



# Halton District School Board

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Report Number: 00164  
Date: November 1, 2000

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

FROM: Administrative Council

RE: **Review of the French Language Policy 6000-6**

## **Background:**

At its regular Board meeting held on May 17, 2000 the Halton District School Board passed the following resolution:

*Be it resolved that the Halton District School Board establish a French Immersion committee to review but not be limited to Policy 6000-6: Delivery of French Immersion Programs in Halton.*

On or about June 16, 2000 a memo was distributed to all schools in the Halton District School Board to be shared with School Councils requesting members to serve on this review committee. Names were to be submitted by September 15, 2000. With only 3 or 4 submissions by the week of September 11<sup>th</sup>, another request for committee members was sent to schools to be shared with School Councils. The closure date for the receipt of names was extended to September 22, 2000, At the Board meeting of September 20, 2000, trustees Erica Andrew and David Abbott were confirmed as committee members.

At the first meeting of this committee on Thursday September 28, 2000 it was requested by the parent volunteers in attendance that both teaching staff and school administrative staff be added to the committee to serve in resource roles. Upon completion of this ends, the committee membership became as follows:

<b>Name</b>	<b>School/Role</b>
David Abbott	Trustee
Erica Andrew	Trustee
Karen Bonham	Parent, Queen E. Park
Wendy Duncan	Parent, Sunningdale Public School
Debbie Elliott	Parent, Maple Grove Public School
Sheila Emmerson	Principal, E.C. Drury High School

Marcelle Faulds	Teacher, Iroquois Ridge High School
Roxanne Field	Parent, Clarksdale Public School
Barry Finlay	Assistant Superintendent, School Programs
Carol Henley	Parent, W. E. Breckon Public School
Susan Hooper	Parent, Milton District High School
Phyllis Kingsley	Principal, Sunningdale Public School
Chris Kuehnel	Parent, M. M. Robinson High School
Line LaBonne-Mason	Parent, Linbrook Public School
Cindy McCuaig	Parent, Pine Grove Public School
Renee Meloche	Teacher, W.I. Dick Middle School
Gail Phillips	Coordinator, School Programs
Susan Tupling	Parent, George Kennedy Public School

Armed with the Board resolution, the committee decided to complete this review by responding to the following challenge.

How do we write a policy for the delivery of French Language programs in the Halton District School Board that meets most effectively, the needs of all students, reflects the Board's Mission Statement and Guiding Principles and is delivered within existing resources?

In response to this challenge, the committee generated a series of questions that it wanted to see answered (Appendix 1) through this study and arranged to receive input from the Halton community. A news release (Appendix 2) was distributed throughout the Halton region including schools on three separate occasions during the early part of October inviting presentations to the review committee. Presentations were made by parents and community members as well as Halton District School Board staff. These community input sessions were held on Monday October 16<sup>th</sup> at River Oaks Public School, Tuesday October 17<sup>th</sup> at Lord Elgin High School and on Monday October 23<sup>rd</sup> at Sam Sherratt Public School. In total, the committee received 12 formal presentations and a number of informal presentations from non-committee members in attendance over the three community input sessions. Not all presenters gave a copy of their presentation to the committee. The committee received two additional submissions in writing. The committee has met seven times in the past four weeks to complete the policy study and prepare this report.

Situation:

The French Immersion program has been offered ciliated since 1978. This is the third review of the French Immersion Policy during the past decade. Presently, there are 4,588 elementary students in Early Immersion, (71 in Extended French) and 1,366 secondary students in Early Immersion (175 in Extended French). As of September 2000, this reflects 18.6% of the elementary population, including 26.8% of grade 1 students, and 9% of the secondary population. In 1992 the Board moved to the delivery of the elementary French Immersion program in centres. According to the present policy the French Immersion program may be delivered in single track Immersion centres or dual track Immersion centres. Of the 22 elementary Immersion centres, 3 are single track. All 12 French Immersion programs at the secondary level are dual track.

The Extended French program is offered in one affiliated elementary and secondary location and it remains a viable program in this area.

We continue to offer the French Core program starting at the grade four level in Halton. This is consistent with the funding model for the delivery of the Core French program.

### Community Input:

There was overwhelming support for the French Immersion program in Halton. Although recommendations for the delivery of the program varied, that the program was valued and must be maintained was a given. All programs however can improve, and recommendations for improvement fell into two major categories: delivery model and program content. In the former there was strong support for single track French centres, especially at the primary and junior levels. There was also strong support for dual track programs. The majority of presenters wanted programs in their local areas regardless of delivery model. Although members of the committee were not unanimous on this issue, the majority favoured single track French centers as the optimal delivery model for the French Immersion program for grades 1-6. In addition, having a critical mass of students for effective program delivery at all grade levels was mentioned frequently during both community and committee discussions; however, this too was tempered by strong support for individual school programs at the secondary level. Importantly, there was recognition that no one size fits all in the delivery of this program at both the elementary and secondary level since community needs vary across Halton.

From the program perspective, there was much discussion about the delivery of mathematics in French in grades 6-8; the shortage of French language teachers; the dissemination of information about the French Immersion program to parents; the potential implications for the English program of this committee's recommendations; the placement of the required French Immersion courses at the secondary level; potential implications for the present program when the new elementary and Extended French guidelines are received from the Ministry of Education; and transportation. You will note that some of these issues have been addressed in the recommended revisions to the policy and others have been addressed through specific recommendations by the committee.

### **Factors Affecting this Policy Review:**

As part of the process leading to recommendations, the committee discussed a number of factors that have a direct relationship to this review. In random order these factors included but were not limited to the knowledge that

- French Immersion is an optional program.
- four school/area study committees are in progress at this time.
- communication between this study and the school/area studies is critical.
- the committee needs to maintain a system perspective when making recommendations.
- pending decisions regarding the courses to be offered at the grade eleven and twelve level could have an effect upon the French Immersion program course offerings.

## **Conclusions:**

The delivery of French Immersion in the Halton District School Board is very complex. Parents, students, teachers and administrators are very supportive of their programs. Delivery models and course offerings vary from area to area and panel to panel and all are viable. The Board faces many difficult accommodation decisions presently and in the future. Therefore,

*"Should the French as a Second Language program policy created in part for the delivery of optional programs limit potential alternatives and/or reduce flexibility in decision making for the Board on issues such as accommodation, local community needs and effective use of resources for all students?"*

or

*"Should the policy enable the Board to have a number of options for the delivery of French Language programs when considering these same issues?"*

The draft revised Policy Statement for French attached remains an enabling policy. When combined with the following specific recommendations for the improvement of the overall delivery of French Language programs they recognize and support the value to be gained from the teaching and learning of French as a Second Language and they provide the Board with a number of options for the delivery of French language programs.

## **Committee Recommendation:**

THAT:

- 1) information on Immersion programming, program delivery models, learning expectations and implications of its optional status be made available to all parents prior to the enrolment of their children in Halton Schools, including centres.
- 2) inservice for Kindergarten teachers be provided to help them support parents in their decisions regarding the placement of their children in French Immersion
- 3) this program continue to be accessible to all students by maintaining the present transportation policy.
- 4) schools with French Immersion programs in consultation with their school councils establish long term plans for the delivery of these programs.
- 5) parents are given timely and accurate information should accommodation needs or other factors necessitate a change in program location or model of delivery.
- 6) Program Services research the impact on student achievement in mathematics when taught in French in grades 6-8.

- 7) At the secondary level schools attempt to optimize the opportunities for students enrolled in French immersion programs to access elective courses.
- 8) the Board when making decisions about accommodation of students and when planning new schools consider: 1) the number of students and the viability of the program at the secondary level. 2) a single track delivery model at the primary and junior level.
- 9) Classroom and library resources be provided equitably between French and English programs.
- 10) the Board investigate creative ways to provide remedial support to students in the French Immersion program.
- 11) the Board investigate creative ways for allocating more stable classroom locations for teachers in the elementary Core French program.

**Recommendation:**

*THAT:*

the Board approve the revised Policy Statement for French and the recommendations of the French Language Policy Study Committee and authorize the Director to act upon both within the boundaries of prudence and ethics.

Respectfully submitted,

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Barry Finlay  
Assistant Superintendent of Education  
School Programs