

PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Instructional Programs / Curriculum Committee of the Peel District School Board, held in the Brampton Room, the H. J. A. Brown Education Centre, 5650 Hurontario Street, Mississauga, Ontario on Wednesday, November 15, 2017 at 18:00 hours.

Members present:

Kathy McDonald, Chair
Stan Cameron
Janet McDougald
Harkirat Singh
Rick Williams

Trustee also present:

Sue Lawton

Members absent: (apologies received)

Suzanne Nurse
Robert Crocker

Administration:

Adrian Graham, Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction Support Services
(Executive Member)
Poleen Grewal, Associate Director of Instructional and Equity Support Services
Peter Joshua, Director of Education

Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

Chair McDonald welcomed Tanzila Mian, Project Manager, Canadian Parents for French, to the meeting.

IP-52, moved by Harkirat Singh, that the agenda be approved.

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2. Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

3. Minutes of the Instructional Programs / Curriculum Committee Meeting, October 11, 2017

IP-53, moved by Sue Lawton, that the Minutes of the Instructional Programs / Curriculum Committee Meeting, held October 11, 2017, be approved.

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4. Celebrating Faith and Culture Chart – December 2017

IP-54, moved by Stan Cameron, that the report re Celebrating Faith and Culture Chart for December 2017, be received.

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5. Report of the French Immersion Program Review

Providing background information, Associate Director of Instructional and Equity Support Services, Poleen Grewal, recalled the French Immersion Program review undertaken in 2012 and the recommendations arising from the review, including the establishment of a 25% enrolment cap on all Grade 1 elementary French Immersion programs and a review of the enrolment cap by December 2017. She noted that a Steering Committee was struck in Fall 2016, and its terms of reference were received by the Instructional Programs/Curriculum Committee in January 2017.

Coordinating Principal – Elementary Education, Catherine Roper, explained that the overall goal and objective of the review was the sustainability of a high quality French Immersion (FI) program in the Peel DSB. Maintaining the efficiency and effectiveness of FI delivery and instruction, ensuring equitable access to the FI program, and ensuring that the program is cost effective were the other objectives of the review. She stated that, in order to achieve the goal and objectives, five review questions were explored. For each review question, quantitative and qualitative data was collected, and literature reviews were undertaken. In addition, all elementary vice-principals and principals in schools with FI programs were invited to a focused conversation, and those unable to attend were invited to provide input through a survey.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Catherine Roper provided detailed information, contained in the above-noted report, with regard to the review questions pertaining to: demographic characteristics of FI students, emerging patterns and trends, and distribution of FI programs across the Board; optimal percentage of instructional time for early FI programs, and changes in students' French grades from Grade 1 to 2 resulting from decreased FI instructional time; optimal threshold for single and dual-track schools; reasons for students withdrawing from FI. She examined the literature review, implications of data collected, and the recommendations arising from the review questions.

5. Report of the French Immersion Program Review (Continued)

During the presentation of the four review areas, the administration responded to several questions of clarification from trustees. It was noted that many students on the waitlist for Extended French accept offers into other regional or gifted programs and, as a result, all Grade 7 students registering for Extended French are accommodated. Increasing the number of Extended French classes will also expand opportunities for students to continue in French language programs. In response to Chair McDonald's question, it was advised that 21.4% of all Grade 1 students in Brampton are enrolled in FI, and the corresponding enrolment for Caledon and Mississauga is 33% and 25%, respectively. Associate Director Grewal stated that two classes are being added to Brampton schools and further opportunities will be considered through the Annual Planning Document.

With regard to the correlation between instructional time and attrition rates, Associate Director Grewal indicated that the review did not include collection of data pertinent to comparing attrition rates at boards having a higher percentage of instructional time. She stated that the entry point into FI is different in school boards, for example, at Halton DSB, FI starts in Grade 2, whereas in the Toronto DSB, FI is offered in Kindergarten. A trustee asked about the optimum percentage of FI instruction that can ensure proficiency in French and help in reducing the attrition rate. It was noted that 50% French instructional time is regulated by the Ministry of Education, and has helped with more inclusion in FI programs, particularly with English Language Learners. In response to a question, Catherine Roper advised that a student graduating with a French as a Second Language certificate will have increased their understanding of French culture, and can communicate orally in French. A trustee asked about the comparative percentage of students receiving support in FI versus regular programs. Rosanne Brown, Research Officer, Assessment and Accountability, referred to statistics contained in the report and remarked that lower enrolment of ELL and special education students in FI programs is a finding common to school boards across the province and Canada. Associate Director Grewal advised that the administration is looking at strategies to enable special education students to continue in FI programs, including assigning ISSP teachers to FI programs to provide supports.

Matthew McCutcheon, Acting Director of Human Resources – Operations, provided information on the review question relating to patterns and trends in hiring practices of French as a Second Language teachers. He advised that hiring of FSL teachers has become more difficult primarily due to Regulation 274 and the new two-year University teaching program. Providing statistics on the reduced number of teachers graduating from Faculty of Education programs, Matthew McCutcheon stated that, notwithstanding the 25% cap, enrolment in FI programs has increased due to growth in the overall Grade 1 enrolment. The number of FI classes has grown from 131 Grade 1 FI classes in 2011-2012, to 149 in 2016-2017. He noted that the increase, along with the other factors, has made it difficult to staff the FI program adequately to provide an excellent program. With regard to hiring permanent FI staff, Matthew McCutcheon highlighted hiring a pool of FI teachers and providing guarantees of employment. He advised, however, that while this has helped with hiring permanent FI staff, hiring of occasional FI teachers continues to be extremely difficult.

5. Report of the French Immersion Program Review (Continued)

Board Chair McDougald commented that the review of the cap on FI enrolment was initially recommended with the hope that the cap could be increased. Referring to higher instructional time at some other school boards, she queried as to how excellent programs could be provided at these boards given the constraints in hiring qualified teachers. She stated that the Peel DSB has maintained high standards in hiring FSL teachers who are capable, confident and engaged. Janet McDougald noted that the Ministry of Education has announced that there will be sufficient FI teachers, and she suggested that the Board write a letter to the Ministry voicing concern about the limitations of Bill 274, and requesting that Bill 274 be rescinded with regard to hiring of FSL and ELL teachers.

Replies to further questions of clarification included: 16 classes do not have FSL teachers due to shortage of occasional FI teachers, and parents are made aware of the situation; reasons for the reluctance to increase beyond 5 years the commitment from teachers to teach French; hiring practices are similar across school boards; 7.85% of Halton DSB Grade 2 students are in the FI program, and the Ministry reports through OnSIS data that 12.74% of Senior Kindergarten students are in FI across Ontario; difficulty in obtaining data regarding percentage of FI enrolment vis-a-vis Grade 1 enrolment for other school boards; Ontario Public School Boards' Association has initiated a survey to research boards on FI teacher hiring; Ministry is aware of the problem of FI teacher hiring.

In conclusion, Catherine Roper indicated that, if the need arises, the elementary French Immersion Program Review recommendations will be reviewed and re-examined by December 2020. Chair McDonald thanked the administration for the detailed report, and Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Support Services, Adrian Graham, thanked members of the French Immersion Review Steering Committee for their work on the review.

IP-55, moved by Janet McDougald, that the Instructional Programs/Curriculum Committee recommends to the Board:

1. That, the Grade 1 French Immersion enrolment cap of 25% be maintained.
2. That, French Immersion be offered in high demand areas (e.g. school with an historically high wait list).
3. That, the distribution of programs across all three municipalities be examined.
4. That, additional French Immersion programs in Brampton be considered when possible (through the Annual Planning process).
5. That, adjusting the boundaries in high risk areas so that more students from high Social Risk Index (SRI) areas can enroll in the French Immersion program be considered.
6. That, opportunities to add additional Extended French Immersion sites be explored.
7. That, 50% French language instruction beginning in Grade 1 be maintained.

5. Report of the French Immersion Program Review (Continued)

8. That, the French Immersion and English track balance at dual-track schools through the Annual Planning process be monitored.
9. That, for dual-track schools, through the Annual Planning process:
 - a) the optimal threshold for single and dual-track schools be monitored;
 - b) a discussion be initiated through the Annual Planning process when the enrolment of the English program in a dual-track school is less than 40% and the viability of the English program is determined to be at risk;
 - c) once there is a consideration for single-track French Immersion schools it will be important to engage in community consultation/information sharing (e.g. early in the process, being transparent about the process, provide marketing materials);
 - d) the availability of a nearby school for the English track program be considered.
10. That, professional development for staff supporting French Immersion programs be provided on how to support students with special education needs and English Language Learners (ELLs) in the French Immersion program in order to decrease rates of attrition for students with special education needs and ELLS.
11. That, French Immersion program communication and messaging from Kindergarten to Grade 1 be reviewed.
12. That, the Board continue to recruit teaching staff from around the province and outside Ontario.
13. That, the Board consider investing with partners, the possibility of intermediate teachers to work in both panels (i.e. junior/intermediate, intermediate/senior). (APPENDIX I)

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6. Peel District School Board's Role in Supporting Students/Families Living in Poverty

IP-56, moved by Harkirat Singh, that the report re Peel DSBs Role in Supporting Students/Families Living in Poverty, be received.

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Associate Director Grewal stated that the above-referred report affirms the supports outlined in the report titled "Peel District School Board's Role in Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy", brought to the Board on January 25, 2011, as well as provides updated information on recent initiatives designed to support students living in poverty. She noted that Chair McDonald had put a motion on the floor at the August 29, 2017 Regular Meeting of the Board that staff prepare a report listing current programs that help students overcome barriers pertaining to poverty, including hunger, mental health, technology and external factors, and protocols in place to measure the effectiveness of these programs.

6. Peel District School Board’s Role in Supporting Students/Families Living in Poverty (Continued)

The report outlines the variety of initiatives designed to provide students with opportunities to overcome potential long-term effects of poverty. Associate Director Grewal highlighted initiatives such as Camp SAIL, Grade 7/8 Student Success Teachers, Parent Reaching Out Grants, and collaboration with Peel Public Health. She reported that, last year, Principal of Lorne Park Secondary School, Craig Caslick, attended a number of round table discussions at the Region of Peel to explore opportunities to support families living in poverty. Stating that the programs listed in the report are a starting point, she confirmed that a secondary report with updated information on the Board’s strategy within the larger Region of Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy will be brought back.

The administration responded to trustees’ questions of clarification including: list of schools receiving ongoing Ministry funding under the Urban and High Priority Schools initiative has not changed; schools designated as urban and high priority are expected to provide a report on their demographics and activities; partnerships with food banks will be included in the report that is brought to the Board. A trustee asked about the number of schools that collect clothes for communities, and whether there are schools that have community kitchens. In reply to a question, Craig Caslick provided a detailed report regarding application by the Board and five other partners for the \$500,000 Trillium Foundation’s Local Poverty Reduction Fund, which was eventually not successful. He stated that Peel’s application pertained to creation of community hubs, but the Province may have already collected sufficient data as similar work is probably ongoing in other regions.

Chair McDonald asked about timelines in bringing forward the report outlining the Board’s poverty reduction strategy that supports the Region’s strategy. Associate Director Grewal spoke of re-engagement with the Region of Peel on poverty reduction, and reviewing programs for gaps. She stated that information on accountability and effectiveness of measures can be brought back within this school year, but discussions with the Region may take longer. In reply to a question on training regarding sensitivity to poverty issues, she highlighted equity and inclusion training, and advised that poverty covers a cross-section of issues. Thanking all staff who were involved in creating the report, Chair McDonald suggested that mental health within the context of poverty be explored.

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IP-56

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7. Question Period

There were no questions.

8. Public Question Period

Michael, a representative from Big Brothers Big Sisters, thanked the administration for the report on the role of the Board in supporting students/families living in poverty (Item 6 of these Minutes). He remarked that the extent of poverty is not revealed unless data is disseminated by postal code. Expressing appreciation for the work done by the school board, he stated that his association has substantial interactions with families living in poverty and suggested including Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel in discussions on poverty strategies. Michael also suggested reviewing the mechanisms in place to remove “quick fixes” and instead explore longer term strategies. The administration responded.

Tanzila Mian, representing Canadian Parents for French (CPF), highlighted activities undertaken by the CPF, including: conducting a workshop at Corsair Public School; circulating to trustees and members of the FI Review Steering Committee the press release regarding FI by the Minister of Education; working with Board staff to streamline classification of credentials of overseas teachers. She stated that the Toronto DSB, which offers 100% French instruction from Senior Kindergarten to Grade 3, schedules monthly French Language advisory meetings, which Peel staff could attend. Tanzila Mian noted that a majority of school boards offer 100% French language instruction in Senior Kindergarten, and Peel is one of the few boards providing 50% French language instruction in Grade 1. With regard to the proficiency and success of Peel’s FI students, she provided anecdotes from her life following her graduation from Peel’s FI program, as well as about other Peel FI graduates, that demonstrate the success of the program.

9. Adjournment

IP-57, moved by Stan Cameron, that the meeting adjourn (20:05 hours).

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..... Chair Secretary