

Upper Grand District School Board
French as a Second Language Advisory Committee

Minutes
Monday, March 4, 2019

The French as a Second Language Advisory Committee of the Upper Grand District School Board met on March 4, 2019 at 5:00 p.m. in the Boardroom at 500 Victoria Road North, Guelph.

The following Parent Representatives were present: Vikki Brown, Christine Caughill, Core French – City of Guelph; Rachel Cooper, Mark Paralovos, French Immersion – City of Guelph; Paul Smith, French Immersion - Secondary

Present from Staff were: Tracey Lindsay, Superintendent of Program; Jonathan Walker, Principal of Program; Chad Warren, Secondary Principal, Jillian Major, Program Staff FSL Curriculum, Jennifer Passy, Manager of Planning

Trustees Present: Lynn Topping, Linda Busuttil, Robin Ross

Regrets: None

Absent: Cheri Herdman, French Immersion – Wellington County Parent; Ashley Scott, French Immersion - Dufferin County Parent

Tracey Lindsay, Superintendent of Program, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

Approval of Agenda of March 4, 2019

Linda Busuttil, Trustee, moved that the agenda of March 4, 2019 be approved. All were in favour.

The motion carried.

Approval of Minutes of November 12, 2018

Lynn Topping, Trustee, moved that the minutes of November 12, 2018 be approved. All were in favour.

The motion carried.

Elections of Chair and Vice Chair

Tracey Lindsay advised that Jonathan Walker, Principal of Program and, Chad Warren, Secondary Principal, would act as scrutineers, if needed.

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Tracey Lindsay opened the nominations for Trustee Co-Chair. Linda Busuttil nominated Robin Ross, Trustee, for the Trustee Co-Chair. Robin Ross accepted the nomination. There were no other Trustee Co-Chair nominations. The nomination for Robin Ross as Co-Chair stands.

Trustee Busuttil nominated Rachel Cooper, French Immersion – City of Guelph for the Parent Co-Chair position. Rachel Cooper accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations for Parent Co-Chair. The nomination for Rachel Cooper as Co-Chair stands. Robin Ross and Rachel Cooper were asked to take the chairs' positions at the front of the room to continue the agenda.

JK/FI Registration Update

Robin Ross welcomed Jennifer Passy, Manager of Planning, to the meeting.

Jennifer Passy introduced herself to the Committee and shared results of the JK/FI Application on-time period for 2019-2020. The on-time window for applications to attend JK/FI in 2019-2020 was open from January 8-18, 2019. There were 644 spots available in total and 629 applications received. If there were more on-time applications than spots, a random selection process occurred. This year, there were 6 schools that had more applicants than space available. The application count included some Out of Area and Out of District applications.

Overall, there were fewer applications than in the past two years. With much press and media attention in the first year of JK/FI enrolment caps, there were many applications. Geographically, access has improved to JK FI since new schools in Shelburne, Orangeville and West Guelph have started offering FI. It is expected that schools will continue to receive applications until the end of the current school year, and students will be placed into the program or on waitlists as appropriate.

The 2019-2020 JK/FI Application Summary Chart shows application numbers and it shows space is available for late applicants in the coming year.

Principals were notified if random selection was required at their respective schools and postings on websites advised which schools were subject to random selection. Random selection process began February 11, 2019 and applicants were notified about placement prior to February 28, 2019.

Office Coordinators are monitoring a centrally available tracking chart that was created this year, and late applications will be considered where space exists, and waitlisted students offered spaces where others may have declined. If space does not exist, school-based waitlists are started. Late applications receive placement on a first-come, first-serve basis, where space is available.

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Waitlisted, on-time or late applicants must be registered in a UGDSB Regular Track school. Out of Area or Out of District applicants will only be processed after consideration of applications in accordance with Policy 501. Out of Area and Out of District applicants are not considered in their home school but wait for a response from the requested school.

In 2016, Board approved recommendation, 14 b), which directed that siblings of students registered in FI be given priority access. Sibling priority remains a factor for consideration during random selection process. Of applications received in January 2019, 41 % had one or more siblings registered in FI in the board. Sibling priority numbers remain consistent with past years.

Linda Busuttil asked if there was more up-to-date information available than what was provided in the February 12, 2019 report. Jennifer Passy answered that Office Coordinators are still tracking down families but can provide current information at the March 2019 Business Operations Committee meeting.

Linda Busuttil asked how long a student can be waitlisted. Jennifer Passy replied that if there are withdrawals, schools will pull directly from the waitlist and that there are natural transition periods throughout the school year. The practice has been if there is a space freed up, the next in line on the waitlist will be offered the spot. JK is the entry point; however, waitlisted students can be offered FI spots up until the UGDSB staffing first count date of the child's SK year.

Linda Busuttil commented that caps to JK class sizes are based on the current class sizes and collective agreements. Linda Busuttil asked if this is something staff will bring back to the Committee to have a conversation about after March 15, 2019, should there be any changes. Jennifer Passy explained there is a process for considering JK FI caps through the annual review process in the fall. Not every cap is at 29 or a multiple of 29, and there are considerations beyond Ministry class caps. It was suggested that there are a lot of unknowns at this time, and it is most appropriate to consider changes through the annual review process for the 2020-21 school year.

Mark Paralovos, French Immersion – City of Guelph asked for clarification about the class size discussion. Jennifer Passy explained that if there is an announcement from the Ministry and class sizes are changed, those changes are reflected in our FI class size caps, and Linda Busuttil asked would there be reconsideration at that time for cap sizes.

Robin Ross asked if a parent submits a late JK/FI application and there is a sibling currently in the FI program, does the parent receive acceptance to the JK/FI program based on sibling priority. Jennifer Passy replied that late JK/FI applications at a school where randomization was required has happened, and spaces were already offered to parents who had on-time applications. Late applicants would not be accepted into the

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program and would be waitlisted in date order of applications and no sibling priority exists for late applicants.

Rachel Cooper, French Immersion – City of Guelph asked if Office Coordinators are allowed to tell parents if they are close to hitting class caps at the time of registration, and if so, perhaps this affected the decline in current applications compared to the two previous years. Tracey Lindsay replied that, yes, Office Coordinators are allowed to be transparent with that information.

Jennifer Passy shared that families are typically aware of whether or not the cap was exceeded. No direction has been given to Office Coordinators not to share the information. Once random selection happens, the applicants who are not placed in the program are placed onto a waitlist. A family who submits an on-time application has equal chance for placement in the FI program as the rest of the on-time applications - after sibling priority is considered.

Robin Ross thanked Jennifer Passy for her presentation.

French as a Second Language and French Immersion at UGDSB

Robin Ross welcomed Jonathan Walker, Principal of Program to the meeting.

Jonathan Walker thanked the Committee and asked that questions be asked throughout his presentation. Jonathan Walker began with identifying what French as a Second Language looks like in the UGDSB, and explained that their goal is to have a common message and strong beliefs that all children can learn French. Learning French strengthens problem-solving skills, competitiveness for future job opportunities, and first language skills, as well as allows students to learn about diverse cultures.

Core French is a mandatory subject from Grades 4-8. Students must receive French instruction for an accumulated 200 minutes per week which equals 600 hours each year in order to study French at the Secondary level.

French Immersion is from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Kindergarten is the only entry point for French Immersion students. Secondary students require 10 courses in French to receive a certificate of completion.

From JK – Grade 2, 100% of schooling is in French. In Grades 3 and 4, 80% of schooling is in French. In Grade 5, 75% of schooling is in French. In Grade 6, 70% of schooling is in French and 50% of schooling is in French by Grades 7 and 8. Entry from other districts can be admitted if they have had an FI program.

There are differences in how French is taught in our board; for example, teachers' professionalism by following the curriculum, what time of year educators teach certain subject areas, what units they are teaching and what resources they may have. The

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Program department recommends purchasing resources and assessments that Regular Track classes have as well. English instruction begins in Grade 3 and continues into high school.

The documents that guide the FSL work in the UGDSB are; the Ministry Curriculum, other Ministry documents, the board created FSL Plan, and the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR). The CEFR is a reference for teaching French and a resource that offers tools for teachers to track progress for language learners, through speaking, interacting, presenting and writing. It focuses on what skills language learners need and what they are learning in class to show progress. The philosophy of the CEFR helps to inform instructional and assessment practices in FSL. In the UGDSB, just like the rest of the province, educators base (French) assessment on curriculum expectations and the four levels of the achievement chart, the standard province-wide guide to be used by all teachers as a framework within which to assess and evaluate students' achievement. The DELF is a test based on the CEFR. The test is offered twice a year to Grade 12 UGDSB students.

Robin Ross asked how the board measures the experiences at different schools. For example, in some schools, the announcements are in French and O Canada is in French. Dual Track schools don't always have announcements or O Canada in French; how could we provide consistency.

Jonathan Walker replied that he can speak with principals to encourage using the national anthem in French and promoting it even in Regular Track schools.

Tracey Lindsay added that they will need to know which schools and what experiences the students have. Program tries to promote both languages, in Dual Track schools and FI centres. They put up French signage, post the long-term plan that started with FI centres, and help schools access resources. A reminder to principals and vice principals, to promote both languages would help. Core French is as valued as French Immersion and French Immersion is not the only way to become French proficient as many Core French students have taken French in University.

Jonathan Walker continued to share information about the documents used, such as the *Ministry Curriculum, French as a Second Language 2013* for Grades 1-8, Core French, Extended French and French Immersion, the *French as a Second Language 2014* for Grades 9-12, and *A Framework for French as a Second Language*. Another document referenced is, *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL Programs*. This document talks about how to modify and accommodate for Special Education students, and shows educators how to support all learners by using the same supports that they would see in a Regular Track school.

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Welcoming English Language Learners into FSL Programs document is used by educators to support ELL students in French programs. The Program Department ran Professional Development sessions for principals and teachers to learn about this document, how to support ELLs, and how to support newly arrived students. This Professional Development was offered to Core French teachers as well, to support the consistent message that everyone can learn French.

Paul Smith asked what Extended French is compared to the other types of French.

Tracey Lindsay explained that Extended French requires a different amount of hours and French instruction would start in the Junior Grades. Core French has a certain number of hours and its own curriculum. French Immersion doesn't have a different curriculum; it has the same curriculum, but the instruction is in French. Extended French is a mixture of both, and students earn a different type of certificate.

Jonathan Walker reviewed the highlights from the Ministry Documents. French as a Second Language Programs are for all students. A considerable body of research exists and shows that second language learning provides significant cognitive and academic benefits, and is an economic and cultural asset. The framework is a call to action to strengthen FSL programming, promote its benefits, and heighten appreciation and support for FSL. Goals in the framework align with the goals in the FSL Plan. The curriculum for French Immersion in Grade 1-12 has 4 strands. The fundamental purpose of assessment is to improve student learning. The performance standards in assessment are the same in all strands.

Linda Busuttill asked about the statistic, 'Grades 4 to 8 receive 13% of Core French in a school day'. How many teachers have classrooms versus a 'Teach 'n Go Cart'. Is there room in the French Action Plan to consider this.

Jonathan Walker replied that this issue is discussed frequently and that there is benefit to Core French teachers having their own classroom.

Tracey Lindsay explained that on school visits she notices who has classrooms and they do advocate for the space, however, the Ministry considers those classrooms a space that shouldn't be used because of the associated costs with having another classroom. Most of the UGDSB schools don't have space for French. The Ministry needs to fill those rooms before they would even consider allowing a new school to be built. Generally if there is space, the board tries to allow French teachers to have their own room, but it is out of their control. Classrooms are a very valuable space, and it does increase the value of the experience for the students.

Linda Busuttill asked if there is entry into FI other than JK and does the process look at previous FI experience. For example, Waterloo doesn't have FI until Grade 1. Would the

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board consider literacy or learning skills when they didn't have an opportunity in their previous board and won't have the opportunity to get into the FI program in this board.

Jonathan Walker explained that students are not admitted if they have not had FI experience, however, if their first language is French and they are from Quebec, for example, this is taken into consideration.

Linda Busuttill asked what year of the French Action Plan they are in.

Jonathan Walker replied that they are Year 2. Next year they are Year 3 and will look at the changes.

Linda Busuttill asked where the French Action Plan is housed.

Jonathan Walker replied that the plan is housed in the Program Department. They will bring the plan back next year, get feedback by reviewing the plan with principals and superintendents, revisions will be made by the Program Department, and then the plan will be brought to FSLAC for input.

Linda Busuttill referred to the document, *Welcoming English Language Learners into the FSL Programs*, and asked what efforts are we making as a board, to engage new Canadians. Does the board track the ELL data? Is there growth, are we making steps to welcoming and engaging these students.

Jonathan Walker replied that Program works with Immigration Services to help make them aware of both of the programs. In terms of tracking, there isn't specific ELL FSL data to track, but the board tracks ESL.

Mark Paralovos asked if ELL students receive French in the UGDSB.

Jonathan Walker replied, yes.

Linda Busuttill asked what support does the board offer administrators when they are coming from a Regular Track school to a Dual Track school. Does the board provide training?

Jonathan Walker replied that he meets once per year with new administrators in FI. He asks what topics they would like to discuss to share within the group. He formulates his presentation around their needs and it gives administrators the opportunity to meet and discuss the topics.

Robin Ross asked if the board is putting the same type of resources in French as in Regular Track and is there a higher number of IEPs in Regular Track than in FI. Or, is it disproportionate.

Tracey Lindsay replied that the board does track those numbers and they are increasing in numbers. When the board provides support to schools for SERTs, they look at the

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number of IEPs. If one school has 20% of students with IEPs versus a school with 10%, the resources are allocated accordingly. They look at principal time, vice principal time, social work time, CYC time, and particularly SERT time.

Robin Ross commented that parents are choosing FI not necessarily for learning a language, but to ensure their child is put into a class with fewer difficulties.

Tracey Lindsay replied that the public needed to be educated because that was a misconception. Tracey Lindsay explained that the FSL Action Plan's goal is around retention for Core and FI. They ask parents for exiting feedback and the data is aligned with the Action Plan. In Secondary, the goal is around course selection. The data shows less and less exiting for Special Education reasons compared to 5 years ago. Sometimes students struggle with a communication disorder, for example, and parents might decide to keep the student in FI, or not. The schools don't counsel them out.

Robin Ross commented that the perception of some parents is that the FI classrooms are a better option with fewer behaviour problems. The teacher positions are difficult to fill and we wouldn't want students placed in FI for the wrong reasons.

Mark Paralovos commented that if a student is struggling, counseling them in or out is immaterial for a means to an end. There is an option to limit the stress by putting the student in a Regular Track classroom with their own language. It doesn't make sense to keep struggling students in FI because we want our numbers up. It would be worse off for the child.

Tracey Lindsay explained that the school and board do all they can to support the child in English and in French. It is definitely a parent decision and not the teacher's place to say the child does not belong in French.

Mark Paralovos asked if it made sense, for the benefit of the child and family, to be pushed or made to stay in a place that is harder than going to school in English. Shouldn't the school and board realize if something is fundamentally difficult, they should help and counsel them out of FI; put the students' needs first. It doesn't help the student who is stuck in French Immersion.

Jonathan Walker explained that if a student is struggling in French Immersion, parents should meet with the teacher and to see how their child can be supported. The school and board provide students with every opportunity to be successful and will provide all options for all students.

Tracey Lindsay reiterated if a parent chooses FI, the school and board do everything they can to support the child. If the parents choose Regular Track, the school and board do everything they can to support the child.

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Agenda Items

Tracey Lindsay asked the parent and Trustee representatives to take 5 to 10 minutes to brainstorm for future meeting topics. The following ideas came forward.

1. With respect to our ECEs, what pedagogy are they following in JK? Inquiry-based program? Is it teacher instruction or inquiry-based? Where are we in the FI track with the emergent curriculum and play-based learning?
2. Would like more information on Secondary implementation of the FSL Action Plan (Secondary Review)
3. Is there experiential learning in French? Is there environmental leadership? Are there any plans for either? Is the board aware of trends? Are there pathways for students to become engaged in French community activities? What about volunteer hours in French? Are there jobs for future French teachers?
4. Is there engaging instruction for Core French?
5. Are there Pathways for Kids to become engaged in French community activities?
6. Is there Professional Development for teachers/ECEs? How are we improving knowledge for teachers and ECEs? Are adequate resources and supplies provided?

Recommendations

1. Tracey Lindsay will remind school principals that O Canada should be offered in both French and English or a mixture of the two. Whether or not it is a FI Centre, a Dual Track, or Regular Track school – we are a bi-lingual country and students can participate in both languages.
2. ESL in FSL – can the staff bring back data on how many ESL students are in FI and how do we monitor their progress.

Other

Tracey Lindsay asked the Committee if they would like the next meeting to be in May, rather than in April. Tracey Lindsay will take the recommendations and build the agenda. The Committee agreed to meet back in May.

Adjournment

Tracey Lindsay thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting at 7:05 pm.