

PROGRAM VIABILITY STUDY

SUMMARY OF WORK AND POSSIBLE
RECOMMENDATIONS

May 2016

PRIMARY ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED

- High Uptake into FI programs has resulted in significant growth and challenges finding qualified and high quality French teachers
- Imbalance between English and French program in dual track schools. Very small English cohorts are causing challenges maintaining viable classes

PROGRAM VIABILITY COMMITTEE

- Committee established to investigate the issues and bring forward recommendations
- Committee consists of Trustees, Superintendents, School and System Principals, Research and Planning staff
- Steering Committee established to help set direction and steer process

TIMELINE

- PVC formed Mar 2015
- PVC Meetings Spring 2015
- Phase 1 Community Meetings Oct/Nov 2015
- Phase 2 Consultation Stage Jan-Mar 2016
- PVC Meetings Mar/Apr 2016
- Recommendations to Board June 2016

CURRENT FRENCH DELIVERY MODEL

- Grade 1 French Immersion Entry
- Mixture of Single and Dual Track Schools
- 50 % French, 50% English from grade 1 to grade 8
- Grade 4 Core French begins (all schools)
- Primary Core French currently in 2nd year of implementation

OPTIONS, OPTIONS, OPTIONS

- 14 original options were developed by PVC
- Pared down to 4 options for stakeholder input to receive feedback on capping, intensity, entry point and school type
- 2 additional options added for PVC consideration (total of 6)
- Options narrowed to 3 for consideration for implementation

OPTIONS FOR PUBLIC FEEDBACK

The following 4 options were provided for stakeholder feedback.

- Option 1: Status Quo, Early Entry with Capping
- Option 2: Single Track, Early Entry
- Option 3: Dual Track, Mid Entry (Gr 4)
- Option 4: Single Track, Mid Entry (Gr 4)

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

- Input and Feedback solicited from a variety of stakeholder groups
 - Public Questionnaire (*just under 3000 responses*)
 - Staff Questionnaire (*181 responses*)
 - Student Questionnaire (*Student Senate Response*)
 - SEAC Input
 - Parent Focus Groups (*15 Focus Groups*)
 - School Council Input (*approx 80% response rate*)

A BIT ABOUT THE FEEDBACK

- Feedback is just that – feedback
- Survey tools used were not meant to be scientific
- Feedback process was designed to be open, invitational and accessible to all who were interested
- Participants generally self selected and brought their own perspectives

KEY STAKEHOLDER THEMES

- A general preference for status quo
- General support for early entry. More pronounced for families currently in an FI Program. Families in the English program were more open to a mid entry.
- SEAC was more supportive of mid entry
- Mixed responses on single vs dual track schools with staff having a slight preference for single track schools
- Strong voice for neighbourhood schools
- Lack of support for capping eg: lottery or first come, first served

WHAT ARE OTHER BOARDS DOING?

- Most boards are offering early French Immersion entry (JK, SK or grade 1)
- Some have an extended French Entry at a later grade as well
- Variety of models – single track, dual track and both
- Most boards start with increased intensity (70 - 100%) with gradual decrease over time

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

- Research is mixed on most aspects of FI. There is little clarity in the literature on what constitutes the best model of delivery for FI.
- Many other factors are at play in boards that influence delivery models (rural vs urban, location in Canada, demographics, history, transportation, etc...)

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

The most important factor in a student's development in French language is the instructional program ie: the teacher factor. This far outweighs:

- Entry point
- Intensity
- # of hours of French instruction
- School configuration (single vs dual track)

TWO NEW OPTIONS INTRODUCED

- Option 1: Status Quo, Early Entry
- Option 2: Single Track, Early Entry
- Option 3: Dual Track, Mid Entry
- Option 4: Single Track, Mid Entry
- Option 5: Grade 1 Entry, 100% Intensity, mix of single and dual track
- Option 6: Grade 2 Entry, 100% Intensity, mix of single and dual track

BOUNDARY REVIEW ANALYSIS

- Planning Department did a detailed review in each ERA of the potential for boundary reviews for each of the 6 options
- Options that minimized potential disruption due to Boundary Reviews were
 - Option 1: Status Quo with capping
 - Option 3 and 4 hybrid: Mid Entry with both Dual and Single Track Schools (*referenced as Option 7*)
 - Option 5 and 6: Gr 1 or 2 Increased Intensity Options

OTHER ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Families purchased homes in neighbourhoods because of current school configurations
- Previous recent boundary review decisions eg: Pineland and Ward 4 Oakville
- There is support for continuation of Primary Core French
- Concerns for families already enrolled in FI and the issue of siblings
- Staffing and Teacher Qualifications

RECOMMENDED OPTIONS

The Program Viability Committee favoured the following options as providing viability in English and French programs:

- Option 2: Single Track Grade 1 Entry
- Option 3: Dual Track Mid Entry (or Dual and Single Track hybrid)
- Option 6: Mixed Schools, Grade 2 High Intensity

CAPPING

- To resolve the issues identified with Program Viability in both English and French programs, uptake into FI must be curbed
- Each potential option must consider capping as an option IF the new model does not reduce FI uptake.

OPTION 2: EARLY ENTRY, SINGLE TRACK

- Grade 1 French Immersion model remains at 50% French and 50% English, however, all FI programs will be delivered in **Single Track** FI schools only. Existing dual track schools will morph to single track English or single track French schools.

BENEFITS

- Addresses staffing issues (supply and demand)
- Will significantly reduce uptake from SK – Gr 1 FI
- Does this scenario involve natural capping based on school capacities?

IMPLICATIONS

- Boundary Reviews required immediately
- Movement of large number of students
- Loss of Community School concept
- Possible increase in transportation of students
- Families new to HDSB past grade 1 have no option for FI
- Discontinuing FDK at new single track sites may be a challenge
- Potential capital costs for moving FDK from new single track sites

OPTION 3: DUAL TRACK, MID ENTRY

- Grade 4 Entry. This will result in the delivery model of FI moving from a 50% model to at least an 80% French Immersion model. In addition the delivery of FI will occur in **Dual Track** schools only.

BENEFITS

- Allows parents to make a more informed choice
- Students have experienced Core French (Gr. 1-3) prior to FI entry
- More student voice informed by Core French experience
- More opportunity to develop English language skills prior to entry into FI program
- Greater viability of primary English program

IMPLICATIONS

- Boundary Reviews required - Creation of new dual track schools from single track schools
- In interim, there may be two FI Programs in our elementary schools?
- Unfavourable public view (prefer early entry)
- Impact demand on staffing

OPTION 6: GRADE 2 ENTRY, 100% INTENSITY

- Grade 2 Entry into FI at both dual and single track schools with 100% intensity and reduced intensity after that as shown:
 - Gr 2 – 100%
 - Gr 3 – 80%
 - Gr 4 – 50%

BENEFITS

- Honours early reading research (e.g., significance of end of grade 1 reading targets)
- Increased exposure (intensity) – increased language acquisition?
- Potential for boundary reviews much reduced
- Parents have additional year to “know their learner”
- Additional year to prepare for new model
- Greater connection to home school after grade 1

IMPLICATIONS

- 100% program may add to elitist perception
- May decrease English language skill acquisition in short term
- Increased need for resources and training for teachers eg: lack of expertise in math given the fact that math has not been taught in French in X years
- If uptake remains the same, a cap would need to be imposed for staffing reasons
- Grade 1 - Math English, Grade 2 - Math in French, Grade 3 - Math in English - consider continuity

IMPLEMENTATION

- Dependent on the option recommended, an implementation plan will need to be developed
- There will need to be consideration of:
 - Start date
 - Students already in our current FI model and any grandfathering
 - Length of time of possible phase in
 - School accommodations and boundaries

QUESTIONS

