

For immediate release

June 16, 2016

## Mississauga – Halton District School Board to begin French Immersion in Grade 2 without an enrolment cap

The Halton District School Board (HDSB) Trustees voted last night to phase out the current French Immersion program and replace it 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 beginning in September 2017. The board will not place an enrolment cap on the French Immersion program at this time.

The 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.

A delayed Grade 2 entry may reduce overall enrolment in the program, one of the stated objectives of the review. However, we expect it will 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.

"While we welcome the increased intensity in Grade 2 (100 percent) and Grade 3 (80 percent) over the previous model, 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.”

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>

- 30 -

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) is a national network of volunteers that furthers bilingualism by promoting and creating opportunities for students to learn and use French.

### **Information:**

Betty Gormley, Executive Director | Canadian Parents for French (Ontario)  
T: 905.366.1012 x 2 | 1.800.667.0594 | [bgormley@on.cpf.ca](mailto:bgormley@on.cpf.ca)