach. Kids with diverse needs and learning profiles have the right to attend schools in their own community with their siblings.”

Reduced Reliance on Bussing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More students can walk or bike to school. • Decreases transportation costs and environmental impact. • Increases safety and reduces traffic congestion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Less reliance on unreliable buses, walking to school, friends on the street.” • “Lower travel times for students, allowing busses to be allocated where needs are highest and allowing students to not invest hours per day en route.”
Streamlined Program Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplifies program availability with standardized Enhanced English and French Immersion. • Reduces disparities between schools. • Provides more consistent educational experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I like the idea of all schools offering full French immersion K-8.” • “I think the two streams works better and streamlines choices more easily.”
Improved Resource Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redistribution of resources to neighbourhood schools. • Aims to improve inclusion and support for students with diverse learning needs. • Potential for smaller class sizes and better support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Expecting smaller class sizes and redistribution of students to address over crowding.” • “Streamlining and consolidating so there are not so many specialized programs make sense. Resources can be better used.”
Enhanced English Instruction in French Immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased English instruction in Grade 1 for French Immersion students. • Helps build a stronger foundation in English literacy. • Supports students who may struggle with early French Immersion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I am very happy to see that EFI in Gr. 1 will receive English Language Arts instruction.” • “Adding English into grade 1 French immersion is beneficial.”
Equitable Access to Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures all students have access to both English and French programs. • Reduces inequities between different neighbourhoods and schools. • Promotes inclusivity and diversity within schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think it is beneficial to offer slightly more French in the English program.” • “I like the idea of keeping a cohort of kids together.”

Table 2: Parent/Caregiver Perceptions of Advantages of the Proposed Elementary Program Review Model



What are your concerns or reservations with the proposed program model that should be considered?

Parents/caregivers expressed significant concerns about the proposed program model, particularly regarding the disruption to children’s established school communities, the impact on special education programs, the logistical challenges for families, student safety, the reduction of the quality of French Immersion, and the lack of clear implementation plans, as well as equity and financial feasibility issues. Below, a table represents the common concerns and reservations that were identified amongst parents/caregivers, descriptions of those concerns, and some examples pulled from the raw data.

Concern	Description	Examples
Disruption to Established School Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forces children to change schools, disrupting friendships and support systems.• Causes emotional and social upheaval for students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “My children will be separated with one school starting at 8am and the other at 9am. This will be extremely challenging to manage as a working parent.”• “Children having to leave their core friends and that impacting their learning.”
Impact on Special Education Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduces specialized support for students with special needs.• Integrates complex needs students into regular classrooms without adequate support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I am concerned about the closure of special education classes. The reality is we need more special education classes (and a third special education site), and I am worried that these children will be abandoned without support in the regular or FI stream.”• “Removing SPC’s and forcing students to new schools to maintain their special placement would be a detriment to their education.”

<p>Logistical Challenges for Families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Splits siblings into different schools, complicating drop-offs and pick-ups. • Increases travel time and disrupts family routines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Splitting siblings creates an unreasonable burden on working parents of young children, who would have to coordinate two drop-offs and pick-ups, two EDP programs, and two different sets of school communications/schedules/ etc.” • “My children will be zoned into two different schools, which seems wholly unreasonable.”
<p>Safety Concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forces children to cross busy roads or travel longer distances. • Increases risk during commutes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “My children will now have to cross a MAJOR street to get to their new site. So will many friends in the neighborhood.” • “It’s not safe having small kids walking over a busy Queensway crossing over the exit to the Queensway and walking an hour and a half to and from school.”
<p>Reduction in French Immersion Quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreases French instruction time in early grades. • Dilutes the immersion experience, impacting language proficiency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The decreased French for young grades.” • “Reducing French hours does not immerse children in French (though I do agree with English reading instruction).”
<p>Implementation and Transition Issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clear transition plans for current students. • Insufficient time for families to adjust to changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The timeline of this implementation, which I believe is hugely rushed.” • “Not thought through. At least have a transition period to let the grade 7’s and 8’s finish up.”
<p>Equity and Inclusion Concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for increased segregation by socioeconomic status. • Risk of marginalizing students with diverse needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “This is segregation of affluent versus poorer neighborhoods.” • “This will be difficult due to distance, or having other children at the local school. Quite disruptive, I would think.”

Financial and Resource Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions about the financial feasibility of the changes. • Concerns about the availability of qualified teachers, especially for French Immersion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “This does not seem like a financially sound decision for a board that is already losing students and money.” • “Where are you finding the required number of french immersion teachers?”
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Table 3: Parent/Caregiver Concerns about the Proposed Elementary Program Review Model

► STAFF



What are your thoughts on the advantages of the proposed program model?

Staff indicated numerous advantages associated with the proposed elementary program model, including promoting closer community ties, providing equitable access to both English and French programs, supporting early literacy development, offering flexible entry points for French Immersion, reducing transportation costs, and enhancing support for English Language Learners. Below, a table represents the common advantages that were identified amongst staff, descriptions of those advantages, and some examples pulled from the raw data.

Advantage	Description	Examples
Closer Schools & Stronger Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids attend schools near their homes, reducing travel time. • Builds stronger community ties as kids attend school with neighbours. • Encourages walking to school, benefitting health and reducing traffic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I like the concept of more kids going to school in their communities and being able to walk.” • “I like the community based/ learning approach. Kids with diverse needs and learning profiles have the right to attend schools in their own community with their siblings.”

Dual Track Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both English and French programs available at all schools allows students to switch programs without changing schools. • Reduces stigma associated with program switching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I like the idea of having English Enhanced available at every school.” • “I really like the dual track option for enhanced English in an immersion school.”
Increased English Instruction in Grade 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports early literacy development in English. • Helps identify learning disabilities earlier. • Balances language instruction for better overall literacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I support and think it’s essential grade 1 FI students get English.” • “The addition of English literacy to grade one is helpful. We are slower to identify learning disabilities and get support due to the late addition of English literacy.”
Flexible Entry Points for French Immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows students to join French Immersion at different grades. • Provides more opportunities for latecomers or new Canadians. • Reduces pressure on parents to decide early. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I like the option of students being able to join French at any point in their primary schooling.” • “I like the idea of having students enter French Immersion at grades 1, 2 or 3.”
Reduced Bussing & Transportation Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saves money on transportation. • Reduces environmental impact. • Alleviates bus driver shortages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Less people going cross-boundary, which is better for the environment, student safety (all the driving during drop-off and pick-up is a safety concern).” • “I think community schools are long overdue. As is doing away with the alternative program. This will greatly cut back on bussing allowing us to save money.”
Equitable Access to Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures all students have access to both English and French programs. • Reduces disparities between schools. • Promotes inclusivity and diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think the proposed changes increase equity and accessibility among the English and French programs offered in the OCDSB.” • “I think creating a dual stream program at every school is incredibly important. The disparities between our schools are too vast.”

Table 4: Staff Perceptions of Advantages of the Proposed Elementary Program Review Model



What are your concerns or reservations with the proposed program model that should be considered?

Staff reservations centre around the integration of students with special needs into regular classrooms without adequate support, leading to increased teacher burnout, larger class sizes, and potential negative impacts on student well-being and safety. Below, a table represents the common concerns and reservations that were identified amongst staff, descriptions of those concerns, and some examples pulled from the raw data.


Concern	Description	Examples
Class Size and Teacher Burnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased class sizes due to integration of students with special needs.• Teachers already stretched thin, leading to burnout.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Expecting a classroom teacher to manage an even greater range of needs when staff burnout is already at an all-time high sounds like a recipe for failure.”• “Teachers and students will be displaced resulting in animosity and it will be very tough to rebuild school community and culture.”
Special Education Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Removal of specialized programs will leave students with special needs without adequate support.• Increased pressure and demands on regular classrooms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “The removal of 39 special education classrooms will undoubtedly place an increased burden on regular classrooms, which may not be adequately equipped to support the needs of students with diverse learning styles.”• “Closing of the specialized programs and putting all those students with special learning needs into regular classrooms sounds very problematic.”
French Immersion Program Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decreased French instruction time in Grade 1.• Multiple entry points may dilute the immersion experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “The French Immersion program has already been eroding over the past decade, as is evidenced by the poor quality of French I observe from students on a daily basis.”• “Having three points of entry for French immersion will make primary French very challenging.”

<p>Boundary Changes and School Transitions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruption to students' education and social connections. • Families may have children in multiple schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Separating kids from their schools and friends. Where we live we stay at our school but their best school friends live a street over literally next to us and they have to change schools." • "My kids will be at two different schools. The start and end times are 40 minutes apart. One of us would have to probably quit our jobs just to get the kids to and from school."
<p>Lack of Resources and Support Staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient support staff for increased needs in regular classrooms. • Current support staff already overburdened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "There are not enough French teachers; allowing people to join FI at multiple levels will weaken the program." • "There is already a desperate lack of support for students with special needs in regular classrooms."
<p>Impact on Student Well-being</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional distress due to loss of familiar teachers and friends. • Increased anxiety and mental health issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Elementary students rely on stability and support in their current schools. The loss of familiar teachers, educational assistants, and cherished friendships would be devastating for students." • "Students are already struggling to attend school now and are showing up for only a few days each week. I worry that this shift will add to this issue."
<p>Equity and Inclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration without adequate support may lead to exclusion. • Marginalized students may be disproportionately affected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The model's success depends on equitable resource distribution, continuous evaluation, and safeguards to ensure vulnerable students do not fall through the cracks." • "Research on inclusion is mixed, and removing specialized program classes (SPCs) risks leaving students without the intensive supports they need."



Safety Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased violence and disruptions in classrooms. • Safety of students and staff at risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Safety/quality of education for all students when special education students are abandoned into the regular program without supports. All children will suffer. Violence will increase further.” • “Violence and disruptions to classes (in all program tracks) are at an all-time high.”
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Table 5: Staff Concerns about the Proposed Elementary Program Review Model

 **If you are an educator, what are the potential impacts of the proposed model on teachers and staff?**

Educators expressed concerns about job security and the need to move to different schools, increased workload and potential burnout, lack of support and resources, disruption to school communities and negative impact on staff morale, challenges in meeting diverse student needs, and significant uncertainty and anxiety. Below, a table represents the common concerns and reservations that were identified amongst staff, descriptions of those concerns, and some examples pulled from the raw data.

Impact	Description	Examples
Job Security and Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about job security and the potential need to move to different schools or positions. • Worries about being surplus and having to reapply for positions. • Stress associated with these changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Many staff will be forced out of the school communities they have spent time and energy building.” • “I am worried that teachers will be removed from their schools and have to go through a complex hiring process.”

<p>Increased Workload and Burnout</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased workload and potential for burnout due to the proposed changes. • Managing larger class sizes and accommodating students with diverse needs. • Lack of adequate support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Teachers are already feeling the impact of being constantly asked to do the impossible.” • “Burnout, teachers being overwhelmed - and more so than they already are.”
<p>Lack of Support and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant concern about the lack of support and resources to effectively implement the proposed changes. • Need for more EAs, specialized training, and adequate materials to support diverse learning needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There are not enough EAs and this proposal does nothing to address this.” • “We need more support and more specialized classes not less.”
<p>Impact on School Community and Morale</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential disruption to established school communities and negative impact on staff morale. • Loss of established relationships and sense of community within schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “This will destroy our system. Listen to parents who are sharing their stories.” • “The sense of community for teachers and staff will be destroyed at many sites.”
<p>Concerns About Student Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about the ability to meet the diverse needs of students, particularly those with special needs, in a regular classroom setting without adequate support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Students with special needs will be torn away from programs where they are thriving and put into classrooms that are ill-equipped to help them.” • “The removal of specialized program classes will put a lot of pressure on teachers.”



<p>Uncertainty and Anxiety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant anxiety among teachers and staff due to the uncertainty surrounding the proposed changes. • Concerns about the lack of clear communication and the unknowns about how the changes will be implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The uncertainty behind the proposed model is causing much anxiety in educators.” • “This has added a layer of uncertainty and concern regarding where people will be in 2026.”
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Table 6: Educator Perceptions on the Impact of the Proposed Elementary Program Review Model on Teachers and Staff

► **STUDENTS**



What are your thoughts on the advantages of the proposed program model?

Students indicated that the proposed program model would increase French proficiency, provide flexibility in French Immersion entry, enhance educational experiences, build stronger community connections, support diverse learning needs, and offer better opportunities for immigrant children. Below, a table represents the common advantages that were identified amongst parents, descriptions of those advantages, and some examples pulled from the raw data.

Advantage	Description	Examples
<p>Increased French Proficiency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More opportunities to learn French, including earlier access to French Immersion. • French proficiency opens up multiple opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Learning more French at an earlier age will be beneficial later on.” • “It sounds like a good opportunity to get people speaking more French.”

Flexibility in French Immersion Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier integration into French Immersion programs. • Allows students to switch into French Immersion at different stages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “More chances to switch into French immersion.” • “I think it’s great for kids to have a community that will support them and give them help when they need it.”
Enhanced Educational Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better distribution of school resources. • Improved learning experiences for students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “better distribution of school researches, less opportunities being closed due to earlier program choices.” • “I hope it allows a better education experience for students.”
Community and Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds stronger community ties. • Encourages connections between schools and communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Creating more connections between schools and communities will help students connect with each other and their environment.” • “Getting to know more people in your community.”
Support for Diverse Learning Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports students with diverse learning needs. • Ensures inclusivity and individual attention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Helps students with extra help when they need it, as a student with an IEP at my school where there is a class it helped me stay on top of all my work and succeed.” • “If all staff are trained for the changes and truly prepared to take on a larger role for children’s wellbeing this could really improve the experience of students.”
Opportunities for Immigrant Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports immigrant children in language proficiency. • Ensures they don’t feel discouraged in a new environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It’s important to support immigrant children in developing proficiency in multiple languages while ensuring they don’t feel discouraged in a school environment.” • “I like the idea of making the ESL classes better for those who attend them, as it must be scary to go to a new school and perhaps even a new country with little knowledge of the language mainly spoken there.”

Table 7: Student Perceptions of Advantages of the Proposed Elementary Program Review Model



What are your concerns or reservations with the proposed program model that should be considered?

Students identified numerous concerns around the proposed elementary program model that include school relocations, insufficient support for students and teachers, potential negative impacts on gifted and special needs programs, changes to French Immersion, family and schedule disruptions, the importance of maintaining the Alternative program, and mental health and well-being impact. Below, a table represents the common concerns and reservations that were identified amongst staff, descriptions of those concerns, and some examples pulled from the raw data.

Concern	Description	Examples
School Relocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students having to move to different schools.• Disruption of established routines and friendships.• Impact on students' ability to attend preferred schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "I currently go to the Bayview school and will be sent to the Sawmill Creek school and then Roberta Bondar. Both are outside my neighborhood and far from home."• "My concern is that I must go to another school, YORK!! I've already been to York and I don't want to go again!"• "The changes to the Connaught boundary means my little sister will not get to go to my school anymore."
Support for Students and Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insufficient support for students and teachers.• Increased pressure on existing resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "There are already not enough support for students and teachers. When placing more pressure on them is not ok."• "Cutting gifted and Special Needs programmes has no benefit. Some people learn different from others and these people need support."

<p>Impact on Gifted and Special Needs Programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about cutting or reducing these programs. • Importance of tailored support for different learning needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The special education classes should not be cut because I have a hard time believing that the full support the students need can be integrated into the regular classroom.” • “I don’t think closing nearly 40 SPC’s is very inclusive. School is incredibly restrictive and as someone who struggled to learn effectively in traditional schooling I believe that taking away specialized programs from kids who don’t learn effectively in a traditional environment is akin to setting them up for academic failure.”
<p>French Immersion Changes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about the impact of changes to the French Immersion program. • Potential difficulties for students entering at different grades. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I loved my experience through early French immersion, and believe that by allowing students to enter in grades 1,2, and 3 will only make it harder for teachers to tailor to all students.” • “Allowing students to start French immersion in later grades (like Grade 3) will likely put them behind their peers.”
<p>Family and Schedule Disruptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes causing logistical challenges for families. • Misalignment of schedules for siblings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The new redistricting plan would also create significant logistical challenges for our family.” • “Too much changes and require parents struggling with our working time to handle the different school arrangements for kids in different schools.”
<p>Mental Health and Well-being</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about the impact on students’ mental health. • Importance of maintaining established social connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I am concerned that I will be separated from my friend group.” • “the transition to the new model for current elementary students, students having to move schools where they are already established may be hard for neurodivergent students and students with mental health concerns especially.”
<p>Alternative Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of maintaining Alternative program. • Benefits of Alternative program for student success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Out of the programs I attended for elementary school alternative was the one that set me up best for success in high school.” • “I believe that these changes are simply too swift and don’t meet the accommodations of a significant amount of students.”

Table 8: Student Concerns about the Proposed Elementary Program Review Model

► **COMMUNITY MEMBERS**




What are your thoughts on the advantages of the proposed program model?

Community members noted numerous advantages associated with the proposed elementary program model that include increased access to French Immersion, the potential for reduced bussing, and the promotion of community-based schooling. Below, a table represents the common advantages that were identified by community members, descriptions of those advantages, and some examples pulled from the raw data.

Advantage	Description	Examples
<p>Increased Access to French Immersion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding French Immersion programs to more schools increases accessibility without requiring long commutes. • More flexible entry points for French Immersion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “French immersion available at neighbourhood schools! I don’t have to put my son on a bus to school just to access a French immersion program, when we live a block away from our neighbourhood school.” • “I think making French Immersion more widely available and reducing barriers to access is important and support that goal.”
<p>Reduced Bussing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less dependency on bus transportation. • More kids walking to school, reducing traffic and improving health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I love the idea of reduced bussing, reduced overcrowding, better redistribution of school resources, and more kids being able to attend school in their neighbourhood.” • “The only advantage I can see is less dependency on bus transportation.”

Community-Based Schooling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids attend schools near their homes, reducing travel time. • Builds stronger community ties as kids attend school with neighbours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think there is advantage to having kids go to their neighborhood schools allowing for less busing and more local connections.” • “I like the focus on community building by having students attend schools primarily in their neighborhoods.”
Enhanced English Instruction in Early Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English instruction in Grade 1 for French Immersion students. • Supports language acquisition and literacy development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “All grade 1s learning to read in English.” • “I agree with starting first language instruction in grade 1, rather than grade 2.”
Equity and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal access to programs for all students. • Helps avoid systemic segregation and provides equal opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think the proposed French Immersion/Enhanced English will benefit families by creating community schools and better equity opportunities.” • “It is essential that all OCDSB schools offer the SAME programs, so that we do not have de facto/ systemic segregation.”

Table 9: Community Member Perceptions of Advantages of the Proposed Elementary Program Review Model

 **What are your concerns or reservations with the proposed program model that should be considered?**

Community members identified concerns around the proposed elementary program model that include the lack of support for students with special needs, the disruption caused by changing school boundaries, the negative impact on children’s mental health and well-being, and the potential for increased travel distances and safety risks for students. On the following page, a table represents the common concerns that were identified by community members, descriptions of those concerns, and some examples pulled from the raw data.

Concern	Description	Examples
Lack of Support for Students with Special Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient resources for students with special needs in regular classrooms. • Concerns about the impact on both special needs and mainstream students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You cannot reduce the classes for children with exceptional assistance needs.” • “My concerns are cutting support where students on the spectrum cannot access what they need.”
Disruption from Changing School Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent school changes disrupt children’s education and social development. • Concerns about separating siblings and friends. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Changing children’s schools when they are well integrated and doing well, have friends, etc.” • “My children are so upset they are leaving their school, and their friends.”
Negative Impact on Mental Health and Well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased anxiety and stress for children due to school changes. • Concerns about the impact on children’s mental health post-COVID. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “With all children who were in school when COVID-19 happened, this is yet another (unnecessary) disruption to kids’ learning.” • “As a family physician, I treat an increasing number of children with anxiety disorders. I am very concerned about the number of children who will be forced to move schools under this proposal.”
Increased Travel Distances and Safety Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer travel distances for students, reducing walkability. • Safety concerns with crossing busy roads and highways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Pinecrest public school is known for violence. I am not sending my children there. It’s not safe having small kids walking over a busy Queensway crossing.” • “My primary aged children being forced to attend a school over 2km away rather than the school 100 metres away.”



Overcrowded Classrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Larger class sizes due to integration of students with special needs.• Concerns about the quality of education for all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Classrooms are already overcrowded, and now we will have increased needs without the support those students need for success.”• “Students with specialized needs will be receiving less supports as they are placed back into regular classrooms.”
Loss of Specialized Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elimination of Alternative and special education programs.• Concerns about the impact on students who thrive in these programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “The proposed cuts to special education programming and alternative programming is horrendous.”• “Removing the alternative school program will put many families at a disadvantage.”

Table 10: Community Member Concerns about the Proposed Elementary Program Review Model



Community Consultation Meetings

These sessions were held in the community on three different nights across six different sites and two virtual sessions. In addition, recognizing that not all community members are available in the evenings, there were both afternoon and evening sessions offered based on the community's availability. The sessions were conducted at the following locations and times:

- **March 6, 2025 (In Person)**
 - *Confederation Education Centre* – 1:00PM - 2:30PM
 - *Earl of March Secondary School* – 7:00PM - 8:30PM
 - *Gloucester High School* – 7:00PM - 8:30PM
- **March 17, 2025 (In Person)**
 - *Rideau Community Hub* – 12:00PM - 1:30PM
 - *Brookfield High School* – 7:00PM - 8:30PM
 - *Longfield-Davidson Heights Secondary School* – 7:00PM - 8:30PM
- **March 24, 2025 (Virtual)**
 - *Daytime Session* – 12:00PM - 1:30PM
 - *Evening Session* – 7:00PM - 8:30PM

In these sessions, participants voiced their perspectives on the proposed model's potential advantages, revealing a mix of optimism for increased French Immersion access and community schools alongside skepticism about practical implementation and potential negative impacts. A significant portion of the feedback detailed numerous concerns and reservations, focusing on issues like increased transitions for students, the splitting of siblings and communities, safety risks due to altered boundaries and transportation, impacts on special education and childcare, and a perceived lack of transparency and rushed decision-making. Participants also raised specific questions seeking clarification on various aspects of the model, including its rationale, logistical implications, resource allocation, and the consideration of Alternative approaches. In total, **861 community members participated** in these sessions. It is important to note this number is not representative of unique participants. On the following page, the main themes and ideas from those sessions are captured based on the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed program model shared by participants.



What are your thoughts on the advantages of the proposed program model?

The most common themes among the advantages of the proposed model were increased access to French Immersion, equity, and community.

Increased Access to French Immersion

Many participants in the consultation mentioned the increased access to French Immersion at all school sites as an advantage of the proposed program model. Many felt that French Immersion should be provided in all schools. Others liked the idea of having both English and French streams in the same school. Some participants appreciated the strengthened English component of the French Immersion program and there was support for improving the reputation of the English program at the school board.

Increasing Equity of Access to Programming

Some participants mentioned that they felt the plan would increase equity of access to programming, such as having the opportunity to attend French at their community school. Some liked that there would be a standardization of immersion. Others appreciated the goal of making all schools in the district better. Some participants liked that students with the highest needs would be spread out among schools instead of being congregated and isolated within one school.

Community-Minded

Some participants mentioned that they liked how the plan would impact their community. Conversely, some participants indicated it would impact their community negatively (see disadvantages). Some appreciated that students could stay in the same school even if they switched programs. Others liked that more students would be able to walk to their neighbourhood school. Some participants liked that there would be greater diversity at each school.



What are your concerns or reservations with the proposed program model that should be considered?


Based on the feedback collected during the community consultations, several common themes emerge regarding the concerns and reservations surrounding the proposed elementary program model. The overarching themes highlight the deep-seated concerns within the community regarding the potential negative impacts of the proposed elementary program model on students, families, and the broader school community. These include community disruption, student well-being, safety crossing roads, the separation of siblings and established peer groups, pedagogical basis, logistical challenges for families, and the perceived lack of transparency in the decision-making process. These can be thematically categorized as follows:

Disruption of Community and Social Connections

A significant concern revolves around the fragmentation of existing school communities due to boundary changes and the separation of students (e.g., Devonshire, Woodroffe, Knoxdale, Severn, Broadview, Alta Vista, Pleasant Park, and Castor Valley). Parents/caregivers worry about children being moved away from their friends and established support networks, with some feeling their neighbourhoods are being “ripped apart”. The change is perceived as undermining the concept of a community school, especially when children are being sent to schools outside their immediate neighbourhood. The separation of siblings across different schools also creates logistical challenges for families and diminishes the sense of family unity within the school environment. This fragmentation is seen as a significant disruption to the community within and outside of the school context, lending itself to negatively impacting student (and parent/caregiver) well-being and running contrary to the guiding principle of community-based education

Negative Impact on Student Well-being and Transitions

There are widespread anxieties about the increased number of transitions students will face, particularly with the K-3 and 4-8 grade configurations. This is seen as potentially detrimental to their emotional and academic stability, especially for students who have already experienced disruptions due to the pandemic. Concerns are also raised about the well-being of specific student populations, including those with special education needs, neurodivergent students, trans children, and new Canadians, who may lose crucial supports and familiarity with their current school environments. Participants worry about the emotional and psychological




effects of the changes on their children, particularly anxious children who rely on a sense of belonging at their current school. The forced transition to new schools and the separation from friends are seen as resulting in significant concerns for families. Finally, participants worry that these changes are just the first step and that further boundary/grade adjustments at the high school level will cause even more disruption in the future and further transitions. These transitions are also among the listed logistical and practical challenges identified participants.

Logistical and Practical Challenges

Many participants expressed concerns about the practicalities of implementing the proposed model. This includes worries about transportation, with increased bussing and longer walking distances raising safety issues, especially crossing major roads. The safety of children walking or crossing busy roads, including highways, to attend new schools was emphasized as a major concern. Increased travel distances and the practicality of getting multiple children to different schools at different times are also highlighted as disadvantages. Childcare, particularly before and after school programs (Extended Day Program), is another significant worry, with questions about availability, capacity, and the impact on families who rely on older siblings or walkable options. There are worries about the potential need for EDP for children who previously walked home but will now require transportation. Families are concerned about increased costs incurred now that they may need to pay for EDP because families are separated across different schools. Concerns about staffing levels and expertise, especially regarding French Immersion teachers and support staff for students with special needs, are also prevalent. The suitability of existing infrastructure for the new grade configurations and the potential costs of retrofitting were also repeatedly and extensively questioned. The potential for siblings to be forced to attend different schools due to the new grade configurations (e.g., K-3 and 4-8) is a significant worry for families. Grade configurations, particularly an increase in middle school options were heavily criticized and refuted as best practice in education. Concerns were also voiced about the potential for overcrowding in the new school configurations, with participants mentioning some schools already have too many portables.

Lack of Transparency and Consultation

A strong sentiment of frustration and distrust in the process was evident. Many feel that the consultation is rushed and insufficient with a lack of real-world consultation. There is a perception that decisions have already been made despite the rationale behind the decisions being unclear or contradictory. There is a demand for more transparency regarding the data driving the decisions, the financial implications, the implementation plan, and the criteria for boundary changes and program selection. The lack of detailed information makes it difficult for parents to understand the rationale and potential impacts of the proposed model. Questions about the intended benefits, how they are being measured, and the underlying pedagogical



basis for the changes remain unanswered for many. The perception that decisions are being made without considering the perspectives of affected families is also prevalent with many viewing the consultation as performative.

Concerns about Equity and Access

While the proposal aims for equity, some participants question whether the changes will truly achieve this goal. Concerns are raised about the potential for decreased diversity in some schools and whether the needs of all students, particularly those with special education needs and those in the Alternative program, will be adequately met in a mainstream setting. The elimination and phasing out of the Alternative Program is a significant point of contention for many families who value these specialized learning environments and believe its elimination is a detriment to students and families. In addition, participants believe that the proposed model disproportionately impacts children in urban neighbourhoods. There is also a significant concern about the potential segregation of equity-seeking and sovereign-seeking communities from a traditionally white school, raising issues of community inclusiveness.

Financial Motivations

Many participants suspect that cost savings are the primary motivation behind the proposed changes, though they question the cost-effectiveness of the proposed changes, especially considering potential increases in bussing, school retrofitting, and the closure of existing facilities. There are concerns that any potential savings may come at the expense of the quality of education and the well-being of students and communities, particularly those with special education needs and those in the Alternative program. The lack of a clear financial plan and cost-benefit analysis fuels this suspicion and call for transparency. Further, the lack of transparency regarding budget data and how the changes will be funded is a significant concern. Participants also question if any cost savings will be passed on to taxpayers.

Lack of Grandparenting or Insufficient Grandparenting

The theme of grandparenting is a significant point of concern and a frequently raised issue in the feedback regarding the proposed boundary and grade configuration changes. The feedback strongly indicates that grandparenting of current students is a major concern and a desired outcome for many participants. They are seeking clarity on whether it will be offered, the specific conditions of its application, and in some cases, are advocating for its implementation or extension as a way to mitigate the disruptive impact of the proposed boundary and grade configuration changes on students and their families. The inconsistencies and lack of clarity surrounding potential grandparenting policies are also a source of frustration and confusion.



Conclusion

Based on the consultation feedback, there are seven common themes that emerged across the various groups: (1) Community and Social Structures, (2) Student Well-Being and Transitions, (3) Equity and Access to Education, (4) Support and Resources for Students with Special Education Needs, (5) Operational Logistics and Implementation, (6) Transparency, Communication, and Consultation Process, and (7) French Immersion Program Changes.

Across the consultation pathways, there was broad support for the proposed program model in the following areas:

- Increased access to French Immersion programs
- Flexibility in French Immersion entry
- The potential for reduced bussing
- Equitable access to programs
- Support for early literacy development; and
- The concept of community-based schooling.

However, there were also consistent concerns and reservations about the proposed program model across the consultation pathways. These included:

- The disruption to children’s established school communities
- The potential negative impact on student well-being
- Safety issues related to increased bussing and walking distances
- Logistical challenges for families, especially those with children in different schools and impact on childcare (i.e., Extended Day Programs)
- The impact on special education programs and students with special needs
- A perceived lack of transparency and rushed decision-making
- The availability of qualified French teachers and the reduction of quality in French Immersion; and
- Financial feasibility of the proposed program changes

A decorative background featuring a collage of colorful, 3D geometric shapes in shades of pink, orange, blue, and purple, arranged in a non-repeating pattern.

Land Acknowledgment

The District acknowledges that these consultations took place on the traditional, unceded homelands of the Algonquin nation. In acknowledging these ancestral lands, the District also recognizes its responsibility to the Algonquin people and to understand and honour the Algonquin cultural protocols as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action for education. In doing so, the District has partnered with an external Indigenous scholar to support a review of the proposed model and engage in meaningful consultation that supports its understanding of the model's impact and reception by its Indigenous communities.

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