



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

5 November 2019

Report No.19-109 Status of English with Core French Program

Key Contact: Michael Carson, Chief Financial Officer Ext. 8881

PURPOSE:

1. To present information regarding the current status of the English with Core French program.

CONTEXT:

2. At the Board meeting of 28 May 2019, the following motion was approved:
 - A. THAT staff prepare a report for Board discussion in early Fall 2019 comparing the current and projected student enrolment numbers of the elementary English with Core French programs with the elementary Early and Middle French Immersion programs, including:
 - i. Enrolment for special education (non-gifted), English language learners (ELL), and SES, all disaggregated by grade, division, and program colocation nature; and
 - ii. Contribution rates to high school pathways, disaggregated by program colocation nature.
 - B. THAT this report additionally identify:
 - i. Any key operational, financial, pedagogical, community-impacting, or other strategic advantages and/or disadvantages related to its findings; and
 - ii. Any major programming, accommodations, policy, resourcing, and/or other strategic changes which might be expected to significantly and reliably address any concerns identified.
3. There are three delivery models for French as a Second Language:
 - a. English Program with Core French (ENG) (grades 1-8). Students receive instruction in all subject areas in English with instruction in Core French 40 minutes daily;

- b. English Program with Early French Immersion (EFI) (grades 1-8).
Students receive instruction in both English and French. In grade 1, students receive 80 % of instruction in French, in grades 2-6, 60 % in French and in grades 7-8, 50 % in French; and
- c. English Program with Middle French Immersion (MFI) (grades 4-8).
Students receive instruction in both English and French. In grades 4-6, 66% of instruction is in French and in grades 7-8, 50% in French.

For the purposes of this report, while reference will be made to the English with Core French (ENG) program in comparison to the Early French Immersion (EFI) program and the Middle French Immersion (MFI) program, it is important to note that all French as a Second Language programs (FSL) are conducted as part of the ENG program in all OCDSB schools.

In the two years of kindergarten, the OCDSB offers 50% percent of the program in English and 50% of the program in French in all programs in the District. Parents then choose the English/Core French program or a French Immersion program commencing in grade one for EFI, or later in grade 4 for MFI.

Core French is mandatory for all students in the Ontario public school system from grades 4 to 8 and the Ministry of Education's FSL Ontario Curriculum directs that Core French students receive a minimum of 600 hours of instruction in French by the end of grade 8. In the OCDSB, students who choose the Core French option start that instruction in grade 1 and accumulate 1,942 hours of French instruction by the end of grade 8.

French Immersion students are to have 50% of their program delivered in French at all grade levels of their program and are to have a minimum of 3,800 hours of French instruction by the end of grade 8. In the OCDSB, EFI Grade 1 students have 80% of their instruction in French, grades 2-6 have 60% and in grade 7/8 50% in French, which results in students accumulating a total of 5,452 hours by the end of grade 8. MFI offers 66% of its instruction in French in grades 4-6 and 50% in grades 7/8 with a total of 4,140 hours.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

4. The investigation of any data related to English programming in the District needs to be conducted with a goal in mind. The nature of the data is complex and determining causal effects are complicated, so as we consider the data the following are among the questions that may emerge:
 - Is there a current problem with OCDSB delivery structures?
 - Through what lens should the issue be evaluated? and
 - Are there challenges faced in the delivery of English programming tied to operational issues, program quality, community perception/ lack of knowledge about the program, or the location of the available program?

The District is committed to providing optimum learning environments for students in a way that ensures equity of access within sustainable resources and in a fiscally responsible manner. The District has adopted the Elementary School Program Framework (attached as Appendix A) as part of Policy. P139: CUR-Program Delivery Structures at Elementary Schools. The framework is designed to deliver elementary program choices for students as close as possible to their home community. The framework also commits to providing optimal learning environments to support students through a range of program offerings, providing equitable access to programs and minimizing transitions.

There is always a balance between offering program choices for students in their home community and making sure that those programs are robust and stable. Given the multiplicity of program offerings in the OCDSB, this goal can be challenging. There is the need to provide ongoing support for all students in every program at the elementary level to ensure students' needs are met and to dispel program perceptions about superiority of one program over another with respect to the students who enroll in these programs. While the quality of the ENG programs and instruction is high, there exists a structural inequity based on dwindling numbers of students, resulting in small ENG programs in single and dual track schools.

5. The Data

In order to frame the discussion, the data will be presented in the following categories:

- a. Choice of Program
 - i. the historical and projected enrolment of elementary students by program, retention rates in those programs, grade 8 program data, and secondary school pathways based on program choice;
- b. Program Delivery Structures
 - i. the breakdown of the number of programs in elementary schools, administrative structures and facility utilization; and
- c. Student Enrolment Patterns
 - i. students who have been identified in specialized program classes, students who receive ELL support and students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

For the purpose of comparing single-track schools, Alternative programs have not been included.

6. Choice of Program

EFI has grown steadily as the FSL delivery model of choice over the past decade. As outlined in the Historical and Projected Enrolment Data chart (attached as Appendix B), in the 2018-2019 school year 43% of the total elementary population was enrolled in the EFI program, 29 % were enrolled in the ENG program and 5% in the MFI program. The remaining 23 % were enrolled in congregated classes or in the Alternative program. Enrolment in EFI and MFI has shown a steady increase since 2010 while conversely, ENG enrolment has decreased.

In 2017-2018, 72% of all elementary grade 1 program choice was for EFI as compared to 28% of students choosing ENG. This represents a 10% increase

(EFI) and decrease (ENG) in both programs in the last ten years. The most recent District Needs Analysis (DNA) conducted in January 2018, reflects a stabilizing of EFI demand in the future as outlined in the Program Grade Entry chart (attached as Appendix C). However, the next 5-10 years will have the District build new schools in suburban areas which traditionally have higher demand for EFI programs. As well, the impact of the new 50% English 50% French kindergarten program may well result in increased EFI enrolment at the grade 1 level. The grey vector indicated on the Historical and Projected Enrolment chart (Attached as Appendix B) reflects what projected increases in EFI could look like based on a number of changing factors. Whether the enrolment in EFI programs remains stable or increases over time, the current delivery of ENG is challenging.

The impact of these enrolment trends to date has resulted in a number of operational challenges. As ENG program enrolment decreases, grade viability is challenged. Sufficient enrolment for grade-specific elementary ENG classes varies widely across the District. While the ultimate goal may be to have at least one-and-a-half classes at each grade level to offer sufficient program choice at the local community school and/or a school as close as possible to the home community, this is not always possible. Where there are not enough students to support a single class at a grade level, classes are doubled and trebled to provide enough critical student mass to form the class. In 2018-2019, there were 690 ENG classes. Of these classes, 59% (410) had straight grade levels, 40% (275) had split grades and 1% (5) had triple grades. This is in comparison to EFI classes where 81% are straight grade and 19% were split grades. There were no triple EFI grades.

Multi-grade classes can be viable, but when a school has a single multi-grade class for several years, there are wider educational implications. Some opportunities may be limited within the scope of the program and student placement flexibility is seriously impeded. When decisions are made concerning program placement through accommodation reviews or new school construction, every effort is made to offer ENG programs in dual-track sites (along with MFI) where there has been a history of demand for the program. Of the 111 elementary sites in the District, 65 are currently dual-tracked.

The OCDSB offers a multiplicity of program choice. While there is the commitment to offer program choice in local community schools, wherever possible, it has become increasingly more difficult to achieve that goal with the wide range of choice available. To be able to offer robust ENG programming, many programs have been congregated across the District over time, creating larger catchment areas. Given the predicted continuing decline in ENG enrolment, decisions will need to be made about whether:

- a) to maintain the current approach (larger catchment areas due to dwindling enrolments); or
- b) to create congregated centers for ENG programs.

Both approaches result in students being unable to attend their local community school should they choose an ENG program.

There is a shortage of qualified French teachers across the province and the OCDSB has experienced a shortage. It is becoming increasingly difficult to staff French teaching position vacancies, particularly ones that occur during the school year and with possible predicted growth in the French immersion programs, those shortages may become more acute.

Retention rates for the EFI program have also increased historically from 52.9% in 2003 to 72.9% in 2018 as outlined in the Historical Retention Rates chart (attached as Appendix D). While the retention rates for EFI programming have increased, it is noteworthy that the percentage of students choosing EFI rather than ENG at the grade 8 level is significantly similar. In 2018-2019, 52% of grade 8 students were in the ENG program while 48% of students were in the EFI program, as outlined in the Grade 8 Program chart (Attached as Appendix E). This trend begs the question of why students choose to return to the ENG program at the grade 2 and 6 levels.

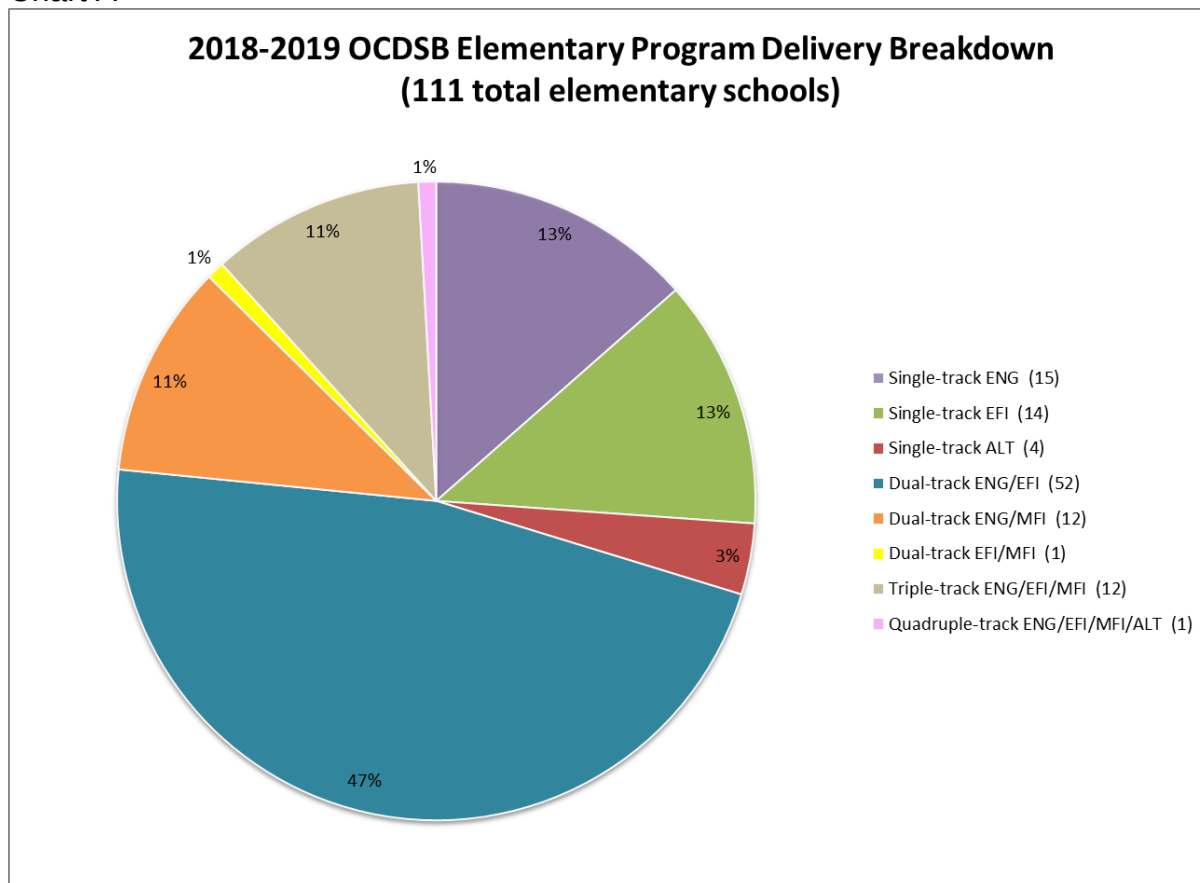
The ability to track students' secondary school pathways in relation to their elementary school programming is not a simple task given the range of course selections at secondary school. For the purposes of this report, data has been collected on students' French and Mathematics choices in grade 9 in relation to their grade 8 program. In 2017-2018, 98% of students in grade 8 EFI and MFI opted to take Academic English and 2% enrolled in Applied English. In the same year, 93.% of students in grade 8 EFI and MFI enrolled in Academic Mathematics and 7% enrolled in Applied Mathematics as outlined in the Grade 8 Students Taking English or Mathematics charts (Attached as Appendix G). In comparison, 64% of students in grade 8 ENG chose Academic English and 50% chose Academic Mathematics. These percentages have been stable over the past three years.

What are the factors that influence decisions to enroll in Applied rather than Academic courses? Is choice based on parental influence? teacher recommendation or program suitability? While Applied programming is the appropriate programming choice for varied student cohorts in grade 8 programs across the system, it would appear that there is a disproportionate representation of grade 8 students entering into grade 9 applied programs. This program choice requires further investigation to determine the source of this trend.

7. Program Delivery Structures

Single-tracked schools have only one program, dual-tracked will have a combination of two program offerings and triple-tracked will support three programs. The OCDSB has 111 elementary schools, of those schools, 33 have single-track programs (15 have only ENG, 14 have only EFI, 4 have only Alternative), 65 have dual-track programming (52 ENG/EFI, 12 ENG/MFI, 1 EFI/MFI), 12 have triple-tracking (ENG/EFI/MFI) and one school has all four program tracks (ENG/EFI/MFI and Alternative. (Please see Chart A below)

Chart A



Class sizes in ENG programs should also be noted. In dual-tracked schools, 13 schools had fewer than 10 students at divisional levels (primary, junior and intermediate) and six schools in triple-tracked schools had fewer than 15 at each level. These class sizes provide timetabling challenges for administrators and result in multi-grade classes as referenced previously.

Whether a school is urban (inside the Greenbelt), suburban (development areas outside of the Greenbelt) or rural, total program enrolments, size and utilization factors are also important things to consider when looking for a correlation to ENG programs. The Grade 8 Percentage of Choice chart, (attached as Appendix E) provides that information. With a few exceptions, most of the schools offering only an ENG program are inside the Greenbelt. Of the 15 ENG single-track schools, 12 are located inside the Greenbelt (80%), one is outside (suburban), and two in the rural area. Eleven of the EFI single-track schools are inside the greenbelt and three are in rural areas. The average size of schools inside the greenbelt is 476 students with the average size of single-tracked schools (ENG, EFI and/or Alternative sites) being 390 students. The enrolment numbers in single-track ENG program schools will decrease proportionately with any projected increase in French Immersion programs.

[The Elementary School Information Matrix](#) has been developed to provide an overview of the District's elementary facilities, including enrolment and student data. This matrix can be viewed by clicking on the link provided. The chart is too large to be printed and submitted with this report.

8. Utilization Factors

Utilization factors vary dramatically in both single-tracked program schools (Eng and EFI). Five ENG schools have a utilization factor below 50%, four between 50% and 60% and six between 60% and 80%. In contrast, nine EFI single-tracked schools are over 100% utilized, with two falling in the 75%-100% range and three below 75%. Out of 111 elementary schools, 21 have a utilization factor of below 60% which means that nine of those schools are single-tracked ENG program schools. The differentiation between ENG and FI single-tracked utilization rates is challenging. As EFI demands increase, the number of schools that are currently overcrowded may increase and ENG schools' utilization factors will drop. Formal accommodation reviews in school areas can address these changing profiles but these may not take place in a timely fashion, due to the provincial moratorium on pupil accommodation reviews and the Board-approved accommodation review schedule. Where program numbers become critical for a school, without a District or local area solution, the situation will need to be managed in a singular fashion and the costs of empty pupil spaces spread across all schools instead of being channeled into areas of population growth. As such, maintaining excess school space negatively impacts all students.

9. Student Enrolment Patterns

Of the 15 single-track ENG schools, 6 schools have specialized program classes. The notable comparison is that only one single-track EFI school out of 14 in the system has students identified in this category. This data correlates to utilization factors. When searching for a site to locate a specialized program class, ENG schools tend to be the sites that have room for additional classes rather than EFI sites that may be fully utilized. Parental perceptions about ENG programming may be influenced by the number of specialized program classes in the school.

The percentage of students with IEPs in schools with ENG programming is consistent within all schools within the District. The general range for students with IEPs, in all 111 elementary schools, is 10%-20% of the student body. In the single-tracked ENG schools, nine are in this same range with two having over 20% of the student population with IEPs. All EFI single-track schools with the exception of one have fewer than 10% of the population with IEPs. The average percentage of students with IEPs in all schools is 20%.

The number of students identified as English Language Learners (ELL) in single-track ENG schools is significantly higher than other elementary schools in the District. Nine out of 15 single-track ENG schools have an identified ELL population of 25%-50% of its entire population and three schools have an ELL population of 20%-25%. EFI centers have fewer than 10% of their population identified in this category. The average for the District is 16%; therefore, this category of student profile is of particular interest. It will be critical to review the process of referral of students that are new to the District in relation to program choices, when determining a course of action for the future. As students become more successful in their English language proficiency, the need for a congregated learning setting often changes. This information also often correlates with utilization factors as to where there is a need for a congregated ELL class to be located. As previously mentioned, ENG single-track schools are the sites with additional pupil space available.

Single-track ENG schools also have a high proportion of the student body who reside in lower income neighborhoods. In 2016-2017, 27 out of the total 111 elementary schools had a student body where 50% or more lived in low income neighbourhoods. Of those 27 schools, nine are single-tracked ENG schools. An additional three single-track ENG schools had 35%-50% of the student body identified in this category.

Student achievement is one important indicator of program success. Using EQAO data is one measure of student success but finding discernable trends in this data in order to comment on ENG programming is elusive as outcomes can be different for grade 3 and grade 6 and year-over-year trends may be difficult to discern, particularly where cohorts of students are small in number. Further, District level results have repeatedly shown that students with special education needs and ELLs tend not to perform as well as their peers on these assessments.

The intersectionality of single-tracked ENG schools located in low income neighborhoods, with a student body with high ELL and special education needs results in student outcomes that are not as successful as District and/or provincial norms. Where these complex factors interconnect, allocation of additional resources may be one of the solutions undertaken to address this issue.

Currently grade 6 EQAO results are not disaggregated by type of French programming in dual and triple-tracked schools. However, 58% of the 2019 grade 3 cohort was enrolled in FI.

10. Other Sources of Information

The District has spent considerable time over the years examining ENG programming in the District. Regular English Program Dialogue/Consultation (Attached as Appendix H) is an inventory of reports, minutes and/or memoranda that reflect discussion and consultation that have been undertaken on the topic. While the listing may not be a totally comprehensive listing of all discussion on the issue, there are recurrent themes:

- a. How to increase public awareness of the strengths of the ENG program to facilitating parental decision-making when making program choices for their children?
- b. How to develop more consistency of communication about the ENG program?
- c. How to change perceptions about the program in a community that places a high value on bilingualism? Can we address perceptions about the quality of ENG program?
- d. What structural changes could be made to program or delivery structures that would provide more equitable access to English programs? and
- e. What is the best resource allocation for ENG programs?

11. Ancillary Issues

A number of other issues require consideration in identifying what problem, exists with the current delivery model of FSL programming in ENG schools and how to develop solutions to address the issues:

- a. The Grade 12 proficiency test, Diplôme d'études en langue française, (DELF) has become the standard for evaluating a graduating student's proficiency in FSL. Recent past analysis of the results showed no statistically-significant difference in success rates at the B2 level for students enrolled in EFI/MFI in grade 8 or in extended/immersion French in grade 12.
A B2 user has a degree of independence that allows him/her to construct arguments, explain his/her viewpoint and has a level of fluency and spontaneity in regular reactions. It is also the level sought to support post-secondary French studies.
- b. Will the new 50%English/50 % French approach in kindergarten program delivery have significant impact on parental choice when choosing the FSL entry point in Grade1?
- c. Is there a need to review the current levels of time allocated to French programming in the elementary Time Allocation Model (TAM)? and
- d. With the current freeze on accommodation reviews, how feasible is it to develop solutions within a constrained planning framework?.

Given the current and predicted enrolment numbers, it is evident that the ENG program cannot be offered at all elementary schools. It is also evident that given the changing trends, English programming cannot continue to be offered in the current fashion unless there is consideration of changes to ensure viability/sustainability. To generate potential solutions associated with ENG programming and to plan the next steps, there must be some certainty in understanding the presenting problems: program viability; student success rates in some schools; inequity of program opportunities and a number of operational issues (staffing, timetabling) have been identified. While the quality of the ENG program and instruction is high, there exist structural impediments based on dwindling numbers of students in the program.

There are persistent challenges tied to the growth of the FI programs and correlating decrease in ENG programs. Given the wide range of program choice within the OCDSB, there will be no direct path to serve all students' and parents' interests. A wide scope of actions could be contemplated to move forward: maintaining the status quo; changing the resource model for the status quo; congregating ENG sites; and/or changing to a totally different FSL delivery model are all on that spectrum. A number of these potential remedies could have long term, far reaching impact on the system that would take years to achieve.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

12. Resource allocation would vary based on the type of plan that is adopted and would be detailed in an action report at that time.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

13. A detailed communication and consultation plan will be formulated based on whatever course of action is recommended for Board consideration.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

14. Examining programs within the OCDSB is work that supports the goal of creating a culture of responsibility that leads to the desired outcomes of improved student achievement, increased graduation success in all pathways and an increased sense of relevance and motivation for students.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

15. The following questions are provided to support the discussion of this item by the committee:
 - How do the current delivery structures of French as a Second Language (core, middle and immersion French) align with the Elementary School Program Framework?
 - Are changes to the delivery of French Immersion and English with Core French programs needed to support the District's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan? And
 - How will this work impact the Board's work plan?

Michael Carson
Chief Financial Officer

Camille Williams-Taylor
Director of Education and Secretary of
the Board

APPENDICES

- Appendix A Elementary School Program Framework
- Appendix B Historical and Projected Enrolment-Selected Programs
- Appendix C Program Grade Entry-Percentage of Students Choosing ENG vs EFI
- Appendix D Historical EFI Program Retention Rates
- Appendix E Grade 8 Program-Percentage of Students Choosing ENG vs EFI
- Appendix F [Elementary Program Information Matrix](#)
- Appendix G Grade 9 Students-English or Mathematics by School Delivery Model
- Appendix H Regular English Program Dialogue/Consultation