

# THE HALTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

1996 10 31

REPORT TO THE SCHOOL PROGRAMS  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RE: **IMMERSION AND EXTENDED FRENCH PROGRAM**

## 1. **BACKGROUND**

The French Immersion Renewal Advisory Team was established to look at Halton's FSL programs (Extended and Immersion) in terms of costs, delivery models and entry points with a focus on reducing costs while continuing to maintain excellent second-language educational opportunities for our students. This team was to research, seek input (See Appendix A: Summary of Questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions, and Presentations), and to draw conclusions for a report to be submitted to the Superintendent of Education Services with regards to the merits of maintaining or eliminating current programs and/or implementing alternatives. Additional information was provided by the following reports: Policy Statement 6000-6 (March 1991), Report on Secondary School Delivery of Early French Immersion (January 1995), Report on Transportation Costs - French Program Transportation (September 1996) and the Report on The Incremental Costs of French Immersion No. 3175 (December 1995, September 1996, November 1996). See Appendix B.

## 2. **PROCESS**

In the fall of 1996, the French Immersion Renewal Advisory Team was formed. It was composed of a Steering Committee and three subcommittees. The Steering Committee of this team included the following participants who were representatives from a wide range of constituent groups:

Arlene Collard  
Aileen Kirkham  
Karen Lenaghan-Parfitt  
Paul MacKinnon  
Gail Phillips  
Terry Ruf  
Penny Siebert  
Heather Stewart (Team Leader)  
Brenda Zamojc

Bruce T. Lindley Public School  
Parent  
Robert Baldwin Public School  
White Oaks Secondary School  
J.W. Singleton Centre  
Acton District High School  
Trustee  
Lester B. Pearson High School  
M.M. Robinson High School

In approaching the task, the Renewal Advisory Team developed three key subcommittees for the work:

<b>Facts and Perceptions:</b>	Gail Phillips (Chair)
<b>Delivery Models and Research:</b>	Arlene Collard (Chair)
<b>Finance:</b>	Paul MacKinnon (Chair)

The membership of these three subcommittees included teachers, administrators, and parents who represented both the FSL and English programs in order to provide the Steering Committee with viewpoints and information from a variety of perspectives. See Appendix C for a complete list of the names of the French Immersion Renewal Advisory Team.

### 3. **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

#### **Immersion French**

This program, often referred to as Early Immersion, begins in Grade One. From Grade 1 to Grade 8, students spend half of their day in English and half in French, accumulating 3,800 hours of instruction in French by the end of elementary school. In secondary schools students are required to take 10 courses in French, including French Language Arts and other subjects plus an OAC, accumulating another 1,200 hours of instruction for a total of 5,000 hours. Upon graduation, students receive a Certificate of Studies in Immersion, which reflects the total number of hours and credits accumulated.

#### **Extended French**

This program, often referred to as Late Immersion, begins in Grade 7 and follows 3 years of Core French instruction. In Grades 7 and 8, students spend half of their day in English and half in French, accumulating 1,320 hours of instruction in French by the end of elementary school. In secondary, the students are required to take 7 courses in French, including French Language Arts and other subjects plus an OAC, accumulating another 840 hours of instruction for a total of 2,160 hours. Upon graduation, students receive a Certificate of Studies in Extended French, which reflects the total number of hours and credits accumulated.

#### **Core French**

As per Ministry Policy/Memorandum No. 58, all Halton students receive 40 minutes of daily Core French instruction from Grade 4 to Grade 8, accumulating 600 hours of instruction in French by the end of elementary school. All secondary students are required to take one Grade 9 Core French course. At this point, continuation in the program is optional. Students who continue in the program until the end of secondary school accumulate 1,080 hours of instruction.

#### **Middle Immersion**

This program begins after Grade 1 but before Grade 6. Students spend at least 50% of their day in French and as much as 100% depending on the model. Since it is difficult for a Board to organize a program that permits students to achieve the necessary 3,800 hours of French instruction by the end of elementary school, generally these programs lead to an

Extended French OAC credit and Certificate rather than Immersion. For purposes of this report, the team considered a Middle Immersion model that would allow students to acquire the 3,800 hours in elementary and the 1,200 hours in secondary as mandated by the Ministry.

#### 4. **SITUATION**

##### ***Rationale for the Provision of Core, Immersion and Extended French Programs***

The Federal and Provincial Governments recognize and value the teaching and learning of French-as-a-second language. They have demonstrated their commitment to these programs through funding and curriculum directions to Boards of Education as described below:

- On September 30, 1996, the Federal Government and the Council of Ministers of Education ratified a 5 year Protocol Agreement on Official Languages in Education. The agreement helps the provincial and territorial governments maintain and develop opportunities for French Second Language instruction (Immersion, Extended and Core French). As stated by Sheila Copps "The renewal of this agreement is about preserving something that makes Canadians very proud: our linguistic duality. Today, Canada's governments are showing the cooperation and commitment to English and French that is at the heart of our identity. This agreement, above all, is an investment in our youth: an investment that is already bearing fruit."
- The Common Curriculum (p. 48) states that "knowledge of a second language strengthens first-language skills. It also helps students to understand the role of language and culture in society and to appreciate the value of other languages and cultures".
- The Common Curriculum (p. 48-49) also states that "becoming literate in more than one language is of benefit in a variety of ways. Those who learn other languages improve their ability to read, write and think, learn to appreciate the need for expressing themselves clearly, and find it easier to learn additional languages. Society also benefits: the study of various languages promotes understanding among cultures and develops multi-lingual citizens who can help Canada and Ontario compete in world markets."
- The draft of The Ontario Secondary Schools (1998) detailed discussion document (p. 33) states that "schools would be required to offer programs in French-as-a-second language (FSL). Core, Extended or Immersion programs in French-as-a-second language enable students to continue to learn the other official language and to acquire a deeper understanding of French Canadian culture. . . . Whenever possible, courses should be designed to enable students to reach the proficiency they need to pursue their educational and career goals." It also states (p. 33) that "whenever feasible, students entering secondary with Immersion or Extended French background should be offered a program at their level of proficiency in French as well as programs in other subjects taught in French."

In Policy 6000-6, the Halton Board of Education "recognizes the value to be gained through the teaching and learning of French-as-a-second language" and has demonstrated their commitment to it through the implementation of Immersion and Extended French programs. Transportation is provided in accordance with eligibility guidelines. Programs are offered in elementary centres and in local composite secondary schools where numbers support it.

These decisions by the governments and the Board have been made based on contemporary research:

- The study of French plays a key role in developing creative thinking, problem solving, communication and flexibility. (Blalystok, 1986)
- There is an important link between the study of languages and the development of generic thinking skills required in all fields of employment. (Seelye and Day, 1992; Conference Board of Canada: Employability Skills Profile, 1992)
- A second language provides our students with a tool for the future and prepares them to function more effectively in our contemporary world. (John, 1990)
- Immersion and Extended French programs encourage bilingualism to support Canada's two official languages and to promote communication and tolerance between English and French speaking Canadians. (Burke, 1992; Mollica, 1989)

### **Facts and Perceptions Related to Immersion and Extended French Programs<sup>1</sup>**

Since there are many issues surrounding the Immersion and Extended French programs and their impact, it was key to the integrity of this process to investigate and to clarify which statements about the programs and their impact are factual and which ones are misperceptions or opinions. The key components of the subcommittee's findings are: currently all costs of the Immersion and Extended French programs are covered by Ministry FSL grants. With the transportation adjustment (centralized pick-up) implemented in September 1996, the costs of Immersion have been reduced by 13.8%. In addition to the Ministry Immersion grants, the Board receives over \$2 000 000 in grants for Core French.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix D: Facts and Perceptions

**Revenue**

General Legislative Grants

Program Specific Grants	Elementary	\$	468 106.00
Program Specific Grants	Secondary	\$	168 196.00
Program Start-up Grants		\$	<u>23 618.00</u>
<b>Total Incremental Revenues</b>		<b>\$</b>	<b>659 920.00</b>

Costs

Translation		\$	22 055.00
Video		\$	10 000.00
Books		\$	5 000.00
Elementary Libraries		\$	54 277.00
Secondary Libraries		\$	15 000.00
Elementary Start-up		\$	22 100.00
Secondary Start-up		\$	37 025.00
Transportation		\$	560 000.00
Transportation Adjustment (Central Pick-up)		\$	(100 000.00)
Cost of Instructional Leader/Consultants and Clerical Support		\$	<u>26 909.00</u>
<b>Total Incremental Costs</b>		<b>\$</b>	<b>652 366.00</b>
<b>Excess of Revenue Over Costs</b>		<b>\$</b>	<b>7 754.00</b>

**Note:**

Savings described in the conclusions of this report would not only offset the incremental costs but would provide a positive contribution of \$237 932 to the Board, which represents **a reduction in expenditures of 36.5%**.

When staffing schools, divisional averages as determined by the elementary collective agreement are applied in both the English and French streams. In secondary, schools are allocated sections based on enrolment and collective agreement class sizes. It is up to the schools to determine the utilization of the staff.

Research shows that language proficiency is directly related to starting point (Kraschen et al. The Age Factor in Second Language Acquisition, 1995) and number of hours of instruction (Lapkin and Swain, 1984). Halton offers an Immersion program with entry in Grade 1 and an Extended (Late) program with entry in Grade 7. Halton RCSB offers only an Extended French program beginning in Grade 5.

While Immersion programs may have an impact on English programs, schools are trying a variety of strategies to address the concerns where they exist.

In Halton, there are very few drop-outs from the Immersion program for academic reasons.

## 5. CURRENT STATE AND RESEARCH RELEVANT TO DECISIONS IN HALTON<sup>2</sup>

### *Value of Immersion and Extended French Programs*

Halton offers a partial (50%/50%) Immersion program beginning in Grade 1 and an Extended program beginning in Grade 7. Seventeen percent of all elementary students are enrolled in these programs, which is twice the provincial average, and 13 percent of our secondary students are enrolled in these programs. Research states that students in partial Immersion programs, like Halton's, are functionally bilingual by age 16. The greater and the earlier the exposure, the greater, the native-like fluency (Baker, 1988; Husum and Bryce, 1981-87). Research also tells us that experience with two language systems builds mental flexibility, superior concept formation and a more diversified set of mental abilities (Cataldi, 1994). In addition, Immersion does not disadvantage children with learning difficulties but, in fact, provides an opportunity for increased second language proficiency (Brucks, 1978). Our Immersion programs promote the development of essential skills for the workplace (John, 1990; Conference Board of Canada: Corporate Council on Education, Employability Skills Profile, 1992). A 1993 report by the Toronto Board of Education and Canadian Parents for French found that Immersion and Extended French students who have graduated and are working full time "are far more likely to affirm that knowledge of French helped them to attain their present position as well as previously held positions. In fact, almost half (49%) of the full time workers affirms this, and over half (58%) report using French in their present job."

### *Entry Points*

#### *Grade One Entry*

Halton's Grade 1 entry point into Immersion allows for a Kindergarten year in English. This allows children to develop social skills, to learn routines and to use their first language in a school context. It also permits parents to make an informed choice with input from the school. Our 50/50 program ensures that children learn to read in English first in order to meet social needs, to lessen the pressure to teach reading too soon in French and to build on and transfer English language skills. On the Grade 3 Halton English test of reading and writing, Immersion students did as well as, or better than their English counterparts. Students also have access to remedial help in English and can move into a full English program more easily than students in 100% Immersion programs. A change out of Immersion into a full English program is, however, rare. Over the last 5 years only 1-2% of elementary Immersion students have left the program for academic reasons. Although the optimum proficiency level is achieved through a 100% Immersion program, our 50/50 program ensures the early development of English Literacy skills.

Since our Immersion program is well established, start-up costs are minimal and maintenance is the same as in the English only program. Responses from our schools and parent community through the input processes clearly reflect strong support for this model.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix E. The Cognitive/Academic Benefits of Learning Languages

### **Financial Considerations**

If the Immersion program were to be cancelled, Ministry FSL grant loss to the Board would be \$650 161. This figure takes into account the Core French grants that would be received for the former Immersion students in Grades 4 to 9, as well as the loss of the Immersion grants for the primary students. If the program remains in its current form and the Ministry FSL grants continue, there is a positive contribution of approximately \$7 554 to the Board. Please refer to the chart on page 5 and Appendix B: Reports on Incremental Costs of French Immersion Programs - Update of Report #3175. Termination of the Immersion program would result in a significant impact on current accommodation necessitating a review of school boundaries, transportation provisions and portable classroom utilization. (See Appendix F, pages 4 - 5, 7- 8)

### **Grade Four Entry**

A number of responses suggested that a Middle Immersion program would not only be a viable alternative to our current one but would give parents and students additional time to make a choice about Immersion. For our students to meet the Ministry Immersion requirements (5000+ hours) and to complete an Immersion OAC course, they would need to do most of their school program from Grade 4 to 8 in French with the exception of 56 minutes of daily English instruction.

Research has found that there are differences between the proficiency levels of Early and Middle Immersion students, particularly in the expressive skills of speaking and writing (Hart et al. 1988). These findings are not surprising since the greater the exposure to French, the greater the fluency. A Middle Immersion can be as successful as Early Immersion as long as it includes 5000+ hours of second language instruction (Goguen, 1987). This is seldom the case, however, since it is difficult for a board to achieve these hours from a Middle entry point.

In addition, a Middle entry point would force some students to change schools at the end of primary as well as at the end of the junior division.

### **Financial Considerations**

Implementation of this program would mean the loss of \$353 500 in Ministry FSL grants for primary Immersion (2020 students @ \$175). While the Board would save transportation costs for Primary Immersion students, a change from a Grade 1 to a Grade 4 entry would have an impact on current accommodation when the Grade 1, 2, and 3 Immersion students returned to their home schools. This would necessitate a review of school boundaries, transportation provisions and portable classroom utilization. Significant start-up costs would also be required. These would include the purchase of materials (approximately \$4500 per class) and the costs to rewrite the French Immersion Language Arts curriculum and to translate Board documents in other curriculum areas such as Math and Science. Unfortunately, relevant, age and language appropriate resources are limited. In addition, this model would displace both English and French teachers, which would necessitate retraining costs. (See Appendix F, page 9.)

## **Grade Seven Entry**

Halton's Grade 7 entry point into Extended French allows students with an interest in French to attain a high degree of fluency, to participate in their choice of French program and to seek an added challenge in their intermediate years. Many parents move into Halton after their children are in Grade 1 and these students cannot move into the Immersion program since they have neither the hours of instruction in French nor the level of proficiency to ensure success. In addition, some parents feel that they are not ready to make the decision about Immersion during the Kindergarten year, and the Extended French program offers them a second opportunity for access at a later date. Responses from our schools and parent community through the input processes clearly reflect strong support for this model.

A review of the literature done by the Carleton Board (1989) showed that different entry points to Immersion draw different student populations. Genesee (1978) stated that the older learner is, in general, a more efficient learner, but that early instruction offers the advantage of more available time and possibly more opportunities to learn. He concludes that in Early Immersion "the combined advantages of extended time and opportunity furnished by early instruction probably make it more conducive to attain the higher levels of second language proficiency" compared to Extended Immersion. Generally, the receptive skills (listening and reading) of both Immersion and Extended French students are comparable by the time they are in secondary school. The difference lies in the expressive skills (speaking and writing). Anecdotal comments from our staff confirm these statements.

### **Financial Considerations**

While the cost to Halton for the Immersion and Extended French programs are marginal due to the Ministry FSL grants, the cost per pupil to transport students for Extended French is significantly higher than for the Immersion program. For the majority of students, the program is offered in their home school. Since there are a few students who reside beyond the regular bus routes and require transportation by taxi or van, the costs are high. If the Extended French program were removed from Policy 6000-6, and if the decision to offer the program were a local school-based decision, this would not only eliminate the current transportation costs of approximately \$210 000 (based on 1995-96 costs) but there would be a positive contribution of \$30 236 to the Board (See Appendix G). Students outside the local school's catchment area would then apply for optional attendance if they wanted to access the program. (See Appendix F, pages 6, 10 and Appendix H.)

## **Grade 1 Core French**

Through the input process, many people suggested that Core French begin in Grade 1 either as an alternative to Immersion or to strengthen the current Core French program. The Ministry mandates a Grade 4 start and has not included outcomes for primary Core French in The Common Curriculum and in the FSL Language Standards. In addition, the FSL Foundation Requirement documents to be released by the Ministry during this school year assume a Grade 4 start. Based on the fact that students who begin Core French in the primary division cannot come close to the proficiency levels of students in Immersion, and some of the findings in the National Core French Study (1983), in which Dr. Stern stated that "small dollops of oral French administered once a day over a period of two or three years in the elementary schools, do not automatically lead to any substantial gains in

achievement for those who start early", there appears to be little educational advantage in offering primary Core French.

### **Financial and Staffing Considerations**

If the current Ministry FSL grants continue, the additional funds coming to the Board would be used to purchase the necessary texts and teacher resources. Approximately 27 teachers, however, would need to be hired over the course of 3 years thereby displacing 27 teachers in the English part of the program.

### **Centralized versus Localized Delivery Models**

In an Immersion/Regular program study commissioned by the Carleton Board of Education in 1989, the question of delivery models was raised. In interviews which were conducted as part of the study, both centres and dual track program organizations were cited as best by interviewees. Principals of Immersion centres tended to feel that the language environment could be controlled better in a centre and hence led to greater second language acquisition. As well, the consolidation of resources was cited as a reason in favour of centres. Principals of English only schools and dual track schools tended to prefer dual track organizations. Reasons for this preference included the opinion that the English program students benefited from exposure to French and that it was easy to move from Immersion to the English program since students didn't have to change schools. On a questionnaire, respondents were asked which approach best served the needs of elementary students. A centres approach was chosen by 19.2% and a dual-track approach by 62.2%. When asked which approach best served the needs of Secondary students, 9.6% chose centres and 66.7% preferred an English and a French program in the same school.

In Halton, there are three single-track (Immersion only) and 21 dual-track elementary Immersion centres. This is an efficient system given that there are 68 elementary schools. In most centres there are sufficient numbers in both the English and French streams to organize effectively. All Secondary composite schools except two offer Immersion and/or Extended French programs. This allows students to go to their home high school, strengthens the viability of single section OAC courses and optional subject areas such as Music as well as saving transportation dollars.

Under the current policy, if at the time of registration, Grade 1 Immersion enrolment is below 20 or Extended French enrolment is below 22, the program will not be offered at the centre the following September. For secondary programs, in February of each year, the Superintendent of Education Services reviews the numbers of students scheduled to enter at Grade 9 to ensure that there are sufficient numbers to run the program through to graduation. These procedures have been put in place to ensure strong viable programs.

### **Financial Considerations**

Fewer Immersion centres would increase transportation costs and could potentially decrease enrolment and thereby decrease Ministry FSL grants. Additional Immersion centres, where numbers would support a program and where bus routes could be eliminated, would decrease transportation costs and thereby potentially increase Ministry FSL grants.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Maintain the current Core, Immersion and Extended French programs as long as the Ministry FSL grants continue with the following suggested changes to decrease costs and/or to improve program delivery:

1. Continue centralized pick-up for transportation to Immersion centres, a change which has provided a cost savings of approximately \$100,000 this school year.
2. Continue the current system of Immersion centres in elementary and localized programs in secondary as per current policies.
3. Continue to investigate alternative timetabling strategies to allow for cross groupings of Immersion and English students.
4. Provide start-up funds only for the odd numbered classes (e.g., the 1st, 3rd, 5th Grade One Immersion classes in a school) and not the even numbered. Since our programs are 50/50 programs, the materials purchased for the odd numbered classes could be used in one half of the day and in the even numbered classes in the other half of the day (\$11,000).
5. Reduce the FSL film/video budget by 50% (\$11,417.80 saved annually).
6. Reduce the translation budget by 25% (\$5,513.75 saved annually).
7. Revise the French Policy 6000-6 so that the Extended French program is offered as a result of a local school based decision, rather than as a regional program open to all students. With the assistance of HEPA, HSPA and SAC, develop guidelines for the maintenance and establishment of local Extended French programs. This would not only eliminate the current transportation costs of approximately \$210,000 (based on 1995-96 costs), but there would be a positive contribution of \$30 236 to the Board (See Appendix G). Students outside the local school's catchment area would then apply for optional attendance if they wanted to access the program and would continue to be allowed access to transportation where empty seats are available on existing runs. (See Appendix H.)
8. Work with the elementary Federation, HEPA and SAC to explore possible changes in staffing which would allow for larger class sizes in Immersion in the primary and junior divisions and a different allocation process for SERT support in an effort to address some concerns around student groupings in English only classes.
9. Recommend to secondary schools with Immersion that 4 courses be offered in the Gr. 9 year, 3 in Gr. 10, and 2 in Gr. 11 to allow students maximum flexibility in course selection, especially in the senior division. Wherever possible, the courses taught in French should be compulsory to allow students maximum flexibility in their optional courses. The number of courses required prior to the OAC will likely be increased with the implementation of the completed Secondary Reform document. At this time it will be necessary to look at the courses that will be offered including the anticipated mandatory cooperative education work experience.
10. If the Ministry FSL grants disappear, a task force should be established to investigate the future direction of the Immersion program. At this time, the question of user fees could be investigated further.

## Appendix A

**Summary:** Focus Discussions: Milton District H.S., October 8, 1996

Public Hearings: Iroquois Ridge, October 15, 1996

Parent, teacher and student questionnaires

October 8, 1996  
Milton District High School

## **FRENCH IMMERSION PARENT FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

Q. #1: If French Immersion transportation is cancelled, what would the impact be on the programs, students, schools? (For those whose children are in French Immersion, how many would continue in the program without transportation provided?? How many would continue with a user fee for transportation?)

- Issues of equity
  - Disadvantaged those who could not, afford bussing (case of Scarborough), or who were single parents..
  - How can you take transportation away from one group and not another?
  - Other programs don't have bussing, why should F.I.?
- Would not continue the program without transportation provided.
- User fees
  - would kill the program vs. the program would drop off a bit
- Distinct differences among the three geographical areas:
  - Burlington - city bus was suggested... Some were concerned about putting elementary child on a bus, perhaps a secondary student.
  - Some areas e.g. Milton - half the students are bussed anyway, so why should they pay for bussing?

Q. #2: Currently, the grants received through the provincial and federal governments cover the full cost of Immersion and Extended French programs in Halton; however, the provincial government is reviewing those grants, and they may disappear. Without those grants, the French Immersion programs as they are currently delivered will become an expense to the local taxpayer. Cancelling French Immersion would likely lead to changes in accommodation, transportation and material costs for the English program. What should the Board do if Immersion grants disappear?

- Younger teachers in F.I. - cost less..
- F.I. is optional, not core. It should be offered but pay the cost.
- Equity - divided...
  - if you cannot afford the cost, don't put your child in the program
  - if a family cannot afford the cost, set up a "means" system that is not embarrassing and grant bursaries to those who cannot afford the fees.
- English only parents have to pay extra taxes (prov/fed) for FI.. Not supportive of continuing.
- wonderful program, parents who can afford it will continue..
- If it's a money maker, continue the program until such time as it costs, then review the program.
- Recommended that we survey every parent to obtain accurate information.

Q. #3: It is the perception of some parents whose children are in the English only program, that they are disadvantaged by the French Immersion programs. In what way do you think these children are positively or negatively affected by French Immersion programs?

- Positively affected:
  - lots of spirit, parents/kids very involved
  - imperative to have an opportunity to learn 2 key languages - a minimum within our global context
- Children are positively and negatively affected because of the attitude of their parents.
- Negatively affected:
  - two streams can create divisiveness between two teaching staffs and students
  - perception that students in the English only program are not as bright as those in the FI programs. The very bright students may be bored from lack of challenge.
  - When remove the highly able (gifted and F.I.), it hurts the make up of the population of the school left behind.
- General Comments:
  - If a family hasn't chosen early immersion, the student does not receive French instruction until Grade 4. It is hard to make a decision. Like Wellington and H.R.C.S.B., we should start Core French in Grade 1.
  - Suggest having FI more localized to avoid transportation costs.
  - Late Immersion not beneficial - some abuse in the delivery i.e. students switching from early to late immersion in Grade 7. It could be to avoid going to a particular school, as happens in other schools.
  - Why Grade 1 and 7 entry points?? why not grade 2 or 3??
  - A general comment about the process was that there was not enough information to comment appropriately on the issues.

**FRENCH IMMERSION RENEWAL  
SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS AND FURTHER DISCUSSION/INPUT**

**IROQUOIS RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL - October 15,1996**

There were six presentations before four members of the French Immersion Renewal Advisory Team (Aileen Kirkham, Karen Lenaghan-Parfitt, Paul MacKinnon, Heather Stewart).

Each of the presenters, and indeed the huge crowd of parents and students present were very supportive of French Immersion and specifically Halton's French Immersion programs.

**In summary, the presentations included the following...**

- Canada is a bilingual country, and since French is one of the two official languages of our country, the study of French should be strongly supported. In order for our young people to obtain jobs in the business and government sectors, strong skills in French are important and are often necessary. In the global marketplace of today, bilingualism gives people a competitive edge when seeking a job.
- In terms of student learning, the study of French Immersion enhances English learning, and increases flexibility and adaptability in thinking and problem-solving. Because of its enrichment factor, French Immersion is an alternative to the self-contained Gifted program. The Board's own document was quoted: By bringing students further along the language learning continuum towards bilingualism, immersion programs prepare them to function more effectively in the contemporary world. It is easier for a student to learn a third or fourth language, once they have learned a second language.
- Concerns were expressed that limited resources might limit the horizons possible for our students. User fees should only be considered as a last resort. All other cost-saving options should be investigated first before cancelling the program completely. A user fee system will create a two-tiered system. If it had to be implemented, a special fund should be established to assist students who would otherwise be prevented from attending.
- There was similar concern about cancelling transportation for Immersion programs. Students would not have equal access to the program, and it would then become an elitist program which discriminates against those unable to transport their son or daughter to the program. There was considerable feeling that people should have choice and fair access to programs. It was emphasized by the presenters that the Board receives additional funds through Ministry grants to support this program and this money should be used to support this program. No other board has chosen to cancel the program because of cuts.
- Should the program be cancelled or transportation eliminated, students unable to participate in the program would be returning, in many cases, to overcrowded schools. New boundary changes would mean more busing and portables, and disruption to the system for all. The Board has already realized a savings of 5100,000 by going to the centralized pick-ups.
- Parents suggested a reduction to budgets such as translation, videos, books, libraries, and start-up. The cost of teaching an immersion program is not greater than that of an English program. Even if it were more costly, we don't stop buying costly computers. why do we hesitate to buy French Immersion resource material?

- On the question of dual track versus centres, the group was divided. Some prefer larger centres to optimize class sizes and use of resources while others prefer the mixing of the French and English stream students to avoid the division of students.
- The presentation from B.C.H.S. strongly supported the concept of a localized model for Secondary Immersion. They believe that the BCHS enrolment in French Immersion will increase if they go to a Grade 7-OAC model. By not offering the program in the home high school, elementary and consequently secondary enrolment will drop off significantly. To balance enrolments in the schools, specialty programs, such as Immersion should be offered in low enrolment high schools.
- The Halton Parents for French representative reminded the committee of their previous reports and presentations to the Board: December 1995: Incremental Costs of French Immersion; April 1996: Speech on the impact of eliminating busing; April 1996: Presentation to the Renewal Committee; June 1996: Brief on Myths/Facts of French Immersion..

Following the formal presentations to the Team Members, parents and students asked many questions and made further comments. Here is a flavour of the discussion ...

- A grade 10 student spoke to the value of learning French through the Immersion experience. She said it helps her to think differently (e.g., globally); to problem solve from a variety of approaches; to appreciate other cultures; and generally, it enhanced her leadership skills.
- If there is no Immersion program, parents would access the self-contained gifted programs to a much greater extent.
- Why cut the program when it makes money for the Board?
- French Immersion does not increase the cost to the English program.
- Parents would unite to fight program cancellation in court. Trustees and governments do not have a mandate to eliminate French Immersion.
- If French Immersion goes, I and many of my children's friends will go to the H.R.C.S.B. The Halton Board would then lose both the tax base and the grant money.
- Why aren't we marketing French Immersion to bring in more grant money? I'm not asking the Board to cut taxes!
- Why single out French Immersion when it has so many proven benefits? We cannot gamble on our children's future!
- If a transportation user fee is considered, parents will want everything carefully explained. They will be much more demanding in terms of service.
- Perhaps all users of the Boards transportation should pay if the French Immersion students must pay. In Calgary, parents pay \$360 per child per year for transportation.
- Perhaps there are further efficiencies to be found in the busing system.
- Safety issues around busing were raised.
- A parent implored us to remember that the Board exists for the children and their needs!

## SUMMARY OF FRENCH IMMERSION QUESTIONNAIRES

#	Parents: Yes ...	Students: Yes ...	Teachers: Yes ...
#1	<p>Do you support the continuation of the Immersion programs in Halton? Please explain your reasons.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• French is an official language of Canada.</li><li>• Provides great work and learning opportunities to develop communication, analytical, and organizational skills as well as flexibility and adaptability.</li><li>• Learning a second language makes you a better learner.</li><li>• Need a second language for understanding and participation in global community (tolerance, respect, cultural awareness).</li><li>• Provides enrichment for able learners.</li><li>• Gives a competitive edge.</li><li>• To cancel would be a wrong message to send to Quebec</li><li>• Program makes money if funding continues.</li><li>• Support tied to continued grants.</li><li>• Programs and resources are well established.</li><li>• It would be a waste to cancel.</li><li>• Inexpensive program with big benefits.</li></ul> <p><b>Parents: No ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students not fluent in French at graduation.</li><li>• It is elitist - a status symbol for parents.</li><li>• Core French is enough for second language exposure.</li><li>• It is not needed for basic education.</li><li>• English is an international language; we're not a bilingual community. Canada is too multicultural; French Immersion is just to appease Quebec.</li><li>• There is a concern about its impact on English only program.</li><li>• A luxury we can no longer afford.</li><li>• Concern about impact of cost on school closures, Special Ed., Eng. program, gifted.</li><li>• Waste of dollars.</li><li>• Offer only if there are user fees.</li><li>• F.I. grants could be used for other programs.</li></ul>	<p><b>Students: Yes ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bilingual country.</li><li>• Beneficial for finding a better job.</li><li>• Should r have choice. Why cut if it doesn't cost anything? Why single out Immersion?</li><li>• Importance of learning a second language for social reasons and for global understanding.</li><li>• Program provides better learning experiences, preparation for future.</li><li>• Show our commitment to Quebec, assist with unity.</li><li>• Program makes money if funding continues.</li><li>• Support tied to continued grants.</li><li>• Programs and resources well established</li><li>• It would be a waste to cancel.</li><li>• Inexpensive program with big benefits.</li></ul> <p><b>Students: No ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Costs taxes - a luxury.</li><li>• There is no English Immersion in Quebec</li><li>• Causes separation of a school.</li><li>• Teach Spanish, Asian languages.</li><li>• Upgrade Core French for all.</li></ul>	<p><b>Teachers: Yes ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bilingual country, promotes unity, tolerance, respect.</li><li>• Job opportunities.</li><li>• Globalization: culture and economy.</li><li>• Learning a second language helps further language learning, thinking skills and cognitive development.</li><li>• Enrichment.</li><li>• Maintain as long as not more costly than other programs.</li></ul> <p><b>Teachers: No ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Causes higher PTR for English program.</li><li>• Not enough long term benefit.</li></ul>
# 2	<p>If Imm. and Ext. Fr. programs Continue to be offered, (do you support two entry points? (Gr. 1 and Gr. 7). Please explain.</p> <p><b>Parents: Status Quo ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gr. 7 is second chance for immature.</li><li>• Parent mobility. Need two access points.</li><li>• Gr. 1: Choice of parents. Gr. 7: Choice of students.</li><li>• Flexibility (e.g., for ESL students) who need time to master English.</li></ul>	<p><b>Students: Status Quo ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Two programs allow choice, some not ready in Grade 1.</li><li>• Early: lots of experience in language, develop good attitude.</li><li>• Late allows catch up time to learn English.</li><li>• Good to start in Gr. 1; Not too late in Gr. 7.</li></ul>	<p><b>Teachers: Status Quo ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strong support for two entry points.</li></ul>

<p><b># 2 (cont'd.)</b></p> <p>If Imm. and Ext. Fr. programs Continue to be offered, (do you support two entry points? (Gr. 1 and Gr. 7). Please explain.</p>	<p><b>Parents: Grade 7 only</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gr. 1 too early. I have not had enough English language instruction.</li> <li>• Students' choice.</li> <li>• Improves self-esteem.</li> <li>• Highly motivated.</li> </ul> <p><b>Parents: Grade 1 only</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language acquisition better at early age.</li> <li>• Learn more quickly and easily; achieve greater fluency and acceptance of language.</li> <li>• Challenge for gifted before Gr. 4 identification.</li> </ul> <p><b>Parents: Other ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entry at any grade if proper testing.</li> <li>• Early should start in Kindergarten.</li> <li>• Better to start in Gr. 4 or 5: Grade 1 is too early and Gr. 7 is too late.</li> <li>• Gr. 4 or 5 start since Eng. would be stronger.</li> <li>• Offer Core Fr. from Kindergarten or Gr. 1 as an alternative.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Students: Grade 7 only</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gr. 7 and Gr. 1 end up at the same point.</li> <li>• Less confusing; students more willing.</li> <li>• Students have strong grasp of English.</li> </ul> <p><b>Students: Grade 1 only</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too much to learn in Grade 7.</li> <li>• Hard for Gr. 7's to catch up; feel belittled..</li> </ul> <p><b>Students: Other ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should have more entry points.</li> <li>• Cannot afford two entry points.</li> <li>• Check research for best entry.</li> <li>• Start at Grade 5: Time to see if we like French.</li> <li>• Start at Gr. 9 - More mature.</li> <li>• Match start with earliest grade at school</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers: Grade 7 only</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option for strong Core French student.</li> <li>• Fair to ESL students who need time to master English.</li> </ul> <p><b>Teachers: Grade 1 only</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students acquire second language easily earlier.</li> <li>• Provides early literacy reinforcement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Teachers: Other ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade 4 entry would allow for intense first language instruction before second language.</li> <li>• Offer Gr. 1 to 8 Core French, then Immersion.</li> <li>• Offer three entry points.</li> </ul>
<p><b># 3</b></p> <p>If Immersion and Extended French program continue to be offered in Halton, should the Board continue to provide transportation at no cost to parents? Please explain your reasons.</p>	<p><b>Parents: Yes ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• User fees create a two-tier system. There is an issue of wealth and equity of access.</li> <li>• This is discrimination against Immersion.</li> <li>• This would cause a decline in enrolment and therefore a loss of Ministry FSL grants.</li> <li>• Not everyone can live within walking distance of school. This is a penalty to those who do not live within walking distance.</li> <li>• Many students would still require busing even if Immersion was cancelled.</li> <li>• There could be possible legal action if the Min. FSL grants for Immersion were diverted from Imm. by the Board.</li> </ul> <p><b>Parents: No ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents should be responsible if outside geographic area.</li> <li>• This is an optional program and should be privately funded.</li> <li>• A good candidate for user fees at this time of fiscal restraint</li> </ul> <p><b>Parents: Other:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immersion should be offered in every school.</li> <li>• Some areas don't have local busing.</li> <li>• Imm. should be more centralized to be more cost effective.</li> <li>• There is a safety issue without buses.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Students: Yes ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is an equity issue. English students are bused. It would be discriminatory if all students could not attend.</li> <li>• Taxes and FSL grants cover the costs.</li> <li>• The cost of transportation would discourage enrolment.</li> <li>• Students shouldn't have to pay for going to school and wanting a better education.</li> <li>• Students have a right to learn French.</li> </ul> <p><b>Students: No ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is too expensive. Why should many pay for the few'?</li> <li>• This is not a compulsory program.</li> </ul> <p><b>Students: Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every school should have immersion so that busing is not an issue.</li> <li>• English and French should pay equally.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers: Yes ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal accessibility is key principle. There is a concern about creating a two-tier system of education.</li> <li>• There are safety issues. There would be too many cars at schools.</li> <li>• Currently grants cover costs, so why charge?</li> </ul> <p><b>Teachers: No...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents should pay with subsidies available for those who cannot afford the cost.</li> <li>• All should pay for transportation (Eng. and French) or no one should pay.</li> </ul>

### # 3 (Cont'd.)

If Immersion and Extended French program continue to be offered in Halton, should the Board continue to provide transportation at no cost to parents? Please explain your reasons.

- Younger students should be bused but there could be a fee for older students.
- Transportation should be provided only in rural areas. If necessary, parents would pay a nominal fee to save Imm.
- Parents would withdraw their children from the program if there was a fee for transportation

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### # 4

Please list any other opinions, questions or suggestions for reducing the costs of Immersion and Extended French programs which would assist this advisory task team with its work.

#### Parents:

- Let parents work with the Board to save the program.
- Offer the program in more or all schools.
- Make dual-track (Early and Late Immersion) schools to reduce transportation dollars.
- Use workbooks instead of expensive photocopying.
- This is an exercise in futility - you're probably not even leading this.
- Guarantee Immersion once and for all.
- Have one designated Immersion school to ensure continuity.
- Eliminating Immersion doesn't reduce busing costs.
- Provide transportation only within geographic area.
- Charge user fees for all programs,
- Charge user fees for all optional programs.
- Charge user fees for some supplies.
- Make changes only if and when province changes FSL grants.
- Change to 100% Immersion model.

#### Students:

- Start Core French earlier and phase out Immersion.
- Hire teachers that can teach more than one thing.
- Put the program in all schools; make Immersion compulsory.
- Do some fundraising.
- Create split classes to save teacher salaries.
- Share materials and resources.
- Eliminate Late Immersion.
- Eliminate Early Immersion.
- Create 7-OAC configurations so that resources could be shared.
- Create magnet schools / centres.
- Don't look at Immersion to reduce costs.

#### Teachers:

- Provide start-up costs in odd number classes. Teacher can share materials.
- Provide transportation only within geographical area for Extended French.
- Reduce FSL film/video budget by 50% and translation by 25%.
- Concern about increased portable cost if no Immersion.
- Use excess and Core French grant money for busing.
- Offer program in strategic areas to make more accessible or move to every school and reduce busing.
- Dual track schools are preferable since there is interaction between the two streams.
- Create split classes as students drop out.

## **Appendix B**

- Policy 6000-6: French, March 21, 1991
- Report on Secondary School Delivery of Early French Immersion, Jan. 12, 1995  
(Report #1964)
- Transportation Costs - French Immersion Program Transportation, Sept. 4, 1996
- Report on the Incremental Costs of French Immersion Programs #3175, December 7, 1995
- Report on the Incremental Costs of French Immersion Programs - Update of Report #3175 1995 02 07, September 23, 1996
- Revised Incremental Costs of French Immersion Programs, November 6, 1996