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**Brief summary of issue or topic of discussion:**

Phasing-in of French Immersion programming at schools where viability is a concern

Proposed Amendments to the OCDSB's Elementary Program Review  
Presented by Agincourt Road PS families

**Purpose and Overview**

We are concerned that the proposed French Immersion (FI) program for Pinecrest PS under the Elementary Program Review (EPR) is no longer viable, as the recently revised plan for Pinecrest removes more than half of the expected FI population from the school. It is only by relying on best-case and unrealistic enrollment estimates that the OCDSB could see Pinecrest just hit viability for FI in some grades. Even then it would be a small and fragile program and financially inefficient, with an offering of endless split classes to students. In fact, the reality is much more concerning: additional survey data, representing more than 80% of potential students, demonstrates that parents are simply choosing other options. Unfortunately, the absence of concrete data from the OCDSB combined with the lack of community engagement at Pinecrest PS draws us to the conclusion that an FI program at Pinecrest PS will be minute and unsustainable from day one.

Ultimately, the revisions to the EPR have resulted in the erosion of equity that the EPR originally sought to achieve due to the lack of viability of proposed program options. In this document we address the following:

1. The revised EPR proposal and the resulting program viability issue, including concerns with the OCDSB's approach
2. Survey Data Analysis - Program Viability
3. Proposed amendments

## 1. The Revised EPR Proposal and the Resulting Program Viability Issue

The many K-3 and 4-8 school configurations in the original EPR proposal, though not acceptable to many parents, were in the original EPR proposal by design - they were the only way to create viable dual stream programs in many communities, including ours. That original proposal created a logistical burden on families that would not be sustainable, and are not the generally preferred option. However, by removing these grade configurations the proposed FI program at Pinecrest PS is not viable.

The EPR revision proposes keeping Severn PS as a K-6 single-track FI school. This proposed change has significant implications for the viability of the FI program at Pinecrest PS, as it removes more than half of the planned FI cohort, leaving a small group of students from Agincourt Road PS to compose the entirety of the Pinecrest FI 1-6 program. The unsustainability of this situation has not been adequately addressed or even acknowledged by the OCDSB in the revised proposal - the plan seems to be to operate, as an absolute best-case scenario, an inefficient and unresponsive program either below or barely at the threshold of viability. In addition, the EPR as written is contradictory to the historical findings of previous reviews that highlighted the importance of viable programs, including Report 16-119 and the 2017 Western Area Accommodation Review.

As such, amendments must be made to the Pinecrest/Agincourt cluster in order to uphold the principles of the OCDSB that "program viability and sustainability are important factors in establishing and/or modifying elementary school programs to ensure that elementary students have access to quality program offerings delivered in a fiscally responsible manner." (Report No. 16-119).

The OCDSB seems to have awareness of these inconsistencies, as it acknowledges in the revised EPR (Report 25-022) that there is a risk of small and potentially unsustainable programs moving forward, and that "it will be important to monitor enrolment and program size and feasibility balanced against the commitment to providing better access to all programs through more dual track schools". Despite this awareness, the OCDSB has failed to address the concerns of Agincourt parents about program viability.

## 2. Survey Data Analysis - Program Viability

The 2018 District Needs Analysis: Elementary Panel report issued by the OCDSB in January 2018 defined program viability as follows ([Report 18-002](#), Appendix B):

Program viability is an indicator developed by staff to determine whether an elementary program at a school is currently, or is projected to be, at a fragile level of enrolment. The threshold used is an elementary program in grades 1 through 6 with **less than ten students per grade** and/or an intermediate program (grades 7 and 8) with **less than 15 students per grade**.

As such, we are using these threshold numbers to highlight the absolute non-viability of the proposed FI program at Pinecrest PS.

### Program Viability: Survey Results and Secondary Data

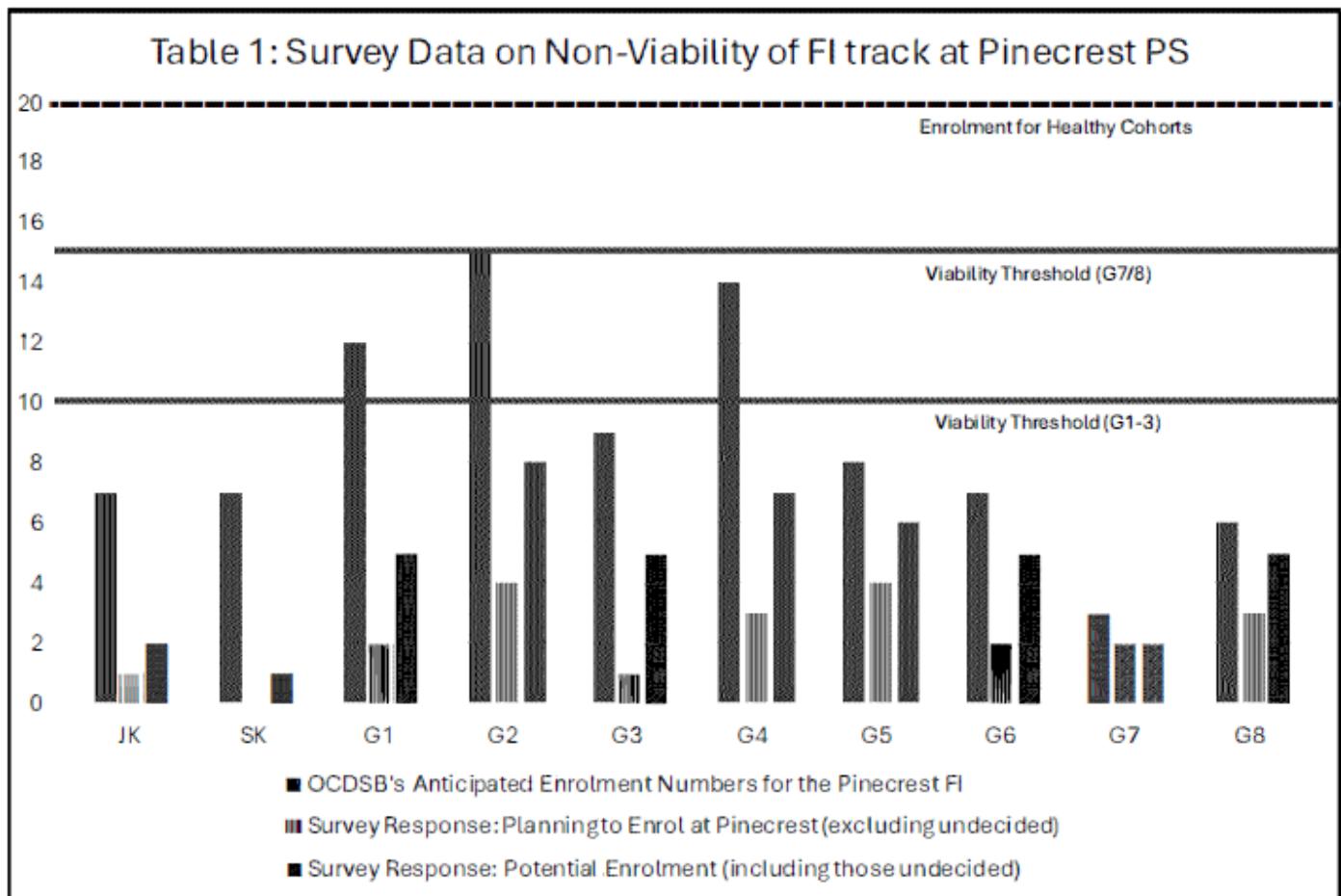
#### Pinecrest Public School FI program

There are data challenges in assessing the viability of the proposed FI program at Pinecrest PS, given that the OCDSB is only providing the net difference calculations for schools, and that the proposal includes Severn PS students joining Pinecrest PS for grades 7-8. To obtain accurate data, we contacted Agincourt Road PS and were informed that approximately 105 current Agincourt students, from K-8, are proposed to move to Pinecrest PS. To assess whether our children would be attending a viable program, we then conducted a survey of the Agincourt families affected by the EPR to assess grade-level and other critical information. This level of granularity was feasible as the number of students is so low.

#### Survey Data Demonstrating Non-Viability of Pinecrest PS FI Program

The survey response rate was high, capturing the views of parents representing 86 students (82% of the projected total). In the survey, parents were asked to indicate the number of children they had enrolled at Agincourt Road PS and the grades for each. On the following page, parents were asked to indicate if they planned to enroll at Pinecrest PS based on the

revised EPR proposal. We have input the data below (see Table 1). We discuss these results in more detail below the table, but the non-viability of the FI program is immediately evident.



Survey results from Agincourt Road PS families reveal widespread concerns about the viability and pedagogical quality of the proposed FI program at Pinecrest PS. Of the 86 students, only **22 indicated they would attend Pinecrest PS** under the revised EPR, with an additional **25 undecided** (totalling a potential maximum of 47 students across all grades in the proposed FI program). The remaining 39 students, representing 45% of the students captured in the survey, do NOT plan to attend Pinecrest if the proposal remains as is. This is an attrition rate of 37% of the predicted total of the FI students. Please note, in this survey, 'undecided' refers to families who have not yet decided whether to send their children to

Pinecrest PS under the revised EPR proposal, transfer to another school board, pursue homeschooling, or relocate to another catchment area.

**Under the most optimistic projection**-assuming all undecided families ultimately choose Pinecrest PS (which seems highly unlikely given results of the survey)-**the total enrollment of the FI program at Pinecrest PS would be 66 students** (the 47 students captured in this survey and all students who are not captured<sup>1</sup>). Even in this unlikely case, enrollment would still fall far below the OCDSB's viability threshold of **10 students per grade for grades 1-6 and 15 per grade for 7-8**. For example, in grades 4-6, projected enrollment ranges from **3-7 students per grade**, while early FI grades (1-3) would see as few as 2-5 students per grade. These numbers are unsustainable and would likely necessitate split or triple-split classes, undermining educational quality. Triple-split classes are absolutely untenable. Compounding the issue, historical trends and verbal assurances from OCDSB staff suggest that FI enrollment at Pinecrest PS will remain stagnant, further jeopardizing the program's long-term feasibility.

This survey data clearly shows that the **FI program at Pinecrest PS will NOT be viable, particularly for grade 4-6 students**. The enrolment numbers in these particular grades CANNOT be bolstered in any way - not through rolling FI enrolment from students currently enrolled in the English program at Pinecrest PS as in the case of grade 1-3, nor through the addition of students from Severn in grade 7-8. With regards to the grade 8 program, however, the grandparenting language suggests that Severn students who are currently in grade 6 (and so the grade 8 cohort for 2026) will be grandparented into Woodroffe Public School thus making this grade level completely untenable as well, with only 5-6 kids as per the survey data.

Finally, it is also worth noting that significant numbers of families with younger kids in K-3 have already decided to switch to schools at other Boards, schools that are walkable for many. This will further erode enrollment numbers for the FI program at Pinecrest PS. While it is recognized that the OCDSB is refusing to grant attention to students leaving the Board, in this case, it is particularly relevant and detrimental to the viability of the FI program at

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<sup>1</sup> There is no reason to assume that non-responding parents would not follow a similar trend to other parents.

Pinecrest PS. It is also worth noting that the current proposal puts Pinecrest PS at overcapacity, at 102%.

## **Amendments for Consideration:**

### **1. Phased-in programming for impacted schools, with grandparenting where programming is non-viable**

We propose an amendment to adopt a "phasing-in" of the FI program at Pinecrest PS, beginning with grade 1 in 2026 and adding one new grade in each subsequent year.

There is precedent for doing so. Following the Western Area Accommodation Review in 2017, Bayshore PS transitioned from a single-track EE school to a dual track school by phasing in FI, beginning in year 1 with a grade 1 FI program and adding one grade in each subsequent year. This situation is similar. As per Appendix IF to Report 19-109, Bayshore PS had 92.1% of its students residing in a low-income neighbourhood and were adding a new FI program. Pinecrest PS has a similarly high percentage of students living in a low-income neighbourhood (76.7%) and is similarly proposing the addition of a FI program to increase equity and accessibility. We propose that Pinecrest PS adopt the same model as Bayshore PS and believe there is strong justification for doing so.

Additionally, a phased-in approach was used to introduce a FI program at W.E. Gowling, a school noted as having 69.9% of its students living in low-income neighbourhoods (Appendix IF to Report 19-109). Report No. 5 Committee of the Whole (Jan. 2014) speaks to best practice for phasing in new FI programs by stating explicitly that "EFI is historically introduced beginning at kindergarten and adding a grade each year, with students who are already attending other schools grandfathered into their current program".

There is further precedent in the current revised EPR. Carson Grove PS is proposed to have a FI program phased in "starting in year 1 (K-2) in September 2026 and adding one grade per year subsequently until the K-6 complement is in place". Carson Grove PS is similar to both Bayshore PS in 2017 and Pinecrest PS in that they are attempting to begin a viable FI program at schools where a significant percentage of the students reside in low-income

neighbourhoods (Carson Grove: 82% of students reside in low-income neighbourhoods: Appendix F to Report 19-109).

\*As a special note, and highly related to the proposed phasing-in of FI, it is worth reiterating that there is absolutely no argument that can justify moving the grade 4-6 (and the grade 8, based on current grandparenting language for Woodroffe Public School) to Pinecrest PS. The English students at Pinecrest PS cannot enrol in the FI program at these grades and so there cannot be any case made for equity or accessibility, nor are these grades supported by FI students joining from other schools. To isolate such small cohorts of students, likely requiring triple split classes, is a detriment to their education, as well as their social and emotional development.

## **2. Clear grandparenting language for all families that is not subject to Board approval**

In addition to phasing-in, an amendment to the current proposal is required to add clear grandparenting language for existing students where viable programming is not available at local schools. This would extend beyond impacted families at Agincourt Road PS and can be applied Board-wide to schools where capacity is not an issue. A broad grandparenting clause would provide approval for impacted students to remain at their current school, without discretion of the Board to deny applications. The students in question are currently in a crucial stage of their academic journey, and maintaining continuity in their education is vital to their emotional and academic success. This would also allow schools offering new programming the ample time required to implement it without impacting students' academic success.

Grandparenting would allow the impacted students to remain at their current school for the duration of their academic careers. This will require an exception to the current District policy, but we believe the benefits to the students, their families, and the school community will outweigh any logistical challenges.

This option is also consistent with the OCDSB's "practice in the past to try and minimize the impact of program and boundary changes through the inclusion of one-time exceptions"



(Report 25-022).

The grandparenting process that is proposed to be established at present appears to be limited in scope and does not take into consideration how caregiver choices will impact program viability. Additionally, relying on an exception process as the revised EPR seems to suggest, places the burden on caregivers to advocate for their children, potentially disadvantaging families who face barriers to participation in such processes.

## **ACTIONS REQUIRED**

An amendment to the revised EPR proposal is necessary for the Pinecrest/Agincourt cluster to ensure that children are not forced into non-viable programming and to respect the rights of these children to equitable education.

The lack of transparency and data-driven decision making by OCDSB staff makes it imperative that these concerns are addressed in advance of a final vote. A promise to monitor enrollment is no promise at all, as these issues were, and have always been, immediately apparent. The proposed pathways here offer ways forward that would serve children and families, and allow the OCDSB to offer dual-track programming where viability exists.