



Administrative Procedure 1000 FRENCH IMMERSION (ELEMENTARY)

Responsibility:	<i>Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being Superintendent of Business Services and Treasurer of the Board</i>
Legal References:	<i>The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core, Grades 4–8; Extended, Grades 4–8; Immersion, Grades 1–8, 2013 Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2016</i>
Related References:	<i>Administrative Procedure 1010 – Junior and Senior Kindergarten Registration Administrative Procedure 1020 – Admission of Underage Pupils Administrative Procedure 1040 – Out of Boundary Requests – Elementary Schools Administrative Procedure 1150 – Temporary Withdrawal of Elementary Students From the Core French Program Administrative Procedure 1160 – Instructions for Temporary Student Withdrawal Administrative Procedure 2240 – Absenteeism: Prolonged Absences and Temporary Withdrawals Board Policy 4009 – Student Transportation Board Policy 4012 – School Attendance Areas Administrative Procedure 4260 – Student Transportation Administrative Procedure 4270 – Admission and Registration of Students Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2013</i>
Revisions:	November 2023, December 2024, November 2025
Reviewed:	

1. Preamble

- 1.1. The following procedures provide guidelines and expectations regarding French immersion programming for Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) elementary students. They outline the application process, guidelines for class formation and consolidation, staffing procedures, withdrawal protocols, program structure, and transportation policies.
- 1.2. The WRDSB provides French immersion programming from Grade 2 through Grade 12. All students may apply to the program during the application period.
- 1.3. The WRDSB provides all students with French-language instruction through the core French program, which runs from Grade 1 to Grade 9. Students may take optional core French classes in Grades 10-12.
- 1.4. The Business Services division oversees admission into the WRDSB's French immersion program in consultation with the Learning Support Services.

- 1.5. The Superintendent of Student Achievement and Well-Being, who oversees the Learning Support Services division, is responsible for French as a Second Language (FSL) programming, including French immersion, for the WRDSB.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. **Designated School:** Under *Board Policy 4012- School Attendance Areas*, the WRDSB shall establish geographic attendance boundaries for each elementary school, thereby creating designated schools regarding grade and program (Note: previously referred to as Home School).
- 2.2. **Core French:** Elementary students in the WRDSB who are not enrolled in French immersion receive core French instruction (with some exceptions; see *Administrative Procedure 1150 – Temporary Withdrawal of Elementary Students from the Core French Program*). Students enrolled in core French receive a minimum of 600 hours of French language instruction by the end of Grade 8, representing 16% of the instructional day in Grade 1, and 8% in Grades 2-8.
- 2.3. **French immersion:** An optional French language program available to WRDSB students through an application and lottery process. Students enrolled in French Immersion receive a minimum of 3,800 hours of French language instruction by the end of Grade 8, representing 58% of the instructional day in Grades 2-6 and 50% in Grades 7-8. Admission to the program in Phase 1 is determined by lottery, and Phase 2 is processed on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to space availability. Admission is not based on academic ability or performance.
- 2.4. **Limited Enrolment School:** A school where student enrolment exceeds building capacity and/or where site limitations prevent the expansion of classroom space. *Limited Enrolment Schools* may accept out-of-boundary students only if doing so does not require the creation of additional classrooms, there are no students on the Designated School waiting list from Phase 1 or Phase 2, and the students can be accommodated within the existing school organization. Admission of out-of-boundary students is subject to review and approval by the Planning Department.
- 2.5. **Closed-Enrolment School:** Under *Administrative Procedure 1040 - Out-of-Boundary Requests, Elementary*, a school may be designated as a closed-enrolment school when student enrolment exceeds the building's capacity and/or has site limitations. Closed-enrolment schools do not accept any out-of-boundary students under any circumstances.
- 2.6. **Out-of-Boundary School:** Any school other than the student's *Designated School*. Students may attend out-of-boundary schools if they have approved out-of-boundary requests. Refer to *Administrative Procedure 1040 – Out of Boundary Requests – Elementary Schools*.
- 2.7. **Primary Home Address:** The student's home address as supplied by the parent/guardian to the school. The *Primary Home Address* will determine the student's *Designated School*. In cases where students live under a joint custody agreement, the parties are expected to decide on the student's school or programs in accordance with their custodial agreement.
- 2.8. **Sibling:** Students having one or more parents or guardians in common.

3. Administration

- 3.1. Students anticipating applying for Grade 2 French immersion should attend their *Designated School* for Kindergarten to Grade 1 (refer to *Administrative Procedure 1010 - Junior and Senior Kindergarten Registration*).
- 3.2. Students at any grade level with a sibling enrolled in French immersion at a *Designated School* may also attend the *Designated School* (refer to *Administrative Procedure 1040 – Out of Boundary Requests – Elementary*), except where students are required to transition to another school for Grades 7 and 8 (i.e., where a Junior Kindergarten (JK) to Grade 6 school feeds to a JK to Grade 8 school for Grades 7 and 8, a sibling in JK-6 may not attend the feeder school with the sibling unless approved as an Out-of-Boundary request).

4. Applying to French Immersion in Grade 2 (Phase 1)

- 4.1. Admission to the French immersion program is determined through a tiered lottery system. Applications are submitted during the student's Grade 1 year through an online application system to qualify for the Phase 1 lottery. Grade 2 French immersion applications for Phase 1 are due by January 31.
 - 4.1.1. If an applicant requires assistance with the online application form (e.g., translation services, access to technology, etc.), they may contact their *Designated School* or the Planning Department.
 - 4.1.2. The WRDSB will share information about FSL program pathways and the Phase 1 application process with all Grade 1 students before January through electronic communication (e.g., School-Day), the WRDSB's website and social media platforms.
- 4.2. Applications received on or before January 31 will form the basis of the computer-generated randomized Phase 1 lottery and will be placed in the following order:
 - 4.2.1. Tier 1: *Designated School* students and approved *Out-of-Boundary School* students will be placed first.
 - 4.2.2. Tier 2: Non-*Designated School* students will be placed second, except at *Limited Enrolment Schools* (refer to Section 7.2).
- 4.3. The Planning Department will verify the data before conducting the computer-generated randomized lottery in Section 4.2.
- 4.4. Before March 15, the French immersion application system will email status notifications to applicants (e.g., French immersion class list or waiting list). If a student is offered a placement in a Grade 2 French immersion class, they will have two (2) weeks to confirm their acceptance of the placement electronically or by contacting the Planning Department.
- 4.5. All students not placed in a class through the lottery outlined in Section 4.2 will be placed on a waiting list. The student's position in the lottery determines their position on the waiting list. If the student's *Designated School* offers French immersion, they will only be offered a placement at an *Out-of-Boundary* school if they are on the *Designated School* waiting list.
 - 4.5.1. Waiting lists will remain open, and applicants will be placed in available spaces up to the 20th instructional day of the school year (typically late September to early October).

- 4.5.2. To maximize the likelihood of placement, a student may remain on a maximum of three (3) waiting lists. A student must secure a spot in French immersion by the 20th instructional day of the school year. No students will be added to the program after that date except those who qualify under the criteria outlined in Section 6.1.
- 4.5.3. If a student is offered acceptance into a Grade 2 French immersion class, they will have five (5) business days to confirm their acceptance electronically or by contacting the Planning Department. All necessary paperwork (e.g., student transfer forms, online registration, etc.) must be provided to the *Designated School* by March 31st or within ten (10) business days of confirming acceptance.

4.6. **Remaining Spots Lottery (RSL)**

- 4.6.1. Before Phase 2 applications are processed, students on the Phase 1 waiting list will be invited to participate in the Remaining Spots Lottery (RSL). Schools with available spaces, identified after acceptances are confirmed in Section 4.4, will be shared with waiting list applicants (see Section 4.5). Each applicant may select up to three (3) additional schools for consideration for placement through the RSL. If the applicant is not placed at any of their selected RSL schools, they will be asked to confirm which three (3) waiting lists they wish to remain on.

4.7. **Retention of Placement**

- 4.7.1. To retain a placement in the French immersion program, students must attend school on the first instructional school day of the year. If absent, a written explanation must be provided to the school's Principal or frenchprograms@wrdsb.ca. Failure to do so may result in the student's removal from the French immersion program. Students must attend school by the 15th instructional day to hold their placement in French immersion unless they remain in the register (refer to *Administrative Procedure 2240 - Absenteeism: Prolonged Absences and Temporary Withdrawals*, s.3).

5. **Ongoing Grade 2 French Immersion Applications (Phase 2)**

- 5.1. After the Phase 1 applicants have been accepted into the French immersion program or placed on a waiting list, additional applicants will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis (Phase 2).
 - 5.1.1. If a student applies after January 31 and the school has space in the French immersion program (refer to Section 7), the student will be offered placement in the class.
 - 5.1.2. Applications received after January 31 for full schools will be placed on the waiting list in sequential order (first-come, first-served), behind Phase 1 students (outlined in Section 4). Alternatively, the student may be offered a French immersion class placement at a school with no waiting list.
- 5.2. Phase 2 opens on February 1 and closes after the 20th instructional day of the school year (typically late September to early October). Refer to Section 4.5 regarding waiting lists.

6. **Internal Transfers and New Registrants**

6.1. **New Registrants**

- 6.1.1. **From Ontario:** Students may be admitted to WRDSB French immersion if they are currently enrolled in a comparable French immersion program and can demonstrate

completion of sufficient instructional hours to meet WRDSB and Ministry of Education standards (e.g., total accumulation of 3,800 hours by Grade 8). French language tutoring does not meet the admission requirements.

- 6.1.2. **From Outside Ontario:** Students entering the WRDSB from outside Ontario must provide documentation (e.g., report cards) of their French-language learning experience. If instructional hours are unclear or insufficient, students may undergo a French language assessment (conducted by Learning Support Services or a WRDSB designate) to support placement decisions. This assessment is not pass/fail and is used solely to collect data to inform appropriate placement. French language tutoring does not meet the admission requirements.

6.2. Placement Based on Designated School Availability

- 6.2.1. **Designated School Offers French Immersion:** Students will be placed in the French immersion program at their *Designated School*, subject to space availability.

- **Grades 3-8:** Students meeting the criteria in 6.1.1 or 6.1.2 may attend their *Designated School* in French immersion.
- **Grade 2 Transfers (WRDSB):** Students who change their *Primary Home Address* before Phase 2 closes have the following options:
 - 1) Transfer to their new *Designated School* in French immersion if space permits (Note: Before the start of the school year, the student will be required to transfer when space permits);
 - 2) Transfer to their new *Designated School* in core French; or
 - 3) Remain at the school where they accepted placement, if the school year has started, and there is a waiting list for French immersion at the *Designated School*. If there is a waiting list, the student will be processed as a Phase 2 applicant to the *Designated School*.

After Phase 2 closes, admission to the *Designated School* will be considered on a case-by-case basis, with considerations made to waiting lists, available classroom space, and other relevant factors. Students may transfer to their *Designated School* following Grade 2 through the student transfer process.

- **Grade 2 Registrations (External):** Before Phase 2 closes, external registrants must complete a French immersion application (see Sections 4 and 5). After Phase 2 closes, students meeting the criteria in 6.1.1 or 6.1.2 have the following options:
 - 1) Attend their new *Designated School* in French immersion if space permits (Note: Admission will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account previous waiting lists, available classroom space, and other relevant factors);
 - 2) Attend their *Designated School* in core French; or
 - 3) Follow the Out-of-Boundary Placement Request process in Section 6.3.Students attending an *Out-of-Boundary School* in Grade 2 may transfer to

their *Designated School* following Grade 2 via the student transfer process.

6.2.2. **Designated School Does Not Offer French Immersion:** Students may be placed at another WRDSB school offering French immersion. If no suitable placement is available, students may be enrolled in core French at their *Designated School* (see Section 9.1.1.2).

- **Grades 3-8:** Students meeting the criteria in 6.1.1 or 6.1.2 will follow the Out-of-Boundary Placement Request process in Section 6.3.
- **Grade 2 Transfers (WRDSB):** Students may remain at their current school, follow the Out-of-Boundary Placement Request process outlined in Section 6.3, or transfer into core French at their new *Designated School*.
- **Grade 2 Registrations (External):** Students meeting the criteria in 6.1.1 or 6.1.2 will follow the Out-of-Boundary Placement Request process in Section 6.3, or transfer into core French at their new *Designated School*.

6.3. Out-of-Boundary Placement Requests

6.3.1. Students seeking placement in a French immersion program at a school outside their *Designated School* must follow the process below:

6.3.1.1. **Submit Form PL-21-A:** Registrations/Transfers after Entry Point to the Planning Department.

6.3.1.2. **Planning Department Review:** Planning will contact the requested schools to assess availability.

6.3.1.3. **Admission Approval:** Schools may only deny admission with the Senior Manager of Planning's approval, in consultation with Human Resources and Equity Services. *Limited Enrolment Schools* require the explicit approval of the Senior Manager of Planning, and *Closed Enrolment Schools* will be denied admission.

6.3.1.4. **No Placement Available:** If no suitable placement is available, the student may transition to the core French program at their *Designated School*. Section 9.2 does not apply in these cases.

7. Class Formation/Consolidation

7.1. Grade 2 French immersion classes will be formed before the school count date (typically March 31) for staffing purposes.

7.1.1. A school must have at least twenty-three (23) Grade 1 students apply by January 31 to form a Grade 2 French immersion class.

7.1.1.1. Exceptions may be considered for geographically isolated schools where combined grade classes are possible.

7.1.2. When a class reaches its predetermined class size cap, a waiting list of additional students who wish to enroll in the program is established (see Section 4.5).

- 7.1.3. With the approval of the Senior Administration (i.e., Leadership Council), an additional Grade 2 French immersion class may be added using the following considerations:
- Phase 1 waiting list applicants total twenty-three (23) or more students (if combined grade classes are possible, fewer waiting list students are required);
 - Additional French immersion classes will leave an adequate number of students in the core French program;
 - A feasibility review of staffing a class with a qualified teacher has been completed in consultation with Human Resources and Equity Services; and
 - Space is available in the school (to be assessed by the Planning Department).
- 7.2. The Planning Department will identify and review *Limited Enrolment Schools* annually. These schools will be identified on the Grade 2 French immersion application form. The application form and WRDSB website will list and explain *Limited Enrolment Schools*.
- 7.2.1. The WRDSB reserves the right to maintain vacancies within a Grade 2 French immersion class at *Limited Enrolment Schools* after Phase 1 for *Designated School* applicants who apply during Phase 2.
- 7.3. The WRDSB may consider adding a French immersion program to a non-immersion site using the following considerations to assess program viability:
- It is feasible to expand the program with qualified teachers (to be assessed in consultation with Human Resources and Equity Services).
 - A minimum of two classes (46 students) have applied for entry into the Grade 2 French immersion program at the site.
 - Adding French immersion classes will leave a minimum of twenty (20) students in the core French program at the school.
 - Space is currently available and projected to remain available at the school (to be assessed by the Planning Department).
 - A student population stability threshold is met (e.g., by assessing neighbourhood turnover rate, age-cohort demographics, etc.).
 - The program has a clear pathway to completion of Grade 8 or Grade 12 French immersion (e.g., the path for students to remain in French immersion until Grade 12 is clear).
 - The school will have been in active operation for five (5) years or more.
- 7.3.1. Senior Administration will recommend adding new French immersion sites in consultation with Business Services, Learning Support Services, Human Resources and Equity Services, the Family of Schools Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being and the school's Principal.

7.4. **Collapsing Existing Programs**

7.4.1. Before the annual staffing process (typically March 31), the Planning Department and Human Resources and Equity Services will report to Leadership Council on enrolment status at each elementary school offering French immersion classes. Decisions to collapse programs will use the following guiding principles:

- The French immersion cohort in any given year falls below the average class size for that grade, and combined grade classes are not feasible;
- Maintaining a French immersion program at the school is not financially feasible; and
- Staffing the program with French-qualified teachers is challenging.

A recommended course of action may include:

- The program is fully removed from the school, with the following options presented to students:
 - Transfer to a core French program in the *Designated School*;
 - Continue French immersion at another school where space permits and the parents/guardians can transport the student(s);
- The program is phased out of the school over time; or
- The program continues at the school.

7.4.2. When a decision is made to close an existing French immersion program, a communication plan will be developed in consultation with the school's Principal, Superintendent, Student Achievement and Well-Being, and Senior Manager of Communications.

8. **Staffing**

8.1. Staffing of French immersion programs follows established WRDSB staffing procedures.

9. **Withdrawal from French immersion**

9.1. **Change of address**

9.1.1. The Superintendent's approval to withdraw from the French immersion program is not required in the following cases:

9.1.1.1. When a student leaves the WRDSB.

9.1.1.2. When a student transfers to their *Designated School* based on their *Primary Home Address*, and the *Designated School* does not offer French immersion at the student's grade level.

9.1.2. Students/families and/or caregivers may be asked to complete an exit survey for data collection.

9.2. **Reasons other than a change of address**

9.2.1. Students have equal access to special education support regardless of the FSL pathway. Students experiencing challenges in the French immersion pathway, in either the English or French portion of the day, are entitled to support through the Student Support Process.

- 9.2.2. Before initiating a change of pathway request, the Student Support Process must have been implemented and documented in the student's Clevr profile. After all support strategies have been implemented and documented, the LS-23-A form (Change of Pathway from Immersion to core French) must be completed by the school administrator. This form requires that the school provide evidence of strategies and supporting data implemented over a reasonable period.
 - 9.2.3. Change of pathway requests that do not fall under the need for student support must also follow the process in section 9.2.2, except for students changing pathways before the 20th instructional day in Grade 2.
 - 9.2.4. The Superintendent overseeing Learning Support Services must approve decisions to change a student's pathway from immersion to core French, based on the student's needs and parent/guardian choice. The Superintendent is responsible for the final decision.
- 9.3. Temporary withdrawal due to extended absence may be granted under *Administrative Procedure 1160 - Instructions for Temporary Student Withdrawal*. For absences beyond 15 days, please refer to *Administrative Procedure 2240 - Absenteeism: Temporary Student Withdrawal on short term basis*.
- 9.3.1. Students returning from extended absences are not guaranteed re-entry into the French immersion program.

10. Subject Time Allocation

- 10.1. The instructional language time allocations in Grades 1 to 8 align with the Ministry of Education requirements. Administrators should refer to the current Subject Allocation document for detailed recommendations on subject allocation to ensure students achieve the minimum required hours upon completion of Grade 8.
- 10.2. The school administrative team is responsible for completing the French minutes/hours of instruction reference card only once a student leaves the WRDSB or moves to secondary school. Schools do not need to annually calculate or document year-end hours. Reports must be printed and submitted to the student's Ontario Student Record (OSR) by the last day of the student's enrolment at that school site. Students participating in extracurricular activities that require them to miss portions of French instructional time are not penalized in hours for their absences.

11. Core French Yearly Hours

Core French Subject Allocation Grades 1-8	
Grade 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 113 hours (180 mins per 5-day cycle) of core French instruction ● 38 hours (60 mins per 5-day cycle) with French as the language of instruction, from an administrator's choice between or a combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visual Arts ○ Music ○ Drama ○ Dance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Physical Education and Health ● 151 hours minimum per year (240 mins per 5-day cycle - 16% of the day) with French as the Language of instruction.
Grades 2-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 75 hours minimum per year (120-150 mins per 5-day cycle - 8% of the day) with French as the Language of instruction.

12. **French Immersion Yearly Hours**

French Immersion Subject Allocation Grades 2-8	
Grades 2-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 14.5 hours (870 mins per 5-day cycle - 58% of the day) of French as the language of instruction ● In Grades 2-6, the following subjects must be taught in French: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ French Language Arts ○ Social Studies ○ Visual Arts ○ Drama, Dance, Music ○ Physical Education and Health ● Minutes for Daily Physical Activity (DPA) will also occur during French as the language of instruction time. ● Total of 545 hours with French as the language of instruction per grade year
Grades 7 & 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 12.5 hours (750 mins per 5-day cycle - 50% of the day) of French as the language of instruction ● In grades 7 and 8, the following subjects must be taught in French: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ French Language Arts, ○ Geography/History ○ Some combination of Visual Arts, Drama, Music and/or Physical Education ● Total of 470 hours with French as the language of instruction per grade year

13. **Transportation**

13.1. Student transportation is governed by *Board Policy 4009 - Student Transportation* and *Administrative Procedure 4260 - Student Transportation*.