



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)

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Elementary Program Review: Implementation Planning Overview

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PURPOSE:

1. This report provides, for discussion, an overview of implementation planning for the Elementary Program Review (EPR), in support of the overarching principles and proposal shared. The report also includes aspects for consideration related to preliminary planning that will be shared as regular status updates to the Board of Trustees over the course of the upcoming school year.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

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

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

CONTEXT:

3. **Elementary Program Review To Date**

The EPR was launched in April 2024 ([Reference Report 24-052 Program Review Process the Elementary Level](#)). Since its launch, five comprehensive reports have been prepared and presented to Committee of the Whole for discussion, as follows:

- i. 10 September 2024: [Report 24-101, Consultation Report on the Elementary Program Review](#) which provided a summary of the input received during the community engagement campaign from interest holders, internal and external to the organization, through in-person and on-line sessions held between April and June 2024;
- ii. 08 October 2024: [Report 24-110, Contextual Report for the Elementary Program Review: District Data and Relevant Research](#) which provided District-level data and externally relevant research, which together with the input outlined in Report 24-101, represent the three key information sources relied on to inform proposed changes;
- iii. 21 January 2025: [Report 25-002 - Comprehensive Report on the Elementary Program Review: Proposed Program Model and Support for Students](#)) which outlined a proposed elementary program model, including proposed changes to supports for students through specialized program classes;
- iv. 04 March 2025: [Report 25-016 - Comprehensive Report on the Elementary Program Review: Proposed Attendance Boundaries, Grade Configurations and Program Offerings, Appendix A to Report 25-016](#) which described changes to elementary school attendance boundaries and grade configurations required to support successful implementation of the proposed model in all sites across the system; and,
- v. 08 April 2025: [Report 25-022 Comprehensive Report on the Elementary Program Review: Revised Proposal related to Program Model and Support for Students, Attendance Boundaries and Grade Configuration](#) which provides a revised proposal related to program model and support for students, attendance boundaries and grade configurations, developed in response to feedback received from the community during the consultation phase which included in person and virtual community meetings, an on-line survey and email.

The final recommendations from the elementary program review are tentatively scheduled to be presented at the 06 May 2025 Committee of the Whole, with a final decision anticipated at a special Board meeting to be held on 13 May 2025. The timeline for implementation of approved changes is expected to be for the 2026-2027 school year.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

4. **Overarching Principles of the Elementary Program Review**
As outlined in previous reports, the EPR has been guided by three overarching principles:

- Community-based education: The recognition of each school site as core to the community allows for the localization of programs and/or services related to learning, well-being, and social responsibility, as well as the effective and efficient operationalization of the District as a system.
- Dynamic, bilingual teaching and learning environments: The ability to offer programming in English and French for all students at each school site, along a continuum of bilingualism organized by subject area/discipline, allows students to build confidence, proficiency and achievement in both official languages.
- Continuum of inclusion: The provision of support at each school site allows for an array of assistance for all students, including multilingual learners and those with special needs, with the potential for full inclusion, withdrawal assistance, and/or specialized program classes.

These three principles have served as guideposts during the review process, helping to inform the proposed changes related to the elementary program model, support for students and school configurations. As outlined below, the overarching principles have also helped to inform the broader work required to set the conditions for successful transformation of elementary programming in the District, in support of student achievement and well-being.

5. **Implementation Planning - General**

Following a decision to approve recommendations for changes to elementary programming, a Project Transition Team will be established, under the leadership of the Associate Directors, Academic and Business, to lead and manage implementation efforts over the coming school year. A Project Lead will be assigned and will work collaboratively with representatives from central departments, including Communications, Program Services, Learning Support Services, Research, Evaluation & Analytics Department (READ), Planning, Employee Services and Early Learning.

For ease of discussion, implementation plans outlined below will be presented in alignment with the overarching principles, specifically:

- a) Dynamic, Bilingual Teaching and Learning Environments, which includes plans for implementing the proposed Elementary Program Model;
- b) Continuum of Inclusion, which includes plans to address changes to Specialized Program Classes and support for students with special education needs; and,
- c) Community-based Education, which includes plans to ensure the revised program offerings, grade configurations and attendance boundaries across elementary schools are suitably in place.

6. **Dynamic, Bilingual Teaching and Learning Environments**

The creation of dynamic, bilingual teaching and learning environments is central to the successful implementation of a revised consolidated elementary program.

Planning for implementation will focus on setting the conditions for learning to support the two elementary programs, Enhanced English (EE) and French Immersion (FI), while also supporting the phase out of Alternative (ALT) and Middle French Immersion (MFI). Implementation planning for the new model will include operational considerations (e.g., financial, infrastructural) and learning considerations (e.g., professional learning, resource procurement).

Feedback and input received through the active community engagement campaigns have reinforced the importance of the District being able to demonstrate readiness to implement change. To this end, work to prepare for implementation, pending Board approval, is already underway and has included exploring options to modify organizational structures (e.g., elementary school schedules), plans to prepare educators and classrooms (e.g., professional learning, resource review), and resources to synthesize key elements of learning (e.g., pedagogical frameworks).

Elementary School Schedules

As the EPR has been underway, Program Services has been working to review and update the District's approach to timetabling and/or scheduling elementary schools to increase learning time, reduce student transitions, and create opportunities for cross-class and cross-program collaboration. This updated model includes maximizing 60-minute learning blocks to increase the time students can focus on a given learning area. Schedules will also focus on creating opportunities to blend students in the Enhanced English and French Immersion programs, specifically during their Language and Mathematics classes. Further, by increasing learning blocks and reducing transitions, there will be more opportunities for cross-class collaboration (e.g., students in different grades collaborating on learning within the Social Science curriculum). Bringing groups of students together from each program will provide more opportunities to build relationships, learn from each other, and benefit from different class profiles. An example comparing a current schedule with the updated approach is available in [Appendix A - Schedule Comparison](#). The new scheduling approach will be introduced during the 2025-2026 school year to build awareness and readiness, so that it is reflected in scheduling for the 2026-2027 school year.

Learning Frameworks

Staff in Program Services, in collaboration with Learning Support Services, and other central teams has been working on developing Learning Frameworks ([Appendix B - OCDSB Learning Frameworks](#)) to provide parents/guardians/caregivers with a clear and comprehensive overview of the District's approach to pedagogy. The frameworks will outline the District's guiding principles for learning, recognizing the diverse lived experiences of OCDSB students, the specific learning topics addressed by grade or division (K-12), the continuum of student supports, and methods for tracking student progress. For example, the OCDSB Literacy Framework ([Appendix C](#)) specifies learning areas for each grade, such as understanding and using sentence structure at the

primary level. These learning areas are aligned with the District's core objectives of the 'learning' pillar, as well as the Ministry of Education's focus for literacy.

Learning Resources - Review, Redistribution, and Refresh

The implementation of the new program model, EE and FI, will have implications for elementary learning resources being used in schools and classrooms. For example, the proposed FI program includes more English instruction in Grade 1 from what is currently provided in Early French Immersion. This means additional English language learning resources will be required for all FI Grade 1 classes. Program Services has developed an approach and timeline to confirm the number and condition of key learning resources (e.g., for literacy instruction) in each school to establish a baseline. At the same time, Program Services will identify the number of resources each school will require based upon anticipated enrolment by program. This data will be tracked and consolidated to inform what resources need to be implemented, and a plan will be developed to allocate those resources to schools for September 2026. This exercise will also create an opportunity to curate outdated resources, ensuring easier access to current resources for staff.

Professional Learning

Professional learning takes place in various ways through a multitude of approaches throughout the school year ([Appendix D - Professional Learning Approaches](#)). Days for professional activity, instructional coach support, centrally-supported school networks, availability of online learning resources, staff meetings, and reinforcement of learning opportunities are examples of how educators engage in professional learning. Content learning such as for reading and math are grounded in key learning principles, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction (DI), and Culturally Responsive and Reflective Pedagogy (CRRP), as well as Indigenous Pedagogies. These principles ensure that students' strengths are centered and utilized for growth. Through streamlined program offerings, more in-depth learning to reduce barriers and increase access to learning for all students, especially those from underserved communities, will be provided. By engaging with Indigenous Pedagogies, CRRP, DI and UDL - creating choice in tasks that activate prior knowledge and build upon students' strengths, for instance - students are engaged in diverse and innovative learning that is collaborative, welcomed and encouraged.

These principles ensure that learning is more personalized and meaningful at a school, class, and student level. At the District level, staff are updating the Board Priority Learning Plan, identifying key learning moves for the 2025-2026 school year, and outlining professional learning schedules for staff. This provides an opportunity to identify and embed relevant aspects arising from the EPR, including tools or resources (e.g., the student tracker, pedagogical frameworks) into next year's plan.

Transitional Provisions - Phasing Out of MFI and ALT

An important aspect of the implementation planning will include planning for the phasing out of MFI and ALT. There has been considerable interest in what the impact of a decision to reduce these programs would have for current students and what opportunities would still exist for new students to enrol. For clarity:

- a) The last cohort of MFI students will be those entering grade 4 as of September 2026, ensuring that current grade 2 and grade 3 students continue to have access to the program, as planned. Students currently in grade 1 will be eligible to enrol in the new FI program as they enter grade 3, as part of the fluid entry.
- b) The last cohort of students entering ALT will be JK students who enrol in September 2025. The last opportunity for intake of students currently in SK or grades 1 to 6 to an Alternative program will also be September 2025.

Following a decision by the Board, information will be shared with families to ensure they are aware of the plans and timelines for phasing out MFI and ALT.

7. **Continuum of Inclusion**

Continued movement towards a more inclusive learning model is critical in aligning with current research and best practices in special education to support students with disability-related needs. Providing a continuum of inclusive supports within each school ensures that decisions are tailored to the unique needs of every learner. Decentralizing support services to each school site enables a wide range of assistance for all students. This includes options for multilingual learners and those with special needs, encompassing the potential for full inclusion within the regular classroom, targeted withdrawal assistance, and/or specialized program classes.

Building upon the re-evaluation of support structures currently in place, the student support model ([Appendix E - OCDSB Collaborative Classroom Support Model](#)) highlights the continuum of inclusion, ensuring that students receive timely and appropriate support, tailored to their specific needs by a team of qualified support staff. The OCDSB Collaborative Classroom Support Model recognizes that student support is fluid, individualized and responsive to students' changing circumstances. Creating mentally healthy and inclusive classroom and school environments is paramount. These environments must recognize and respond to each student's unique learning profile. This support model is grounded in a cyclical process: knowing the learner; collaborative planning with families, students, and staff; continuous observation and reflection; and, data-driven action. It will also provide the foundation for the work moving forward in the area of support for students, including the proposed changes to Specialized Program Classes.

The following key areas of work will be prioritized during the upcoming school year to support the implementation of the EPR recommendations:

- **Transition Planning:** Developing individualized and comprehensive transition plans for students, using standardized templates and guidelines, and involving parents/caregivers. This includes the development of resources for families/caregivers and educators to support discussions with students about any changes they may face, including changes arising from the EPR.
- **Review of Roles and Responsibilities:** Re-evaluating staff roles to enhance collaboration between educators and specialized staff (e.g., speech-language pathologists, psychology staff) for early intervention and appropriate programming.
- **Professional Development Plan:** Creating a comprehensive plan emphasizing Universal Design for Learning (UDL), in particular, along with student well-being, and high-impact teaching practices, with input from multi-disciplinary and central teams.
- **Creation of Program Guides:** Developing Program Guides for students in Specialized Class Placements (SPCs) to focus on skill development, progress monitoring, integration into regular classrooms, and transparent communication with parents/caregivers. This work will be staggered over the next few years to complete guides for all of the SPCs.

8. **Community-based Education**

The implementation of the revised plan for elementary school attendance boundaries, grade configurations and program offerings, designed to strengthen community-based education, will impact almost all of the District's schools in one way or another. The operational considerations, which have been identified in previous reports include transportation changes, managing impacts on students and staff, developing and process to manage exemptions and site-level changes, for example.

Exemptions Process*

As outlined previously, rather than providing sweeping exemptions for students to remain at their current school, staff will develop a process, similar to the current cross-boundary transfer process, to allow families to apply for an exemption that would allow them to remain at their current school rather than move to a new school under the EPR changes. A process - fair, transparent, equitable, and accessible in nature - will be developed through the spring/summer and rolled out to the system early in the fall season. Applications will be considered centrally based on clearly-communicated criteria (e.g., sibling considerations, avoidance of multiple school transitions in a short period of time, other hardship considerations) and subject to planning considerations (e.g., space and program impacts for sending and/or receiving schools). The timelines will be such that families will know whether their applications have been approved prior to the end of the calendar year. It is important to note that the cross-boundary transfer process will still be available to address transfer requests unrelated to the EPR changes.

**Note: Moving forward, the term ‘exemption’ will be used in place of ‘grandparenting’.*

Extended Day Programs

Although the impacts for the District’s extended day programs and third-party providers will be less than initially anticipated, the Early Learning Department will continue its work to monitor and assess the impacts resulting from the proposed changes. This includes working in collaboration with Planning and the Project Implementation Lead to develop a plan to support families who are changing schools as a result of the EPR changes and confirming whether and how they can be accommodated in the new school as early as possible next year. Any transition plan for child care or recreational programs will be handled with utmost sensitivity and care. The District’s commitment to reducing waitlists will continue with the implementation of the EPR changes. As well, moving forward beyond next school year, the Early Learning Department will work with reconfigured schools and school communities to identify new or emerging extended day program needs, including, where feasible, undertaking the process to establish new extended day programs as prescribed by Regulation 221/11 and the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care agreement. This process involves consultation with the City of Ottawa’s Systems Services Manager, a thorough assessment of the impacts on the District’s existing extended day programs and third-party providers, outreach to local recreational organizations, and the preparation of needs assessment surveys for school communities.

Supporting Student Transitions

As part of the implementation plan, the District will draw on related experiences to develop strategies for schools and families to support student transitions and to create welcoming teaching and learning environments for students transitioning to a new school. This will include a multidisciplinary and multi-pronged approach to help students manage the change, including students who may experience heightened levels of anxiety with change, with strategies of support from the District’s Mental Health Lead.

Human Resources Implications

Employee Services, in collaboration Planning and the Project Lead, will continue to assess the impacts of the changes on staff, particularly those assigned to elementary schools. Preliminary staffing projections to date indicate no significant shifts in staffing needs, including, for example, in the number of FSL qualified teachers, as a result of the changes. However, there will almost certainly be a higher than usual number of staff transfers due to changes in program offerings (i.e., more dual-track schools) and shifts in enrolment from boundary and grade configuration changes. Employee Services will work throughout the next school year in partnership with principals and vice-principals, the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF) Student Support Professionals (SSP) and OSSTF Education Support Professionals (ESP) and others, through collaborative discussions to mitigate the impact to staff to the extent possible. These discussions will take into

consideration current collective agreement provisions, staffing and transfer timelines and processes. The discussions will also include strategies for supporting employee wellness through a significant period of change.

Transportation Services

The Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) has been kept up to date on the EPR and the proposed changes to boundaries and grade configurations, given the significant impact the changes will have on student transportation. There have already been preliminary discussions with the General Manager with respect to the changes and the implications for OSTA's work next year, including identification of the additional resources required. Following a decision by the Board, OSTA will proceed with confirming plans for undertaking and completing the changes required to support the revised attendance boundaries, etc., within approved structures and parameters (e.g., eligibility criteria, bell time changes, etc.).

Site-based Renovations and Furniture/Equipment Needs

Following a decision, Facilities, in collaboration with Planning and the Project Lead, will identify and confirm the small number of sites where renovations will be required to accommodate new grade structures and/or programs (e.g., Kindergarten). These renovations will be prioritized within the Facilities work plan for next year to ensure the work is completed and the schools are ready for September 2026. In addition, as part of the implementation plan, work will begin in the fall to develop plans to inventory existing furniture and other equipment, determine school needs based on the projected changes and identify where there are gaps and surplus moving forward. This will include a plan to deliver/redistribute furniture and equipment as required during the summer of 2026.

School Naming Process

The process for adjusting school names to align with the changes will be confirmed following the Board decision. For the most part, it is anticipated that the adjustments to school names will be minor, for example, removing the descriptor 'middle' to reflect a change in grade configuration. It is anticipated that recommendations for school name changes will be presented to the Board, through Committee of the Whole, during spring of 2026 so that name changes are completed and effective for the 2026-2027 school year. Staff will work with the affected schools and school communities to identify any additional considerations and address concerns, in accordance with Board policy and procedures.

School Community Building

Another area for consideration during implementation will be developing strategies to support community building in schools both during the transition and following implementation. This will be particularly important for schools experiencing significant changes in program offerings, attendance boundaries and grade configurations. School administrators, with central support, will play a

key role in supporting their school communities leading up to and following the implementation.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

9. The resource implications associated with the implementation of the proposed changes were outlined in [Report 25-022](#), and will include details on the following:
 - Project Transition Team;
 - Inclusive Student Support;
 - Professional Development and Learning Resources;
 - Site-based Renovations; and,
 - Classroom Teachers and Other School-based Staff

As indicated, the planning and implementation of a change of this magnitude will most certainly require the re-allocation and/or re-investment of resources (human, material and/or fiscal). For the most part, the implementation costs will be absorbed within existing budgets. The staff recommended budget for 2025-2026 will also include a contingency fund of approximately \$375,000, for transition implementation purposes, including to support a full-time Project Lead for the school year leading up to September 2026. In the event that unanticipated costs are identified as implementation planning progresses, for example, the costs of learning resources exceeds the approved operating budget for that purpose, it will be addressed through the revised estimates.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

10. This section will outline preliminary planning with respect to communications with various interest holders through the implementation period. A more detailed communication plan will be developed by Communications in collaboration with the Project Lead. Communications through the implementation will continue to rely on and be informed by effective change management communication strategies, that is, providing clear, consistent messaging, tailored to different audiences such as school councils, and delivered through multiple channels.

Board of Trustees: Staff will undertake to provide regular status updates to the Board, reporting on progress of implementation and other matters at regular intervals throughout the school year. As a tentative plan, information updates will be scheduled in the long range agenda calendars for November, March and June.

Advisory Committees: Regular updates, as required, will also be presented to the advisory committees to ensure they are kept informed. This may include oral updates through the regular Superintendent's Report and/or through opportunities to review and discuss the updates prepared for the Board of Trustees.

Parents/Caregivers: In general, the District will rely on existing structures to communicate relevant and timely information. For example, in the short term, following a decision by the Board, there will need to be communication to parents and caregivers of children currently attending OCDSB elementary schools, including a summary of the changes, timeline for implementation, etc. As has been the case throughout the review, this information will be posted to Engage.ocdsb.ca and on the District's website, and will also be included in the biweekly updates. As required, information that may be unique to a particular group of parents and caregivers may be communicated directly by email.

School Councils: As part of the overall Communications plan, school councils will be made aware of any aspects of the implementation unique to their schools. Schools, through their regular channels, will be provided relevant and timely information to support transitions within their own school community.

Staff: Existing structures will also be used to communicate with staff, including information about the changes and their potential impact, and to provide regular updates regarding implementation on matters that are relevant to various employee groups. There will also be communication and discussion, led by Employee Services, with the various unions who represent members working in the District's elementary schools who may be most impacted by the changes, including: (OCETF), the Ottawa Carleton Elementary Occasional Teachers' Association (OCEOTA), OSSTF, SSP, and ESP.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

11. The following guiding questions are provided for discussion:
 - a) Do preliminary implementation plans align with the guiding principles and strategic priorities of the District?
 - b) Has there been sufficient consideration of interest holders through the implementation planning thus far?
 - c) Has the report identified key considerations and issues that need to be addressed through implementation? Are there additional considerations that need to be included?

FOR DISCUSSION

Pino Buffone
Director of Education and Secretary of the Board

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Schedule Comparison

Appendix B - OCDSB Learning Frameworks

Appendix C - OCDSB Literacy Framework

Appendix D - Professional Learning Approaches

Appendix E - OCDSB Collaborative Classroom Support Model