

For immediate release

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Mississauga – Canadian Parents for French (Ontario) supports best practice model for French Immersion

The Halton District School Board (HDSB) Program Viability Committee presented a final recommendation to trustees to improve program viability in both English and French programs on May 27, 2016, after several months of consultation.

<http://www.hdsb.ca/Programs/Documents/Prg%20Via%20report%2016096.pdf>

Currently, the HDSB French immersion program begins in Grade 1 with 50 percent French as the language of instruction. The Committee is recommending that the current program be phased out and replaced with a Grade 2 entry point with 100 percent French as the language of instruction, 80 percent French in Grade 3, and 50 percent in Grade 4 through to Grade 8.

“Parents rightfully expect that school boards will provide the best possible programming for their children. French Immersion programs that start in Kindergarten or Grade 1 with 100 percent French to Grade 3 or Grade 4 is a best practice supported by 45 years of research and experience.” stated Mary Cruden, President of Canadian Parents for French (Ontario).

This model, commonly referred to as Early Full French Immersion or front-end loaded, provides the greatest number of accumulated of hours in French or ‘time on task’ to support the building of French language skills to meet the expectations of the curriculum. Joseph Dicks, PhD, Director of the Second Language Research Institute of Canada at the University of New Brunswick, clarifies by stating that Kindergarten or Grade 1 students: “learn subject matter content that is more closely aligned with their beginning second language skills.”.

A delayed Grade 2 entry may reduce overall enrolment in the program, one of the stated objectives of the review. However, it will inadvertently make it a less inclusive option by promoting, as the Committee reports, a parental or self-assessment process of ‘fit’ rather than encouraging parents to choose a French program that is designed to meet their goals in French Second Language learning for their child.

"French immersion is suitable for all learners. As in any educational program, 'the right fit' is achieved when inclusive practices, appropriate supports and effective teaching are meeting the needs of the student." stated Nancy Wise, PhD, FSL and Special Education Consultant.

Trustees are expected to vote on the recommendations at the June 15, 2016 HDSB Board of Trustees meeting. Research on the merits of the best practice early French immersion program can be found at <http://cpf.ca/en/files/RESEARCH-UPDATE-Merits-of-EFI.pdf>

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Canadian Parents for French (CPF) is a national network of volunteers which values French as an integral part of Canada and which is dedicated to the promotion and creation of French-second-language learning opportunities for young Canadians.

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