



## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)

6 May 2025

Report No. 25-025

### Elementary Program Review: Recommendations related to Program Model and Support for Students, Attendance Boundaries and Grade Configurations

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#### PURPOSE:

1. This report brings forward for approval the recommendations arising from the Elementary Program Review (EPR), including proposed changes to elementary program pathways, specialized program classes, school attendance boundaries and grade configurations.

#### STRATEGIC LINKS:

2. The OCDSB's Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 makes a strong commitment to improving program quality and accessibility. The need to review current elementary programming, service delivery and support structures were recurring themes that emerged during the strategic planning process consultation in the winter and spring of 2023, as described in [Report 23-029 - 2023-2027 Strategic Plan Consultation Report](#).

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

## CONTEXT:

### 3. **Current Elementary Programming and Delivery Models**

For students in Grades JK-8, the District currently offers a bilingual (50/50) Kindergarten program (BKP), English with Core French (ENG), and two French Immersion programs: Early French Immersion (EFI) which begins at grade 1 and Middle French Immersion (MFI) which begins at grade 4. There are five elementary schools in the District designated as Alternative (ALT), each of which delivers the English with Core French program using an approach and philosophy that is based on seven tenets. The District also offers a virtual option for ENG and EFI, through the Ottawa-Carleton Virtual School (OCV). Each of these programs is augmented by support for multilingual learners and students with special education needs.

The existing structure for serving multilingual learners in the District has been in place for over fifteen years. The majority of multilingual learners are supported in the standard classroom with English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) support. The delivery model for multilingual learners prioritizes in-class support with targeted, language-acquisition-related withdrawal as needed. English Literacy Development (ELD) classes are also available, offering intensive support for students with limited prior schooling who may require significant literacy-based instruction, as well as intentional reintegration strategies based on students' learning needs over time. Currently, there are 15 ELD classes at the junior and intermediate levels across the District.

The existing model for delivery of special education in the District was last reviewed in its entirety over twenty years ago. Since that time, research and best practices to support students with disability-related needs have shifted from a sorting of students based on ability to one where every student's profile is valued and can contribute to the teaching and learning environment. The majority of students with special education needs are currently being supported in the standard classroom. Students also have access to additional support from site-based staff in schools or centrally-coordinated teams outside the classroom within their community school. Some students, particularly those with the most complex learning needs, are supported in Specialized Program Classes (SPCs), typically located in a school outside of the student's community. At this time, there are 11 distinct, exceptionality-based SPCs at the elementary level, totalling 142 classes.

The elementary programs outlined above are currently delivered through a patchwork of school configurations, which includes eight different school grade structures and a range of program structures: single track (English with Core French, including Alternative designated sites or EFI); dual track (English with Core French and EFI or MFI); and triple track (English with Core French, EFI, MFI) combinations, with each program having its own distinct attendance boundary. A number of schools across the District also host one or more of the ESL/ELD classes or SPCs, as noted in [Navigating the Future: 2024 OCDSB Elementary Program Review](#) of Report 24-052.

#### 4. **The Need for Change**

As outlined above, a key theme that emerged from the community consultations of the renewed strategic planning process was related to program quality and accessibility. The 'call to action' for the District revealed that current program models have, over the past quarter century, served the needs of some students in some schools, but clearly not all students in all school communities. As a result, there was an impetus to rethink what programming the District offers, how and where it is offered, whose needs are being served, and how schools may be restructured in terms of program offerings and/or grade configurations to better meet the needs of current and future generations of students.

More specifically, feedback collected from the community consistently indicates that the current elementary model is not meeting the needs of all students in the District in several tangible ways. To begin, many students are required to travel outside of their community to attend school because the program they wish to access is not offered at the closest school. In addition, concerns have been raised about barriers (e.g., attitudinal, structural) to accessing French Immersion programs, including among multilingual learners and students with special education needs. Further, families and students report inconsistent access to special education supports across schools and programs.

When it was launched in April 2024, the program review was situated as an opportunity to further explore whether the current program model serves the needs of the community and identify opportunities for improvement. The review would help identify and address the barriers that underserved students and communities face in accessing programs and supports. It was anticipated that the review could lead to several possible outcomes, including: maintaining some or all aspects of the status quo that were serving students; adjustments, enhancements and/or restructuring of existing programs; and/or, the exploration and adoption of other program models or approaches that better align with the needs and priorities of the community. The review process itself committed to being student-centred, inclusive and focused on creating more equitable and enriching educational experiences for all students, system-wide.

#### 5. **Elementary Program Review to Date**

The first phase of the EPR involved an active community engagement campaign during which the District sought input from interest holders, internal and external to the organization, through in-person and on-line sessions held between April and June 2024 ([Report 24-101 - Consultation Report on the Elementary Program Review](#)). Other key information sources, including District-level data and externally relevant research, were also reviewed between July and September 2024 ([Report 24-110 - Contextual Report for the Elementary Program Review: District Data and Relevant Research](#)).

Informed by three key information sources (public consultation, relevant research and District-level data), a program model, including proposed changes to supports for students through specialized program classes, was developed and

presented to trustees in January 2025 ([Report 25-002 - Comprehensive Report on the Elementary Program Review: Proposed Program Model and Support for Students](#)).

Following the release of the above report, work continued to identify school-based changes to program offerings, grade configurations and attendance boundaries that would align with and support the successful implementation of the proposed program model, as well as enhance the District's commitment to community-based education. The plan outlining the proposed changes was presented to trustees in March 2025 ([Appendix A to Report 25-016 - Comprehensive Report on the Elementary Program Review: Proposed Attendance Boundaries, Grade Configurations and Program Offerings](#)).

The proposed attendance boundaries, grade configurations and program offerings were incorporated into the ongoing consultation process initiated in January to collect feedback on the details shared. In response to the extensive feedback received, a revised plan was developed and presented at the Committee of the Whole (COW) Meeting on 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 Configurations](#)). In particular, the revised plan moved away from new K-3/4-8 grade configurations, which had generated numerous concerns about siblings attending different schools, and revisited attendance boundaries for some schools based on a number of additional considerations. In addressing some of these concerns, however, it also became more difficult to avoid retaining some single-track Enhanced English (EE) and FI schools.

Based on the revised timeline announced in the fall of 2024, the District has been clear that proposed program changes would be implemented beginning the 2026-2027 school year. This timeline gives staff a full year to plan for and ensure the successful implementation of approved changes and support the transition for affected students, staff and school communities.

## 6. **Highlights from Key Sources of Information**

Three fundamental sources of information were identified from the outset of the program review to inform the process and triangulate any decisions regarding the development of the elementary program model and support for students: (a) public consultation; (b) District data (internal); and, (c) relevant research (external). Below is a summary of highlights from each of these sources.

### a) Public Consultation

Seven themes emerged from the initial stage of consultation (April to June 2024) as follows: accessibility and inclusion; administration and structure; communication; language acquisition; program quality; resources and support; and special education.

Highlights from the consultation include:

- the high value placed on bilingualism in the Ottawa context, underscoring the desire for access to FI programming;
- the importance of community schools and being able to attend neighbourhood schools;
- the revelation that many parents and caregivers, especially newcomers, were not aware of the program options available beyond those at their local school;
- the importance of having consistent access to supports in FI programs; and,
- parents of students with special education needs reported feeling that the FI programs are not an option because of the perception that supports are not as readily available.

Reference: [Report 24-101 - Consultation Report on the Elementary Program Review](#).

In January 2025, the Board approved the next phase of its community consultation, intended to collect feedback on proposed changes to the elementary program model proposed, including changes to school attendance boundaries and grade configurations (January to March 2025). Highlights from that consultation include:

- more French Immersion options and flexible entry were appreciated for language skills and future opportunities;
- ensuring equitable access and reducing disparities between English and French programs was seen as a benefit;
- cuts to SPCs and unsupported integration of complex needs students raised significant safety and educational concerns;
- school community disruption and student well-being were concerns, with forced school changes, broken friendships, and potential sibling separation causing emotional distress, especially for vulnerable students;
- participants raised operational and implementation concerns, including transportation, safety, childcare, staffing, and infrastructure challenges;
- phasing out the Alternative program was a significant concern for families who valued its dynamic benefits for students; and,
- participants perceived a lack of transparency, rushed consultation, and felt decisions were pre-determined regardless of their feedback.

Reference: [Appendix B of Report 25-022, Comprehensive Report on the Elementary Program Review: Revised Proposal related to Program Model and Support for Students, Attendance Boundaries and Grade Configurations](#)

#### b) District Data

Analyses and syntheses of data at the District level (July to September 2024) focused on the demographics, achievement, engagement, and well being of students at the elementary level in the various programs.

Highlights from internal data include:

- approximately 40% of OCDSB students in grades 1 - 8 are enrolled in the English with Core French program and 60% are enrolled in EFI;
- provincial assessment and report card data tends to show higher achievement results for students enrolled in FI; and,

- students with special education needs are more likely to be enrolled in the English with Core French program.

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

c) Relevant Research

During the spring and summer of 2024, two distinct literature reviews were conducted by leading external researchers engaged by the District:

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

Highlights from this review include:

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

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

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

Highlights from this review include:

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

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



## 7. **Integrating Indigenous Perspectives**

The District has also engaged Laurie Robinson and Arnold Blackstar, prominent Indigenous scholars, who are collaborating with both the Indigenous Education Council and the Indigenous Education Team.

Laurie Robinson, with extensive experience as an advisor on Indigenous issues, brings a deep understanding of Indigenous control of Indigenous education and strategic partnership advice. Arnold Blackstar, Chair of the Future Generations Foundation, offers significant leadership experience from various sectors focused on serving Indigenous communities.

Their work includes providing an Indigenous lens, facilitating discussions, and sharing expertise to create a culturally responsive environment for Indigenous students and enhance understanding within the school system. The goal is to meaningfully integrate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into OCDSB programs as a foundation for an Indigenous lens across school practices and structures. Recommendations are expected by the end of June 2025 and will inform work moving forward, including implementation strategies and actions related to approved EPR changes.

## 8. **Overarching Principles of the Elementary Program Review**

The EPR and the changes proposed to attendance boundaries, grade configurations and program offerings are guided by three overarching principles:

- **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; and,
- **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.

## **KEY CONSIDERATIONS:**

### 9. **Dynamic Bilingual Teaching and Learning Environments**

After a thorough review of various models of program delivery, it was determined that the best option for elementary students in the OCDSB would be an English program (which includes Core French) complemented by a French Immersion option that builds on the bilingual (50/50) two year kindergarten program introduced several years ago. The recommended program model, therefore,

consolidates existing program offerings from four to two program pathways for elementary students in grades 1 to 8: Enhanced English (EE) and French Immersion (FI). Other aspects of note with the proposed model include:

- each pathway offering varying degrees of English and French as languages of instruction;
- recognizing that Grade 1 will be the natural entry point for most students, entry into the FI program will be fluid, providing students the option to enter at the commencement of grades 1, 2 or 3, discontinuing English with Core French (Alternative), phasing out one year at a time, beginning with JK, effective September 2026;
- discontinuing Middle French Immersion, phasing out one year at a time, beginning with grade 4, effective September 2027; and,
- continuing a two year 50/50 bilingual program for all Kindergarten students.

Note: Entry to FI beyond grade 3, for example, for students moving into the District in grade 4 or later who have come from a French-language school board, may be approved on a case-by-case basis at the school level, applying centrally-developed criteria.

The following chart, which has been shared in previous reports, provides an overview of the English and French instructional minutes in the proposed model and outlines the change it represents from what is currently in place:

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

A more streamlined and robust program model will allow the District to focus efforts and resources (human, financial, and capital) more efficiently and effectively, system-wide, leading to improved program quality and accessibility for



students. The District will also continue to work with parents and caregivers who, for various reasons, do not want their children receiving French language instruction, through site-based arrangements, where possible.

Previous reports have described ongoing work that is happening coincident with and in anticipation of EPR changes, to improve program quality and delivery at elementary sites. This includes:

- a) modernizing the approach to elementary timetabling and scheduling that involves standardizing the length of instructional blocks to 60 minutes, to the greatest extent possible, in order to provide more robust teaching and learning periods. At dual-track sites, students from the two programs will be combined during their English and/or Math blocks, wherever feasible, ensuring that students attending the same school have an opportunity to learn and engage with peers across programs. Educators who share responsibility for a group of students will be encouraged to co-plan using a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach that incorporates Differentiated Instruction (DI) and that is rooted in Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP).
- b) ensuring the embedding and reinforcing key areas of focus (UDL, DI and CRRP) in professional learning and capacity building efforts for educators to facilitate achieving desired outcomes for students.
- c) developing 'Learning Frameworks' that will provide staff and parents/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 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 (Reference [Appendix C to Report 25-023](#)) specifies learning areas for each grade, such as understanding and using sentence structure at the primary level. These pedagogical areas are aligned with the District's core objectives of the 'learning' pillar, as well as the Ministry of Education's focus on literacy.
- d) introducing the DELF PRIM (Diplôme d'études en langue française or French language studies diploma) for students in grade 6 beginning with a pilot in spring 2025 and expanding in the spring of 2026. The DELF, which is currently available to all grade 12 students in the OCDSB, offers a voluntary opportunity for students to take an exam that assesses their French language communication skills. The DELF PRIM is an official French language diploma for children learning French as a second language, issued by the French Ministry of National Education, and is recognized worldwide. This voluntary assessment serves as both recognition and motivation for students. Additionally, it provides valuable information to educators in the District, summarizing the strengths and areas for growth identified in OCDSB students.

- e) optimizing tools for tracking student progress, including making them more accessible for educators. There are various tools currently in use, including early literacy screening, other key assessments in early numeracy, and attendance and engagement data, all of which help to ensure timely identification of necessary interventions and supports for students.

#### 10. **Transitional Provisions - Phasing Out of Middle French Immersion and Alternative**

The proposed program model means that both MFI and Alternative would be discontinued and phased out over time based on transition provisions that allow students already in the MFI or Alternative pathway to remain through to the end of grade 8:

- a) Middle French Immersion: Students currently enrolled in grades 2 and 3 of the English with Core French program will retain the pathway option to enroll in the MFI program in grade 4 in September 2025 and September 2026, respectively. Students currently in grade 1 of the English program will have the option to enrol in the FI program for grade 3 in September 2026, as part of the proposed fluid entry. The last cohort of MFI students would, therefore, enter grade 4 as of September 2026 and complete grade 8 by the end of the 2030-2031 school year.

MFI programs will, in most cases, remain at their current school locations during the phase-out period. However, there are a couple of situations where it will be necessary to relocate an MFI program effective September 2026 as part of the broader school configuration changes. It may also become necessary to consider additional program consolidation and/or relocation options during the phase-out period due to enrolment trends over time.

- b) Alternative programs: Students enrolled and attending a site designated as ALT and any other students registering for September 2025, including new Junior Kindergarten (JK) students, would continue to have access to Alternative programming until they complete grade 6 or, as applicable, grade 8. The last cohort of JK students starting in September 2025 will complete grade 6 at the end of the 2032-2033 school year. Those opting to continue to grade 8 will finish at the end of the 2034-2035 school year.

Effective September 2026, the four grade K-6 ALT schools and the one grade 7-8 school will begin to transition to community schools. Current attendance boundaries for Alternative will remain in place during the phase-out period. However, it may become necessary to look at consolidation and/or relocation options in future years, based on enrolment trends over time, for example.

#### 11. **Continuum of Inclusion**

A structure for student support that is grounded in inclusive education practices ensures that individual student learning needs are understood and a responsive plan is established. The idea of a 'continuum of inclusion' ensures every learner

feels valued and supported, optimizes learning pathways through equitable access to differentiated instruction and resources, and provides access to a continuum of services delivered in the least restrictive environment.

As indicated above, support for multilingual learners is organized along a continuum of inclusion based on students' learning needs over time. This will continue to be the case. The existing English as a Second Language/English Literacy Development (ESL/ELD) classes will be modernized and remain in place for multilingual learners if/as required, with an increased focus on maximizing opportunities for integration.

The current model for special education delivery is also based on serving students' needs along a continuum of support. This means that each individual student's needs are evaluated, monitored, and adjusted as appropriate. Students learning could happen in a regular classroom with in-class support or withdrawal assistance. Students could also be placed in a specialized program class (SPC), that includes integration or a fully self-contained special education classroom. Concerns that arise when there is an over-reliance on placement in an SPC include: early placement in SPCs can limit program pathway options for students; staffing resources are siloed and concentrated in SPCs; and a focus on referrals and other related administrative tasks diverts attention and resources from more inclusive approaches and practices. An evolved model for special education, informed by research, best practices and the Ministry of Education, prioritizes shifting services to students, rather than students to services; early intervention and monitoring to inform programming while keeping pathway options open; prioritizing in-class support with withdrawal as needed and, learning environments that support student well-being and adjust to individual needs.

The proposed model includes gradual phasing out of three specialized program classes (SPCs) (see below), allowing more students to receive tier three support at school sites, while other SPCs will remain in place, incorporating elements of integration.

A summary of the SPCs that are continuing, as well as those identified to be phased out, is provided in the chart below, which has been included in previous reports.

SPCs Continuing	SPCs Being Phased Out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Program (36 classes)</li> <li>• Behaviour Intervention Program (BIP) (12 classes)</li> <li>• Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH) Program (1 class)</li> <li>• Developmental Disabilities (DD) Program (9 semi-integrated classes; 25 classes at 2 specialized sites)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gifted - Primary (1 class; up to 20 students/class)</li> <li>• Language Learning Disabilities (LLD) Program - Primary and Junior (11 classes; 10 students/class)</li> <li>• Learning Disabilities (LD) Semi-Integrated Program - Junior and Intermediate (14</li> </ul>

SPCs Continuing	SPCs Being Phased Out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dual Support Program (2 classes)</li> <li>• General Learning Program - junior (6 classes) /intermediate (6 classes)</li> <li>• Gifted Program- junior (4 classes) /intermediate (6 classes)</li> <li>• Physical Support Program (2 classes)</li> <li>• Primary Special Needs Program (7 classes)</li> </ul>	classes; 8 students/class)
<b>TOTAL:</b> 116 classes	<b>TOTAL:</b> 26 classes

Students currently placed in one of the classes being phased out will be able to continue in the class through the end of their program. The human resources currently committed to supporting the three SPCs will be reinvested to support learning in regular classrooms. The proposed changes are part of the ongoing work of the District, that requires continuous review, assessment and revisions, as well as a system wide commitment to re-evaluating and confirming roles and responsibilities for educators in schools and central teams; formalizing a structured approach to targeted professional development on inclusive practices; and, creating 'Program Guides' for SPCs to ensure quality programming and transparency to parents and caregivers about the program, while shifting away from exceptionality-based labels to a focus on skill development.

## 12. **Community-based Education**

The successful implementation of the consolidated elementary program model being recommended, which includes ensuring more equitable access to programs and supports, requires a more community-based approach and focus. To that end, a plan for changes to program offerings, grade configurations and attendance boundaries across the District's elementary schools was presented in Report 25-022, dated 8 April 2025. This plan was guided by the following desired outcomes:

- equitable access for all students to programs offered within a designated community school model;
- better planning and accommodation conditions, wherever possible, to improve the learning experiences of students, including finding opportunities for:
  - reducing grade configurations;
  - improving transitions between feeder schools - there are currently a number of schools where one cohort of students leaving a school are split and fed into two or more schools; and,
  - re-balancing enrolments where possible to provide more stability for low-enrolment schools and their communities;
- community-based schools that are, where possible, dual-tracked so that both programs are available, with some schools that will offer only FI and a few that will offer only EE, in various areas of the District, where a dual track option was not feasible;

- minimizing the number of single-track, English-only schools in favour of dual-track schools, providing better access to FI for students in these communities who wish to have that option; and,
- students served at their designated community school, in most cases, learning and interacting with peers from their community.

The District invited additional feedback on the revised model by extending the online survey for an additional few weeks. A summary of that feedback is provided below in the section on Communication/Consultation Issues.

One additional change to the plan has been made since the March release, which involves revising the grade configuration at Rockcliffe Park Public School. The school will become a grade K-8 dual-track school, effective September 2026. This change affects the attendance boundaries of Rockcliffe Park Public School, York Street Public School, Queen Elizabeth Public School.

A chart summarizing the recommended **program offerings and grade configurations by school** is attached as [Appendix A](#). The **revised attendance boundaries for each school**, including the most recent changes outlined above, are included at [Appendix B](#).

The School Locator, developed for the Elementary Program Review, also remains available on the Boundaries tab of [Engage OCDSB](#), so parents, guardians, caregivers, and community members can access their designated school for September 2026, based on address and program. It will be important to review the notes included on the attendance boundary maps, which include details on phasing in and out of grades and programs.

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

Also, the consolidation of programs means they should be more accessible to students across the District, and more students will be able to attend a school in or close to their neighbourhood. The proposed boundary changes, therefore, have the potential to positively impact transportation in some parts of the District by reducing at least some bus runs and allowing more children to walk to school. The impact on transportation will be confirmed as OSTA staff begins examining the revised boundaries over the coming months.

Each elementary school's grade configuration will end at the final grade of a school division, that is, at grade 3 (primary division), grade 6 (junior division), or grade 8 (intermediate division).

The groundwork is also being laid for more coherent families of schools, which means there will be more circumstances where cohorts of students will be kept together as they progress through elementary and from elementary to secondary. This also means that where school populations within a community are split between schools, there will be more cases where all of the students transition to the next school as a group.

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

### 13. **Transitional Provisions**

While many of the changes will be implemented effective September 2026, some changes will need to be phased in over time based on transition provisions that are unique to a particular school or group of schools. For example, the four elementary schools currently designated as JK-6 Alternative sites are slated to become JK-6 dual-track (EE and FI) community schools as Alternative is phased out grade by grade. This means the attendance boundaries for neighbouring schools may also be impacted during the transition period.

Transitional provisions are also in place to ensure that schools maintain at least 50% of their current enrolment in the first year of implementation of the changes. This aligns with previous statements that if the Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines (PARG) are determined to apply, the proposed changes would be exempt based on the magnitude of the proposed changes.

As a result of the transitions required to phase programs and grade configurations in and out of schools, there will be some cases where attendance boundaries and grade configurations will be somewhat more complicated, at least in the short term. Strategies will be developed through the transition implementation planning period to address any remaining anomalous situations and ensure appropriate supports are in place for students. Specific communications will be shared with parents and caregivers at each site to help them better understand the impact of the transitional provisions for their children and the school. Notes have also been included on the attendance boundary maps detailing any transitional provisions or phasing associated with the school.

### 14. **Process to Consider Exemptions**

As indicated previously, a process is currently being developed to allow parents and caregivers affected by the changes to attendance boundaries to submit requests for exceptions. These requests would enable their children to remain at their current school, based on specific circumstances such as sibling considerations, despite the revised attendance boundaries. More details about the process, including eligibility criteria, school and program capacity limits and timelines will be shared as quickly as possible following a decision by the Board.

Decisions related to exemptions will be finalized by the end of the calendar year.

## 15. Summary of Recommendations and Outcomes

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

**Recommendation:** Two program options for students in grades 1 to 8: Enhanced English and French Immersion; phasing out of MFI and Alternative.

### **Outcomes / Activities / Tracking**

- streamlined program offerings (EE and FI), that provide improved access to both English and FI programs;
- no change to the bilingual (50/50) kindergarten program;
- programs that provide a strong foundation in both official languages;
- where possible, math and language classes combined across dual-track programming;
- more equitable distribution of resources to support student learning and wellbeing;
- fluid entry, that includes flexible entry into FI, beginning at grade 1 through to grade 3;
- students in junior and intermediate grades (4-8) may continue in their selected program through their remaining elementary years; and,
- students in FI can choose to move to EE at any point in time;
- Learning Frameworks (e.g., Literacy, Numeracy) that provide a clear overview of learning topics, tracking methods, etc.;
- introduction of DELF for grade 6 students; and
- optimizing tools for tracking students (early literacy screening) to support timely interventions and supports.

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

**Recommendation:** Phasing out of three SPCs: Language Learning Disabilities, Learning Disabilities Semi-Integrated Program (Junior and Intermediate), Gifted - Primary.

### **Outcomes/Activities/Tracking:**

- maintenance of ELD classes, system-wide, as well as capacity building for support staff related to ESL/ELD;
- focus on building teacher efficacy on inclusive classroom practices, as well as CRRP, DI, and UDL, along with Indigenous ways of knowing and learning that includes land-based education;



- continuation of most SPCs, to support students with complex special education needs, which includes the creation 'Program Guides' for SPCs to ensure quality programming and transparency for parents and caregivers; and,
- learning needs are identified, goals are set/tracked/monitored, and transition plans are built around individual next steps;
- redistribution / reinvestment of the equivalent of approximately 30 FTE teachers, currently supporting the SPCs being phased out, to general classroom support in the form of teachers and/or educational assistants;
- rollout of the [Collaborative Classroom Model](#) with a focus on the continuum of inclusion, ensuring that students receive timely and appropriate support, tailored to their specific needs by a team of qualified support staff;
- school-based support and multidisciplinary team support will focus on supporting programming for students in the community school instead of assessment and applications for student placement in SPCs;
- re-evaluating and confirming roles and responsibilities for support educators both in schools and central teams;
- targeted transition planning for students, including the creation of tools and templates for parents/caregivers and school-based teams to incorporate best practices and key considerations for supporting student transitions; and,
- establishing consistency of practice across schools to ensure transparency for parents/caregivers and ongoing consultation with a multidisciplinary team.

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

**Recommendation:** Changes to elementary schools' program offerings, grade configurations and attendance boundaries, as outlined in Appendix A [EPR - Updated School Configuration Index](#) and [Report #25-022](#) required to support the consolidated program model.

**Outcomes/Activities/Tracking:**

- improved access to programs through the expansion of dual-track programming across the District in a community school model;
- a reduction in the number of single-track English schools from 14\* to 5 (*\*or 18 when the Alternative schools are included*);
- a reduction in the number of single-track French Immersion schools from 15 to 6;
- more students will be served at their designated school, learning and interacting with peers from their own community, along with greater opportunities for parent and caregiver involvement;

- streamlined grade configurations at schools that align with the divisions: primary (grades k- 3, junior (grades 4-6), primary/junior (K-6) or intermediate (grades 7-8);
- cohorts of students will move together in more cases through the elementary grades;
- more consistent transition of cohorts of students from elementary to secondary schooling;
- ongoing commitment to extended day programming, supporting transitions and exploring opportunities for expansion;
- more students able to walk to school, increased transportation efficiencies;
- increased opportunities for expansion of community partnerships (e.g. Boys and Girls' Clubs); and
- all schools will remain open with more balanced enrolments in most cases.

**16. Transition Implementation and Other Operational Considerations:**

The reports provided to date have outlined various operational and transition implementation considerations related to the proposed changes. The following have been identified as key operational considerations by interest holders including students, staff, parents/caregivers, trustees, federation/union partners, and community members:

**a) Extended Day Programs (Childcare)**

The District currently operates 68 Extended Day Programs (EDPs) and has partnerships with over 28 community organizations across more than 30 schools, underscoring the importance placed on accessible before and after school programming. Following approval of any proposed changes, Early Learning will continue its work to monitor and assess the impacts on both District-run EDPs and third-party programs. This includes working in collaboration with the transition team to develop a plan to identify and support families who are changing schools. The goal will be to confirm whether and how they can be accommodated in an EDP, and where one exists in their new school, as early as possible next year. In general, transfers will be granted on a priority basis to families currently enrolled in an OCDSB EDP, provided space and staffing are available at the designated site. Early Learning has also initiated a conversation with the City of Ottawa to discuss opportunities for expansion within the District should current capacities prove insufficient following implementation of EPR changes. Early Learning will also continue to support families facing significant child care expenses by ensuring information is made available regarding the City of Ottawa's Child Care Fee Subsidy program. This program aims to ensure equitable access for low- and moderate-income families, including newcomers with children up to the age of 13, to licensed programs within Ottawa. Transition planning 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.

b) Transition Planning for Student Movement

As indicated previously, approximately 1,500 more students than in a typical school year, may be required to move schools in September 2026 due to the proposed changes. This number may decrease based on the number of exemptions granted to students through the exemptions process. As part of the transition planning, measures will be included to support students in managing the change, including those who may experience increased anxiety with change. This may include, for example, opportunities for students to visit and become familiar with their new school and to meet peers. LSS will also support the creation of tools and templates for parents and caregivers and school-based teams to incorporate best practices and key considerations for supporting student transitions. The District will be able to draw on previous experiences managing significant change and disruption, including previous boundary changes, to monitor and mitigate negative impacts for affected students and ensure appropriate supports are in place to create welcoming teaching and learning environments.

c) Transition Planning for Staff Movement

The increased level of staff movement across employee groups assigned to elementary schools will be managed by Employee Services in partnership with elementary principals and vice-principals, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), Student Support Professionals (SSP) and OSSTF Education Support Professionals (ESP) and others, through collaborative working groups, taking into consideration current collective agreement provisions, staffing and transfer timelines and processes. As indicated previously, Employee Services will be able to draw on previous experiences involving significant staff movement, including major accommodation reviews, to mitigate impacts and support a successful transition.

d) Changes to Student Transportation (OSTA)

Given the scope of the proposed changes, adapting the current student transportation system to accommodate the new boundaries and grade configurations will require significant effort on the part of the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA). The proposed changes to boundaries and grade configurations have been shared with OSTA representatives, and tentative planning to accommodate the additional work is underway. This includes ensuring appropriate resources are in place to complete the necessary work. Changes will be made within approved policies and procedures, including, for example, eligibility criteria and bell time changes; progress will be updated through the usual communication channels between OSTA and the member boards.

e) Site-based Renovations, Furniture and Equipment Planning

A small number of schools will require site-based renovations to accommodate changes in grade configurations (e.g., where a Kindergarten program will be added to a school). These renovation projects will be prioritized in the annual capital plan developed by the Facilities Department.

In addition, as part of the implementation plan, work will begin in the fall through the transition project team to inventory equipment and furniture in schools and make necessary arrangements to redistribute across sites, if required.

f) Planning for Learning Resources

The District has provided foundational resources to all elementary schools in recent years. These resources include teacher resources that educators use to structure and guide instructional time, along with student manipulatives and student assessment tools. A combination of school and central funding is used to replace or refresh resources as they naturally wear over time. The introduction of new programs (EE or FI) at schools that were previously single-track, and/or the introduction of new grade configurations will require additional teaching and learning resources. Preliminary planning has commenced to plan for the redistribution of resources wherever possible and for the purchasing and distribution of new resources, as required, in advance of changes being implemented in September 2026 and beyond.

g) School Name Changes

Any changes to school names that may be required will be identified in the fall and a process for school name review/renewal will be confirmed so that name changes are approved prior to the end of the next school year. This will include name changes required due to program changes (e.g., removing the term Alternative) or changes to grade configurations (e.g., removing the term middle from a school).

h) Policy Changes

Following a decision by the Board, work will get underway to identify necessary policy updates (Tier 1) required to align existing policies with the substantive decision. This will include, for example, updates to Policy P.139.CUR - Changes to Programs and Program Delivery Structures at Elementary Schools, to reflect the changes in programs available to elementary students.

i) Program Viability (Small/Low Enrolment Programs and Grades)

Since planning projections are based largely on trends, projections may be somewhat less reliable during the first few years of the new model. As a result, it will be necessary to closely monitor enrolment and program size and feasibility, particularly in dual track sites. In some cases, where trends indicate enrolment in particular programs/schools will continue to be low, it may be necessary to bring forward additional changes. As indicated previously, as MFI and ALT are phased out, low enrolment may also necessitate looking at relocation and consolidation options. Although the usual preference is to avoid making changes within a five year timeframe, it may be necessary to take steps in the shorter term to address enrolment pressures that are adversely impacting program viability in some sites as compared to other sites.

17. **Timelines**

The original timelines for the EPR have been adjusted in a number of instances to accommodate additional time for community consultation and input/feedback. It is important that a decision be made prior to finalizing the 2025-2026 budget and to allow senior staff and system leads to build the necessary work into their 2025-2026 work plans. From a community perspective, it is also important to provide parents, caregivers and students with a clear and coherent path forward for the District's elementary schools and programs.

**RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

18. The streamlined program model proposed and the revised school configurations and boundaries represents a substantial change impacting all of the District's elementary schools. In the long term, the proposed changes will lead to more efficient and effective use of District resources (financial, human, capital). Planning and implementation of a change of this magnitude will require the reallocation and/or reinvestment of resources in the short term, including: staffing implications; new learning resources; professional learning; capital improvements; and, other logistical considerations. Aspects of implementation will be integrated into existing work plans for next year, such that associated costs or resource allocations will, where possible, be covered within existing operating budgets and staff complements. A summary of key resource implications associated with the recommendations is provided below.
- a) **Project Transition Team:** A transition team will be established under the leadership of the Associate Directors, Academic and Business, to lead and manage various aspects of implementation. As with the opening of a new school, consideration has been given to releasing a project lead (e.g., a school administrator, for all or part of next year to act as project manager, overseeing and coordinating the work). While there may also be some limited need to engage resources to do the work or to backfill other members of the team, the work will largely be integrated into existing work plans and roles for next year, rather than establishing multiple dedicated positions. To support the transition team, including the release of a full-time lead, the staff recommended budget will include an allocation of \$375,000.
  - b) **Inclusive Student Support:** The consolidation of 26 SPCs will result in the reinvestment of resources equivalent to approximately 30 full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching positions. These funds will be reinvested to directly support students in regular classrooms through the allocation of additional educational assistants and/or teachers. Furthermore, the administrative time saved by eliminating the application process for these SPCs will be redirected to provide direct student support within standard classrooms. Finally, multidisciplinary team resources will be redistributed to offer more direct support within schools and classrooms.
  - c) **Professional Development:** Professional development requirements associated with the proposed program model and support for students will be incorporated into the annual professional learning plans developed for the 2025-2026 school year and beyond.

- d) **Learning Resources:** Planning for new resource requirements has been started using projected enrolment (for school, class, and program) numbers. The purchase of new resources will also be balanced with the redistribution of resources already allocated across the District, where possible. Based on the above, preliminary estimates for new resources are approximately \$250,000 - \$300,000. These expenditures may be spread over multiple budget years, as programs and grades are phased in at some sites.
- e) **Site-based Renovations:** The proposed changes to school grade configurations and attendance boundaries will require both one-time and ongoing investment of resources. This includes one-time capital investments to support changes in schools such as retrofitting classrooms and school yards, for example, where Kindergarten is being added for the first time. Similarly, a change in grade configurations and/or enrolment may cause a need for more/different furniture and equipment. While every reasonable effort will be made to shift resources across schools, as needed, there are also likely to be one-time costs to ensure schools have access to what they need.
- f) **Classroom Teachers and Other School-based Staff:** Overall, the changes to elementary programming should not result in a measurable change (increase or decrease) in the total number of classroom teachers or other school-based staffing. Some modelling has also been done using revised configurations and projected enrolment which shows that the impact on staffing, particularly the number of English teachers and number of French teachers, appears negligible.

It is expected that many of the upfront costs of implementing the new model will be absorbed within existing budgets. An additional fund of approximately \$375,000 will be included in the staff recommended 2025-2026 budget, for transition implementation purposes, including to support a project lead for the school year leading up to September 2026. For clarity this fund is not intended to cover the additional costs outlined above (e.g. learning resources, professional learning, renovations, etc.). Any additional unanticipated costs will be identified and addressed through the revised estimates.

## COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

### 19. Consultation

Since its launch in April 2024, the elementary program review has included extensive opportunities for members of the OCDSB community to provide input and feedback, including the following:

**Spring 2024:** A community engagement campaign that included both online and in-person opportunities for community members to provide input to help inform what proposed revisions may be required.

**Fall 2024:** An extended opportunity to gather input specifically from Board advisory committees.

**Winter 2025:** A consultation period to gather feedback on the proposed program model and proposed changes to program offerings, grade configurations and attendance boundaries.

Most recently, the District extended the opportunity for consultation to allow additional feedback on the revised plan presented in Report 25-022. A summary of that feedback is provided in [Appendix C: Consultation Report](#), and includes some of the following highlights from the feedback:

- widespread appreciation for the revised proposed model's focus on students attending schools closer to home, reducing transitions (specifically, phasing out JK-3/4-8 models), enhancing walkability, and keeping siblings together;
- many supported increased access to French Immersion and equitable program distribution, while others were concerned that some underserved communities were being overlooked;
- across all groups, there was widespread worry about the potential negative impact of phasing out or integrating specialized programs without adequate support staff (like EAs) and resources in regular classrooms;
- consistent questions were raised about practical aspects like transportation, longer commutes, unclear plans for before/after school childcare, increasing class sizes, understaffing, and the risk of burnout;
- some viewed the move towards dual-track schools positively for creating a more equitable experience, while others remained skeptical about whether expanding access (particularly French Immersion) could maintain quality without adequate staffing and resources;
- concerns were expressed about the potential emotional toll on students due to disrupted friendships, communities, routines, and support systems when changing schools; and
- some interest holders felt that decisions favoured the most vocal groups. There was a clear call for more detailed rollout plans, clarity on supports, and genuine follow-through on feedback received.

This feedback will continue to inform the EPR work through the implementation phase.

There have also been ongoing communications with Ministry of Education representatives throughout the review to ensure they are aware of the proposed changes.

### **Communication**

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



A preliminary communications plan for the implementation phase was outlined in Report 25-023, and included plans for communicating to various interest holders. For the most part, communications will occur through the regular communications channels. Information updates will be provided to the Board at regular intervals through the school year.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended THAT:

- A. i. Effective September 2026, two elementary programs, Enhanced English and French Immersion, as described in Report 25-025, be offered for students in grades 1 to 8: Enhanced English and French Immersion;
- ii. Middle French Immersion be phased out over time as the last cohort of Grade 4 students entering the program in September 2026 completes Grade 8;
- iii. Alternative be phased out over time as the last cohort of JK students entering the program in September 2025 completes Grade 8;
- B. Each of the following Specialized Program Classes: Gifted Program - Primary, Language Learning Disability Program and Learning Disabilities Specialized Intervention Program, be phased out as students leave the program; and
- C. Effective September 2026, elementary schools' grade configurations, attendance boundaries and program offerings be revised as outlined in Report 25-025 and Appendices A and B to Report 25-025, including site-specific transitional provisions.

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Pino Buffone  
Director of Education and Secretary of the Board

## **APPENDICES**

A EPR Updated school configuration index  
B Proposed Attendance Boundary Maps  
C Consultation Report