

Good evening, My name is Brian Arruda and I am here as a representative of the St. Matthew Parent Council.

As a parent like many others, I am invested in my children's education and its impact on their future. It's concerning and upsetting that I have to stand here before you all today and request that our children get access to the same education that every other child across this province is already getting. Expecting our children to take time out of what we already know to be precious moments in their instructional day for IL robs them of equal access to fundamental class time and learning opportunities. To teachers, every minute counts in their day, and every interruption only impedes our children's learning. We pride ourselves in having the greatest teachers in the city, and yet we continue to interrupt their day and expect them to produce results with 120 minutes of less instructional time.

Additionally, the Education Act clearly states that all students in Ontario are required to receive 300 minutes of curriculum instruction. The IL program is not part of the Ontario curriculum. It does not appear on any ministry website and in fact the IL coordinator has stated that it does not exist. As a parent, how am I to know what is being taught and who is ensuring that proper learning is taking place if IL does not fall under the preview of curriculum?

No matter how we look at it, this board is denying our students access to equitable education. Its undeniable that our students are struggling with learning English and French already, why do we ask them to surrender 2 hours a week to learn another language when that time should be spent in Math, Science, Social Studies, and Literacy which already fall well below the provincial standard as proven by their EQAO scores. By the time our students have graduated from grade 8, they will have lost 7 total months of curriculum instruction with their teachers! Almost 1 whole school year less of instruction than other Ontario students. As a teacher, I know it is absolutely impossible to make up 7 months of lost time to cover the required curriculum in the quality of education our kids deserve.

As parents, we can opt out of music for religious reasons or CHOOSE to opt out of part of the Health curriculum, however we are not given the same option to opt out of learning a third language. I would much rather my child take that time to work with their teacher, as the teacher should be available at

this time to work with students as these 120 minutes would not interfere with their 240 minutes of prep time.

Another important facet to IL is funding, the ministry no longer funds the integrated model and the Ministry policy clearly states that “international languages needs to be taught outside of school hours and must not interfere with instructional time”. Why does this Board continue to fund the IL program to the tune of 5 million dollars that should be allocated to other desperately needed supports and resources for our students when the ministry will fund an afterschool and/or weekend program for those students that wish to participate in them?

In closing, we ask that you allow schools a realistic and fair threshold of 51% when it comes to surveying the community, but more importantly, if we continue to ignore the needs of our students and insist on an integrated IL program model, you must at least allow parents the choice to opt out so their child can have access to the mandated 300 minutes of teacher instruction that the Education Act clearly states every child in Ontario is entitled to. A policy that this board only 3 years ago felt was so important that it offered an extended day so that the IL program did not interfere with student learning.

Thank-you in advance for your consideration.