



Halton District School Board

Report Number: 15114

Date: September 10, 2015

FOR DECISION

TO: The Chair and Members of the
Halton District School Board

FROM: Stuart Miller, Associate Director

RE: Program Viability re: English and French Programming Public Consultation

Warrant:

On June 24, 2015, the Board of Trustees approved Motion 15-0138 with respect to the recommendation of the Program Viability Committee regarding public consultations. The purpose of this report is to outline the process and timeline by which the Board will consult with the public and local communities around program viability for both English and French programming.

Included in this report are two recommendations. The first recommendation offers that the Board undertake an extensive consultation with the public through a variety of communication tools and allows for a significant period of time to complete this process. The second recommends the final report for addressing program viability be brought to the Board no later than May 2016 and that implementation of any significant changes be scheduled for September 2017.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Be it resolved that the Halton District School Board adopt the following process for public/community consultation process with respect to possible actions or recommendations for program viability of both English and French programming.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Be it resolved that the Halton District School Board approve the timelines for the public/community consultation process and that the completion of that process will result in a recommendation coming to the Board no later than May 2016 with implementation of September 2017 for any significant changes in the delivery of either French Immersion or English programming.

Background:

At the March 4 Board meeting, a Program Viability Committee was created as a result of Board motion M15-0043. The purpose of this committee was to examine the emerging concern of HDSB schools to deliver both a viable French Immersion program and English program. The impetus for the creation of the committee was the increased uptake of Grade 1 French Immersion and the impact this was having on English programming in some HDSB schools. Currently there are 19 schools with limited enrolment in the English program (classes). This may result in students who do not choose to enroll in French Immersion being in split classes for their entire elementary years and with the same classmates year after year.

In addition the high uptake of French Immersion in the Board is putting pressure on recruiting qualified and quality French-speaking teachers. Many boards in Ontario are experiencing similar issues and consequently there is increased competition for quality French teachers.

The Program Viability Committee met several times and developed four scenarios addressing the challenge of viability. The committee recommendation, approved by the Board of Trustees (Motion 15-0137) identified the four scenarios, and need for public consultation (Motion 15-0138) prior to a recommendation being put forth around a solution to the challenge. These scenarios will be presented to the public along with relevant data and information through various means. The public and the Board's stakeholders will be invited to provide input on these specific scenarios and/or suggest others.

Challenge:

Viable programs are those with both sufficient learners and teachers; thus this challenge is twofold. Currently the HDSB has 19 elementary dual track schools (French immersion/English program) in which the numbers of students remaining in the English program is very low and hence problematic. The number of students in Grade 1 English in these schools ranges from 4 to 14. Projections beyond the 2015-16 school year suggest this situation will continue to grow within these schools and also extend to other dual track schools.

Secondly, although the Board is actively recruiting French teachers, most Principals have reported challenges in hiring sufficient quality instructors.

Purpose of Public Consultation:

The lens by which consultation will occur is one that will allow stakeholders input into the challenging dilemma the Board is currently and continuing to confront, with respect to providing viable quality program to both those who have chosen the French Immersion program and those who have chosen to remain in the English program.

The purpose is not to create a circumstance whereby the public is lobbying or advocating for a particular position. By presenting the public with the challenge the Board and more specifically its students are facing, it is expected the feedback and input received will provide information that ultimately informs a final recommendation to the Board in May 2016 to equitably support all students regardless of their choice of program.

The public/community will be invited to comment and/or provide feedback on the four scenarios developed by the Program Viability Committee. In addition they will be invited to comment and/or suggest any other scenarios or possible improvements/modifications of the four scenarios presented.

Process for Communication/Consultation

Appendix 1 outlines the dates of the information nights and the data collection methods the Board will use to seek input from the public. These will be published on the Board's website, sent in a news release and tweeted, as well as shared with all schools of the HDSB for distribution to their communities.

Essentially the process will be split into two parts. The first part will be strictly for providing information in both a series of information evenings and electronically. The public will be presented with the challenge and the evidence which supports it. This information/data includes, but is not limited to the following.

Part 1 Consultation Process: InformationData to be shared

- number of single track schools
- number of dual track schools
- pupil place capacity of the schools (OTG)
- number of schools core French
- historical and projected enrolment growth (both English and French immersion)
- uptake of French Immersion
- projections of FI uptake
- class sizes in both English and French (samples)
- recruitment of French Immersion teachers
- attrition rate of students choosing FI (Grade 2-12)
- comments on subject specialists in secondary schools
- enrolment projections at FI secondary schools

Four Scenarios Developed by Program Viability Committee

- the four scenarios developed by the program Viability Committee
- implications (for students, families and staff) of implementing each of these four scenarios

This information will be made available to the public at the information sessions:

Part 2 Consultation Process: Consultation with Public

The second part of the process is the consultation phase. During this phase the public will be invited, through various means, to provide input/comments on the four scenarios that have been developed by the PVC and have been approved by the Board as going forward to the public. Again the intent is not to have the public lobby or vote on any of the particular scenarios, but rather to provide feedback regarding their suitability in addressing the challenging of providing viable program to both the English and French programs.

Social Media:

In addition to the communications process outlined in *Appendix 1*, the Board will also create a separate webpage with a link from the Board's main webpage. It will also have a Twitter feed that will direct the public to the webpage, and finally a Facebook page will be set up in which comments can be made with respect to a solution to the challenge of providing viable programs for both English and French.

Timelines

As outlined in *Appendix 1*, the window for public input into the recommendation that will be taken to the Board will be closed in late March or early April. The input gathered throughout the entire consultation process will be analysed and will ultimately help to inform a recommendation that will go to the Board of Trustees no later than May 2016.

If the recommendation and/or motion by the Board results in significant changes to the way French Immersion or English programming is delivered to HDSB students, then implementation will commence in September 2017. Interim measures, however, may be approved for implementation prior to September 2017.

It should be noted the expansion of primary core French will continue as approved by Board motion M13-0274, to all eligible elementary schools by 2018.

Rationale:

There are several rationale for the timeline of implementation (for significant changes) being September 2017.

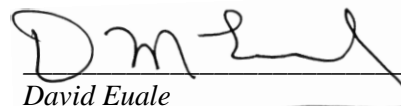
1. The resultant motion may initiate a Boundary Review Process. These typically take several months to complete as consultation with the affected communities is both required and essential for a fair and effective process. Such a process could not occur from May to September 2016.
2. There may be staffing implications in so far as teachers may be required to move to other schools. Due to the Board's contract obligations with its unions, this would have to be completed by April in the school year prior to the move. Staffing in schools is contractually completed in the Spring prior to the following school year.
3. If the proposed consultation process was shortened to address the previous two rationale, in order to start implementation in September 2016, it might be perceived as an inadequate process, whereby not providing sufficient time and notice for parents to address the potential changes to their children's schools and schedules (ie daycare/before and after school)

Conclusion:

Clearly the Board is confronting a significant challenge in trying to ensure all students, regardless of the program they choose (French Immersion or English) have a viable and enriching experience with high quality teachers. The Program Viability Committee has created scenarios and a process by which the public, through their input, can support all students. By pursuing the communication plan presented, the Board will ensure the public has had the opportunity to provide input into a challenge where there is no easy solution.

Respectfully submitted,


Stuart Miller
Associate Director


David Euale
Director of Education

Communication Plan PVC

| Date | Part 1: Information/data sharing | Responsibility | Comments |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|---|
| September 16, 2015 | Board Meeting | Stuart | |
| October 7, 2015 | Board Approval for Communication Plan | Trustees | |
| October 17, 2015 | PIC conference (information shared) | Rob/Stuart | Saturday event: White Oaks South Campus |
| Proposed October 19, 2015 | Information Night - Milton | Ops | Directed to web page via Twitter/Facebook. A separate webpage will be set up and the information posted and updated; there will also be a link from our Board webpage |
| Proposed October 22, 2015 | Information Night - Halton Hills | Ops | |
| Proposed October 26, 2015 | Information Night - Burlington | Ops | |
| Proposed October 29, 2015 | Information Night - Oakville | Ops | |
| November-December | Information shared with specific groups PIC SEAC P/VP's Questionnaire developed Focus group process developed | Stuart Research | Research will provide a method for setting up the focus groups |
| Date | Part 2: Public Input/feedback process | Responsibility | Comments |
| December-January | Focus groups: 2 nights/area (<i>see notation at bottom of page</i>) 40-50 people Questionnaire: randomly selected parents | Ops | 1-2 reps per school |
| January - February | Questionnaire continued Questionnaire: selected elementary/secondary teaching staff School Council input SEAC input PIC input Social media/e-mail input | Research/com munication | Research/communications will determine the questions and the methodology of distribution (it will be random) |

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Assessing input and resulting actions</i> | <i>Responsibility</i> | <i>Comments</i> |
|------------------|---|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| February - March | Input gathered/compiled | Ops | |
| March - April | Input shared with PVC, Administrative Council | Research Planning PVC | |
| May | Recommendation to Board of Trustees (May 4th) Recommendation shared in social media Opportunity for delegations to Board Board approval (May 18) | Trustees | |
| September 2017 | Implementation - phased in during 3-5 year period | Ops | |

Proposed Focus Group Nights

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| December 1 and 3, 2015 | Milton |
| December 8 and 10, 2015 | Halton Hills |
| January 12 and 14, 2016 | Burlington |
| January 19 and 21, 2016 | Oakville |