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The 50/50 Bilingual Kindergarten Program



**What is the impact on learning of
the 50/50 English-French
kindergarten program?**

Overview

- A historical perspective from Ontario
- Play-based learning
- Inquiry
- Curriculum changes & school policies
- International case studies of bilingual education
 - China
 - France
 - Jamaica
- Outcomes from Ontario program

Historical Perspective from Ontario



Cummins, J. (1982). Tests, achievement, and bilingual students. *Focus: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education*, No. 9, pg. 1-9.

“Most minority language students are still taught predominantly in English by nonbilingual teachers and most are still assessed by monolingual psychologists with assessment tools and procedures that were designed only for children from the majority Anglo group” (pg. 2)

- The article focused on three psychological assessments and how the psychologists made assumptions based on the student’s cultural and linguistic background

As a result, the misconceptions fail to recognize the difference between language proficie via face to face communication and the ones involved in performing academic tasks. (Cummins, 1982).



50/50 English-French in Ottawa

In the 2016/2017 school year, the OCDSB and OCSB rolled out mandatory 50/50 English/French kindergarten in all Junior and Senior Kindergarten classes

Prior to this, French Immersion was optional and started in Senior Kindergarten, while Core French was offered at both grade levels

This expanded on the Play Based Learning model that had been introduced with full day kindergarten over the preceding 5 years



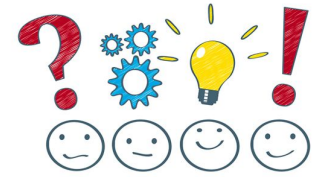
What is Play-Based Learning?



Briggs, M. & Hansen, A. (2012). *Play-Based Learning in the Primary School*. SAGE Publications. ISBN: 9781446254493.

- Focused on student centered activities
- Play in the classroom is intentional
- Primary assessment is observational
- Students have the opportunity to talk with teachers to show their learning
- Incorporates imaginative play
- Teachers use student interests to guide their planning

What is Inquiry?



Board, A. (2013). Student engagement and success using an inquiry approach and integrated curriculum in primary education. *Canadian Children*, Vol. 38, No. 2, pg. 41-44.

- Conversations in class; guided discussion lead to new topics for exploration and learning
- Teachers do not necessarily use the same themes and activities year to year
- Makes connections with the students lives and is based in practical experience
- Language is practical; proper terminology



“(T)he children had gained a deeper understanding of the question through their own inquiry” (pg. 44)

Classroom Configurations

In Ontario, the new kindergarten program splits the students' learning into 50% English and 50% French. How this looks in the classroom can vary:



- Students switch languages halfway through a day
- Students alternate days in each language
- Students divide the week in groups of 2 and 3 days

Educators

Each class has a teacher and at least one Early Childhood Educator (ECE): number of ECEs depends on whether or not the school offers the extended day program

- Teachers may have their own room and students move
- Students may have a homeroom and teachers move
 - ECEs can stay with a teacher or a group of students
- Teachers may share a room and split the teaching time



Curriculum Changes in the Ontario Kindergarten Program

Removed	Moving towards
The calendar routines	A co-constructed learning environment
Completing generic worksheets	Open-ended materials and provocations
Theme based teaching	A focus on the learning and the process, not the product
Subject-based scheduling	Pedagogical documentation from the educators
Completing cookie cutter crafts with the students	Educators and students are learning partners
Having group snack	Providing choice for the children and opportunities to engage with their peers

**Hand-out from the Curriculum department from the CDSBEO (2016)

Changes in Daily Learning

Previous Kindergarten curriculum focused on subject-based teaching; new Kindergarten curriculum focuses on the four frames:

- 1) Self-regulation and well-being
- 2) Demonstrating literacy and mathematics behaviours
- 3) Problem solving and innovation
- 4) Belonging and contributing

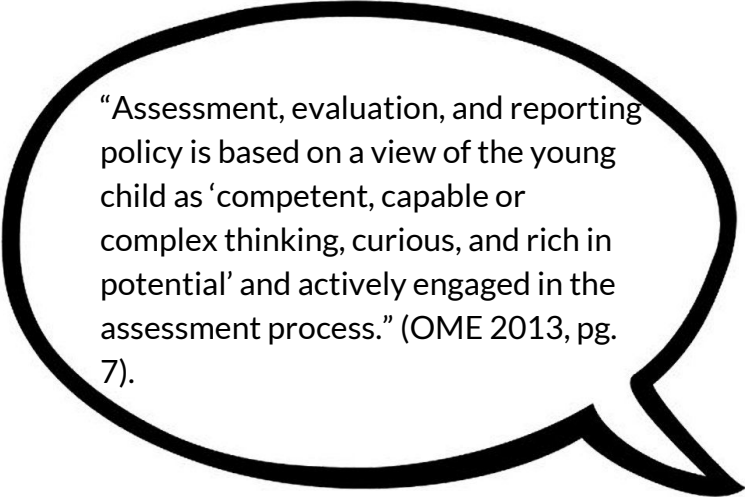


“The Kindergarten frames are defined more specifically to reflect the development and learning needs of children in Kindergarten and beyond.” (The Kindergarten Program, 2016).

Considerations for program planning in the new Kindergarten program consist of a **flexible approach** to learning (flow of the day), which includes a variety of opportunities for learning and a minimum amount of transitions to meet the needs of the students.

Changes in Documentation

Assessing students in kindergarten is completed much differently compared than primary and secondary students. Educators in kindergarten are consistently documenting the student's learning by taking pictures, recording the students, and anecdotal notes. While the educators are recording the students, it is important for the educators to be engaged with the student and to ask open-ended questions to see their thinking process.



“Assessment, evaluation, and reporting policy is based on a view of the young child as ‘competent, capable or complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential’ and actively engaged in the assessment process.” (OME 2013, pg. 7).

Welcome to
Kindergarten!

Changes in Documentation

The new reporting document *Communication of Learning* is intended to provide parents with descriptions (written in everyday language) with specific, personalized comments relating to all four frames discussing the child's strengths and growth in learning.

The three categories to include in the Communication of Learning are:

- 1) Key Learning
- 2) Growth in Learning
- 3) Next Steps in Learning

(*Growing Success: The Kindergarten Addendum*, 2016)



Documentation Comments

Moving from...	Moving towards...
<p>Mohamud has improved his reading this term and is now reading PM Benchmark level 4. He can print both lower and upper case letters correctly and uses the appropriate grip for his pencil and paint brush. With encouragement from adults he is able to write some simple sentences starting with a capital letter. For example he wrote "I like my mom" correctly, and used high frequency words that are familiar to him.</p>	

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(Pedagogical Leadership K-3 Provincial Sessions, Spring 2017)



Case Study: Chinese-English Education in China

Wei, R. (2013). Chinese-English bilingual education in China: Model, momentum and driving forces. *The Asian EFL Journal Special Edition*, Vol. 15, No. 4, pg. 184-200.

Wei examines bilingual education (BE) primary schools in Shanghai; interviews 6 teachers from 4 schools

Most common form of BE: content and language integrated learning (CLIL)

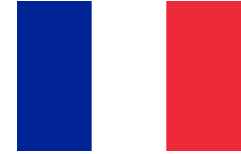
Bilingual education “craze”

Chinese Ministry of Education (2001) promotes teaching through English as one of the 12 guidelines for improving teaching quality at the undergraduate level; **top down approach**

“(M)any teachers welcome BE because it brings with it an opportunity for them to procure more economic, cultural, and symbolic capital” (pg. 191)

“Partial immersion” is problematic term because it assumes 50% English instruction; in reality on 2.9 to 23.5% English instruction

Case Study: French-English Education in France



Hélot, C. (2003). Language policy and the ideology of bilingual education in France. *Language Policy*, Vol. 2, No. 3, pg. 255-277.

“ Bilingual education is a recent phenomenon in France, a country which has long been known for its monolingual identity inherited from the French revolution, a nation state which built itself on the principle of ‘one language, one nation’” (pg. 255)

France categorizes languages in three terms:

- 1) Foreign (English, Spanish, German)
- 2) Regional (Basque, Creole, Catalan)
- 3) Of Origin (Arabic, Turkish, Polish)

English is the most commonly chosen foreign language of study - 80% at the primary level and 93.2% at the secondary level

Two models of BE:

- 1) Full and partial immersion - regional dialects only
- 2) CLIL (1 or 2 subjects) - foreign languages

High levels of English interest have swayed authorities to see foreign languages as part of cultural heritage as opposed to a threat to national identity

Case Study: Creole-English Education in Jamaica



Devonish, H. & Carpenter, K. (2007). Towards full bilingualism in education: The Jamaican bilingual primary education project. *Social and Economic Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 1, pg. 277-303.

Colonial Caribbean saw English as the only “proper” language of instruction; most students do not have English as mother tongue

Jamaican independence: struggle for the visibility of the Creole language

Jamaican diglossia: “We write a language we do not speak. We speak a language we do not write.” (pg. 282)

Bilingual Education Project: grades 1-4, 50/50 instruction in English and Jamaican Creole, aims to see Jamaican as a linguistic label and create a standardized writing system

Positive outcomes:

- Students more socially self aware
- Language awareness developmentally advanced

Difficulties:

- Educators find it difficult to avoid unconscious switches between languages
- Creole associated with lightness and fun, English associated with seriousness and difficulty

Four Reasons For The Program

- Equity of education
- Easier for class mix & match
- Reduce budget
- The EARLIER, the BETTER



Equity of Education

CBC News (2016). French immersion changes in kindergarten to grade 3 passed by OCDSB. *CBC News: Ottawa*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/french-immersion-changes-passed-1.3441537>.

People coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, English language learners, students with disabilities, and male students take early French immersion and middle French immersion at lower rates than the rest of the population.

This program ensures that all students receive a strong foundation in French.

We have an opportunity to get all of our kids off to a better start!



Class Mix and Match

Wise, N. (2015). French immersion should be for all. *National Post*. Retrieved from: <http://nationalpost.com/opinion/nancy-wise-french-immersion-should-be-for-all>.

The reason for the changes are practical as well as pedagogical. Having the same program in all kindergarten classes would make it easier for schools to mix and match, creating split grades and balancing class sizes.

Now, in schools that offer both, an English senior kindergarten class could be tiny, while the more popular French immersion classes could be bursting at the seams.



Reducing Budget

OCDSB needed to chop \$14.4 million from its budget in 2015. The single new French immersion program could reduce 2.7 million.

The Earlier, the Better

Two academic experts on French immersion education were asked to weigh in. Generally speaking, the more French instruction, and the earlier it begins, the better, said Katherine Rehner, an associate professor at the University of Toronto. “However, no studies would be able to give you the ‘magic number’ (of instruction hours) below which you will be less proficient.”



Criticism is flying from all sides



People who hold positive attitude towards the program consider the issue from a long-term and macro perspective. They believe that being a bilingual is helpful for careers, especially in Ottawa. According to their own experience, they believe learning a language at a young age is beneficial to the kids.

For people who still have some concern or even hold negative views about the program, they consider the question mainly from short-term and individual perspectives.



Steve Brass

True outside of Ottawa for sure. But here it's just what you do so your kid can get a white collar job in this city in 2035. And who doesn't want their kid to be equipped with all the necessary tools for economic success?

Like · Reply · Mark as spam ·  5 · Apr 8, 2016 3:31pm



Ralph Babbitt Landscape Designer/Contractor at 个体经营

You want your kids to have a decent job in Ottawa? much more likely if they're bilingual...no brainer!

Hotspot Questions/Concerns from Society

Will the program provide stress for some children, such as those with special needs, children who are English Language Learners(ELL), and children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds?

In an interview from CBC, there was a voice recording from a mother whose 4-year-old boy has some special needs. Her tone was extremely anxious, as she believed that the move to the bilingual kindergarten will be cruel for her son



Christine E Thomson Owner at Bone Voyage

The OCDBS is closing I believe 7 English-only elementary schools in June. My son's school is one of them - he has autism and isn't a good candidate for French Immersion - which is too bad because the FI school is right across the street from me. I'd always planned to send him to FI but it's not for him, I know now. He already buses - now if I want to keep him in an English public school he'll be bussed even farther.

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Hotspot Questions/Concerns from Society

Will French immersion swallow Ottawa's English school boards?

The enrolment in the English program slips and EFI grows. Pino Buffone, the board's superintendent of curriculum, believes that there is a possibility for English to become a "specialty" program depending on the parents' interests.

For example, enrolment figures for Elgin from October (2015) show 47 senior kindergarten students in EFI and only seven in English. The resolution, Elgin was turned into a French-immersion centre in September 2016 and ships English kids to Centennial Public School, about 12 blocks away.

Elgin is not isolated. There are other cases where families are moving from the community where their children grew up to enrol in an English program. With the implementation of the FI program, English programs for elementary schools will decline as the graduation from the 50/50 bilingual kindergarten program can drive the parents' further decision.

Discussion Questions

How do you think ESL and ELL students will fare in bilingual learning environments where both languages are new?

What might be some advantages and disadvantages of the various configurations of time and teachers?

Which of the international examples seem most successful/beneficial? China = partial immersion (up to 23%), France = CLIL (1 or 2 classes), Jamaica = 50/50 bilingual

How might we address the concerns of parents with special needs/ELL students who do not want to be in a 50% French program?

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