

**FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE DECISION OF PARENTS
TO ENROLL THEIR CHILDREN IN A FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM
IN PRINCE GEORGE**

by

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Abstract

French Immersion in Canada started more than 40 years ago in the small town of St-Lambert, Québec. It was initiated by a small group of English parents who wanted to allow their children, whose first language was not French, to learn French. Today, French Immersion is offered in all ten Canadian provinces and each of the territories, totaling 300,000 students attending 2,100 schools across the country. By attending French Immersion programs throughout elementary and secondary school, students will have acquired a level of competency in French and English as well as a level of bilingualism high enough to be able to live and work in a French community. This project proposes to investigate reasons why school children in Prince George, British Columbia are registered in a French Immersion program and the influence parents' socioeconomic status variables have on their decision to register them in French Immersion. A survey method will be used to collect data from parents who have registered their children in one of three French Immersion schools located in the Prince George School District.

Acknowledgement

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Marc for his endless support and perseverance in believing that I could accomplish it, to my children Erika and Nicolas for their comprehension and pride, and especially to Lynne and Nick my dear and respectful friends.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

For most kindergarten children, starting school is a very important moment in their short life, a moment they have been waiting for. However, sometimes this unique day, no matter how cherished and longed for, can also be very terrifying. This is especially the case when this day marks the beginning of a new, long, and challenging journey: learning a brand new language. Truly, this is how some students probably feel on their first day of school. That is, when they go to a French Immersion school, their parents have chosen this program for them, filled with good intentions, and hoping to give their children more opportunities by learning another language and another culture. According to Krashen (2007), this choice is made for the children, but everyone in the house has to assume some responsibility for it because children's cultural and linguistic experience in the home is the foundation of their future learning and we must build on that foundation rather than undermine it.

Introduction to the Problem

According to Canadian Parents for French (2007), and the University of Michigan (2008), all French Immersion programs in Canada comprise the largest alternative to the mainstream system, numbering 300,000 students across the country. In addition, they indicate that a large number of children who are registered in French Immersion, Intensive French, Core French and Francophone programs do not speak French or understand little or no French when they commence.

Research Questions to be Investigated

This study proposes to investigate the following two questions:

- 1) For what reasons do parents decide to enroll their children in a French Immersion elementary school in Prince George?
- 2) Do socioeconomic status variables influence their decision to enroll them?

Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following terminologies require specific definition.

1. French Immersion Program: According to Bostwick (2004), French Immersion is an approach to foreign language instruction in which the usual curricular activities are conducted in a foreign language. This means that the new language, French for this study, is the medium of instruction.
2. Core French: Core French is a basic program in French as a second language where students study the language a minimum of 30-40 minutes per day (Ministry of Education, Government of British Columbia 2001).
3. Single-track program: When a school offers education in one language only.
4. Dual-track program: When a school offers education in two languages.
5. Parental figure: A person who represents essential but not necessarily ideal attributes of a father or mother and who is the object of the attitudes

and responses of an individual in a parent-child relationship. (Gage Canadian Dictionary, 1991).

6. Phoneme: Any of a small set of units, usually about 20 to 60 in number, and different for each language, considered to be the basic distinctive units of speech sound by which morphemes, words, and sentences are represented (Random House Dictionary, 2010).
7. Socioeconomic Status (S.E.S.): S.E.S. will be defined as one's income, educational attainment, occupational status, identity, age, and gender (Demarest, Reisner, Anderson, Humphrey, Farquhar, and Stein, 1993).

CHAPTER 2

The Literature Review

Definition and History of French Immersion Education in Canada

French Immersion programs in Canada started more than 40 years ago in the small town of St-Lambert, Québec. On September 8th 1965, a small group of devoted English parents registered their children in French Immersion at Margaret Pendlebury School.

French Immersion started for many reasons. According to the article, Survey of Canadian Attitudes Toward Learning (Canadian Council on Learning 2007), the main reason why French Immersion started was to allow English-speaking children to learn French and “become more competitive in Quebec’s job market”. On the other hand, the article, Proud of Two Languages (Canadian Parents for French, 2006) indicates that Anglophone parents wanted their children to learn both languages and find out about Francophone culture.

According to Canadian Parents for French (2008), French Immersion language programs are designed for children whose first language is not French and who have little or no knowledge of French prior to entering the program. They also describe how French Immersion programs provide students the chance to achieve a level of bilingualism by the end of secondary school graduation that enables them to work or pursue their education in college or university in French.

According to the Canadian Council on Learning (2007), there are three types of Immersion programs: Early, Middle, and Late Immersion. According to

L'enseignement en Immersion Française, Early Immersion starts at a very young age, as soon as Kindergarten, before language literacy learning. Middle and Late Immersion start only later in the intermediate school program.

People's Concerns About French Immersion

According to King and Fogle (2006), parents encourage their children to learn a second language because it brings together the parents' heritage language and culture, it provides academic and cognitive advantages, and the encouragement of cross-cultural understanding and communication. Furthermore, the authors indicate that even if second language acquisition may result in a language delay, most children will benefit from being bilingual because there are no studies that prove that bilingualism causes language disorders or confusion. The authors also indicate that children can benefit more from reading done in the second language than watching television; however, even if it helps to develop cognitive skills, bilingualism does not lead to better academic performance.

According to Early Advantage (2008), in the past, children who learn two languages have been compared to those who learn just one. For example, Early Advantages (2008) found that bilingual children could perform certain cognitive assignments more accurately than could monolinguals. The same study showed that bilingual children are more capable of sorting out intangible and ambiguous information than are monolingual children. In the same article, Petitto (1997) calls this increased mental flexibility and agility heightened computational analysis in

the brain. Petitto also indicates that the brain is not a “closed system” and that the brain is not programmed to learn only one language.

Myths and Misconceptions About Language Learning in the Classroom

In an attempt to help teachers face unexpected realities when they teach a new language to young children, McLaughlin (1992) enumerates five myths or misconceptions about language learning in a classroom.

1) Children learn a second language quickly and easily? According to the author’s research, there is no proof that young children will learn a language quicker than will adults. Even if children socialize more easily, adults have better “memory techniques.”

2) The younger the child, the more skilled he or she will be in acquiring a second language? This myth is partly right if pronunciation is considered, however, the author mentions that older children will learn better than will younger children.

3) The more time students spend in a second language context, the quicker they learn the language? The author found no evidence to support this myth. In fact, he indicates that using the home language in the classroom will help students to obtain better grades and strengthen the ties between home and the school.

4) Children have acquired a second language once they can speak it? McLaughlin indicates clearly that a child who speaks the language well but has difficulties in writing or reading, has not yet acquired the second language.

5) All children learn a second language in a different way? Learning a language is compared to any other kind of learning, it is different for every individual and the teaching techniques have to be diverse to meet every kind of learner.

In order to be able to support their children and help them to succeed with their homework, the article, *Why Choose French* (2006), suggests communicating often with the teacher, continuing to read to the child in English or other language if mother tongue is different, facilitating access to a *Bescherelle* verb book and a French dictionary, watching TV in French, and ensuring encouragement and support of all academic efforts.

French Immersion Programs in Canada

Most French Immersion classes are taught in French until grade four when English classes start and “students learn the same material that they would if they were not enrolled in French Immersion” (University of Michigan, 2008).

According to the Ministry of Education, Government of Saskatchewan 1995, children have to become familiar with the phonemes of the French language. These phonemes are the small sounds employed to form a word. By using many strategies like body language, gestures, expressive tones, visual supports, and repetitions, teachers who speak only in French will facilitate the language acquisition. Teachers also support their curriculum by including themes and songs that captivate students’ attention and interests.

The article, *French Immersion* (Ministry of Education, Government of Saskatchewan, 1995), states that by the end of secondary school, students will

have acquired a level of competency in French and in English and a level of bilingualism high enough to be able to live and work in a French community.

Reasons why Children are Enrolled in French Immersion

According to Brehaut and Slevinsky (2002), deciding to register a child in French Immersion is a decision that can be made on behalf of or with the children, but no matter how it is chosen, it is an "important academic choice for the child's educational career" (Brehaut & Slevinsky, 2002, p.1). Because Canada is multicultural, the decision to learn a second language can give children, in a French Immersion program, countless benefits.

According to Statistics Canada (2004), French Immersion students appear to have better reading scores than do Non-Immersion students. Table 1 below describes the average reading scores obtained by Immersion and Non-Immersion students. The study reveals that students in French Immersion perform considerably better in reading than do other students except in the province of Manitoba. However, the author indicates that the fact that there are more girls than boys registered in French Immersion programs might have influenced the results.

According to Lessow-Hurley (2005), students learning a second language will develop an appreciation and understanding of another culture because teaching a second language is combined with culture; it is important for a teacher to know and understand the culture surrounding the work environment in order to avoid inequity or bias. Language and culture are indivisible and learning a different language involves contacts with a new culture. Lessow-Hurley also

indicates that parents encourage their child to learn a second language because it brings together their heritage language and culture.

Table 1: Reading achievement

	Average Reading Scores	
	Immersion	Non-Immersion
Newfoundland and Labrador	608	510
Prince Edward Island	558	509
Nova Scotia	567	517
New Brunswick	550	495
Quebec	566	537
Ontario	570	533
Manitoba	533	533
Saskatchewan	570	529
Alberta	601	548
British Columbia	610	537

Source: Statistic Canada 2008.

In addition, Foust (2003) states that young children who acquire a new language have a natural way of absorption; they will perform better in math, explore new cultures and heritage, and have better travelling skills.

According to Lawless (2009), learning a new language could help to understand the one that is already spoken and make a third one easier to learn. Similarly, Nutt (2009) indicates that it is common now for people to speak another language than their mother tongue, and speaking a third language is becoming popular. Nutt also indicates that it has been proven that those who are bilingual are better able to learn a third language because they can make a distinction between the two other languages by identifying grammar, spelling, vocabulary, similarities between words, and sentence structures. The author also mentions

that it is easier to understand the rules of a third language and to practice the third language outside of the classroom if a student has done this for a first and second language.

According to Canadian Parents for French (2006), bilingual students will find a job more easily than will monolingual students because 30 percent of all job opportunities for federal public services require the ability to speak French and English. They also indicate that going through a French Immersion program increases academic, cultural, and career options and offers more employment opportunities.

The Canadian Council on Learning (2007), states that French Immersion programs help to strengthen students' problem-solving skills. Their research has demonstrated that bilingual students have more cognitive advantages than monolingual students and are able to solve problems, and understand complex and abstract concepts more easily by concentrating on the facts without being distracted.

Early Advantage (2008) compared children who learn two languages to those who learn just one; bilingual children perform certain cognitive tasks more accurately than do monolingual children. They also indicate that bilingual children are more capable of sorting out intangible and ambiguous information.

Lawless (2009) encourages learning a foreign language to develop the ability to communicate with other people when travelling or in our own community and to help us to understand and accept other cultures. She mentions that a new language can open the door to new people, ideas, careers and ways of

understanding the world. Moreover, learning a new language can also help learners to understand the one that is already spoken and make a third language easier to learn.

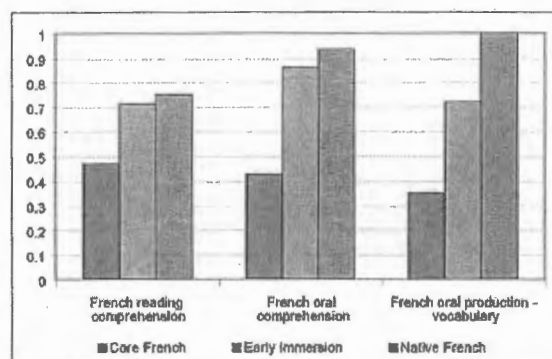
French Immersion, 40 Years Later

During the last 40 years, research has indicated that Anglophone students registered in a French Immersion program succeed better in any kind of elementary test than did students in a Core French program as part of the mainstream system. In addition, students who went to Early French Immersion had as much success as Native French students on writing and comprehension tests (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

According to The Canadian Council on Learning (2007), French Immersion programs have been called a “phenomenon” and “the great Canadian experiment that worked” (p. 2). The article indicates that students studying in French Immersion show no differences in achievement scores in French and English language, mathematics, science or social studies, compared to students studying in English. The article indicates that there are “no negative effects or no differences in academic achievement” (p. 2).

In the early school years, because everything is taught in French, students in French Immersion might have low results in English writing and reading. However, those competencies will improve later as English will start to be taught. This result is demonstrated in Figure 1, which compares French reading comprehension, French oral comprehension, and French oral production

vocabulary between students registered in Core French, Early Immersion, and Native French.



Source: Canadian Council on Learning 2007.

Figure 1: Scores on French-language tests for early-French Immersion, core French, and native French fifth graders

Summary

According to research, French Immersion programs seem to be the best method for developing bilingualism among Canadian children. In addition to developing a second language and becoming familiar with a different culture, children in French Immersion programs acquire writing and reading skills at a higher than average level. They also succeed better in mathematics and science than do children in unilingual school programs. This outcome might encourage French Immersion children to continue in French at a higher level in education because according to Canadian Council on Learning (2007), 51% of those students will go to a French speaking university.

It appears that French Immersion programs met their objective and grew quickly at the beginning. However, according to the Canadian Council on Learning (2007), in order to continue to develop bilingualism and obtain more

significant results, French Immersion programs need to expand to substantially increase rates of French-English bilingualism among Canadians. Consequently, developing more French Immersion programs risk facing other challenges such as finding qualified teachers. Due to a shortage of qualified teachers, school districts in British Columbia have no spaces to register more students in their French Immersion programs and have implemented a lottery system to avoid parents lining up. The long-term solution to this problem is to expand opportunities for post-secondary learning in French and opportunities for teachers to develop French-language skills during their teacher preparation (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to understand parents' reasons for registering their children in a French Immersion school in Prince George, British Columbia, and if any socioeconomic status (S.E.S.) variables have influenced their decision to do that rather than enroll their children in an English only school. It will be revealing to find out if the reasons to register children in an Immersion school are linked to the parents' S.E.S. This result would be an important contribution to the research knowledge on this topic. These findings might bring changes in the school district's policies, help teachers to understand and cope with S.E.S. variables in their classes, and guide parents in their choice to enroll their children in French Immersion programs.

Research Procedures

This study collected data from parents who had their children in one of the three French Immersion Schools in the city of Prince George, British Columbia. Questionnaires were distributed to children by the administrators of each school (see appendix A) and were attached to a consent form and a confidentiality letter (see appendix B). Participation was voluntary and involved no risks for any of the participants. Once completed, the questionnaires were returned to the researcher for analysis. The researcher collected data on age, education, parental figure, and the reasons why parents chose a French Immersion program.

It is important to mention that no children were involved in this project and that participants were given the researcher's contact information in the event that

they wanted more information or had questions. The names of participants did not appear anywhere on the questionnaires or on any documents.

Research Methodology

Before the project began, I met with School District No. 57 to obtain permission for the project. Once permission had been granted, I contacted school administrators and met with them to discuss the methodology. Shortly after meeting with the three principals, questionnaires were sent to every student's home. An envelope to facilitate the return of completed questionnaires, accompanied the questionnaires.

Research Population

The participants were the parents of school children attending a French Immersion program in one of the three French Immersion schools in Prince George: College Heights Elementary School, Spruceland Elementary School, and Austin Road Elementary School. These participants came from three different areas of the city. College Heights is a subdivision located on the west side of Prince George; Spruceland is located in the center of the city; and Austin Road is located on the city's north side.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The research instrument was a questionnaire that I developed. The administrators of each school agreed to send the questionnaires and permission forms to the parents of children in the Immersion program at their schools. The questionnaires were sent to the participants in the fall of 2009 and took approximately five minutes to complete. Data were collected between November

and December 2009 and the results of each survey were recorded in a table. The entries in the table included a family S.E.S. profile: the parents' ages, level of education, occupational status, and the reasons why they registered their child in a French Immersion program.

Data Analysis

An Excel Program was used to analyze results of the findings. Once the data was analyzed, they were securely stored in my house.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter presents the research findings and is organized by three schools: (1) School #1: Results for Austin Road Elementary School; (2) School #2: Results for Spruceland Elementary School; (3) School #3: Results for College Heights Elementary School. The results for the survey for the three schools are described individually. Each school description is divided into five sections: age, education, reasons why parents have chosen to enroll their children in a French Immersion school, reasons why parents have chosen to enroll their children in a French Immersion program compared to their level of education, and reasons why parents have chosen to enroll their children in a French Immersion program compared to parents' age. A summary for the school follows the description. This chapter also contains two additional sections. The first section presents comments reported by parents at all three schools. The second section gives a summary for all three schools of reasons why parents chose to enroll their children in a French Immersion school. Schools one to three report their results with the use of histograms for the purpose of describing the variables of age and level of education of the parents whose children attend one of the three schools.

Descriptive Statistics

This survey research had access to a sample of 433 families living in Prince George, British Columbia who had one or more children attending one of the three schools where a French Immersion program was offered. Out of a possible 100 families at Austin Road, 143 families at Spruceland, and 190 at

College Heights Elementary School, a total of 256 surveys were filled out and returned. This represents 65% of the population at Austin Road, 66% at Spruceland, and 50% at College Heights.

Presentation of findings for School #1: Austin Road Elementary School

Age:

The first S.E.S. variable that was examined was the age of the parents who responded. The results indicate (see figure 2), that 3% of parents who have chosen to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at Austin Road Elementary School were between the ages of 20 and 25 years old, 8% were between the ages of 26 and 30 years old, 17% were between the ages of 31 and 35 years old, 18% were between the ages of 36 and 40 years old, 14% were between the ages of 41 and 45 years old, 5% were between the ages of 46 and 50 years old, and 1% were between the ages of 51 and 55 years old. There were no parents older than 56 years of age with children attending this school. Results indicate that the majority of parents who chose to enroll their children at this school were between 36 and 40 years old.

Education:

The second S.E.S. variable that was studied was parents' level of education. Figure 3 indicates that 31% of parents who have chosen to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at Austin Road had a university degree compared to 18.5% who had a college degree and 11% who finished high school. Parental figures (mother/father) were also examined. Figure 3 also

indicates that the percentage of mothers who went to college and university was higher than fathers.

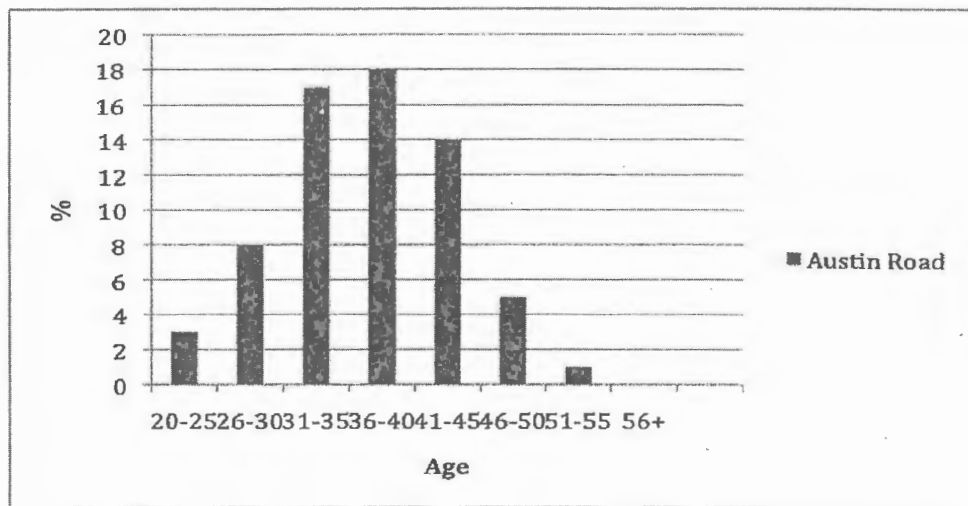


Figure 2 Parents who chose to enroll their children at Austin Road Elementary School by age

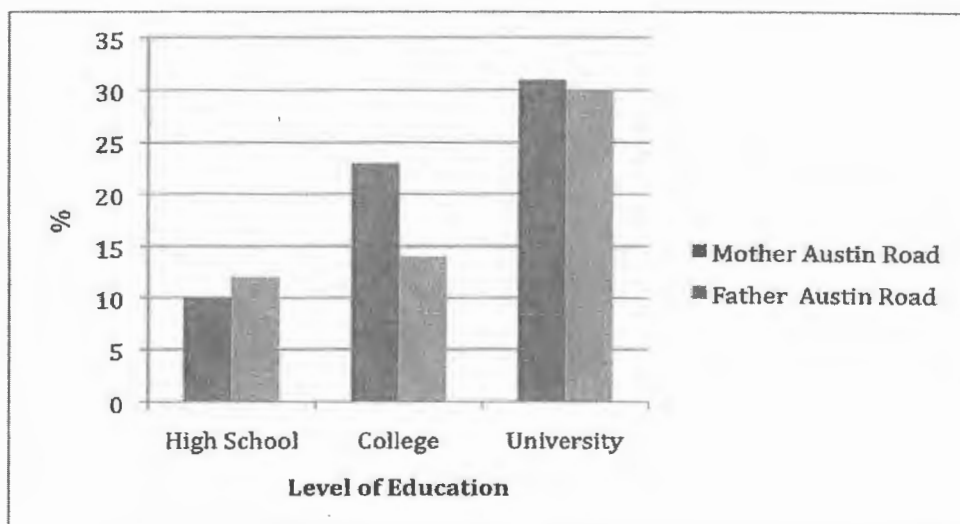


Figure 3 Level of education of parents who chose to enroll their children at Austin Road Elementary School

Reasons why parents have chosen to enroll their children at Austin Road Elementary School:

The survey asked participants to indicate their reasons for enrolling their children in a French Immersion program. Parents had a choice of 11 reasons, (see figure 4) and could choose more than one. The survey also contained an open section for additional comments.

The results indicate (see figure 4) that for 8% of parents who have chosen to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at Austin Road, the reason was for their children to regain their language and their French roots. For 60% of parents, it was to learn a new language; for 8% to regain their French culture; for 28% to learn about a new culture; for 52% to have more job opportunities; for 32% to provide their children with more opportunities to travel in foreign countries; 7% thought that French Immersion had better teachers; 11% thought that French Immersion had better programs; for 48%, it was to give their children more challenges; 38% associated their choice with higher achievement, and 28% chose a French Immersion program because it was offered in their neighbourhood.

Reasons why parents chose to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at Austin Road Elementary School compared to their level of education:

The reasons why parents chose to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at Austin Road Elementary School were compared to their level of education and parental figures were also examined (see figure 5). These reasons were also rated according to parents' level of education. Parental figures

that had a university degree were compared to other parental figures having a college or a high school degree. Figure 5 indicates that all parents in all education levels thought that acquiring a new language, getting a better job, and giving more challenges to their children were the three most important reasons for choosing French Immersion. The fourth most important reason was their perception that French Immersion programs were associated with higher achievement.

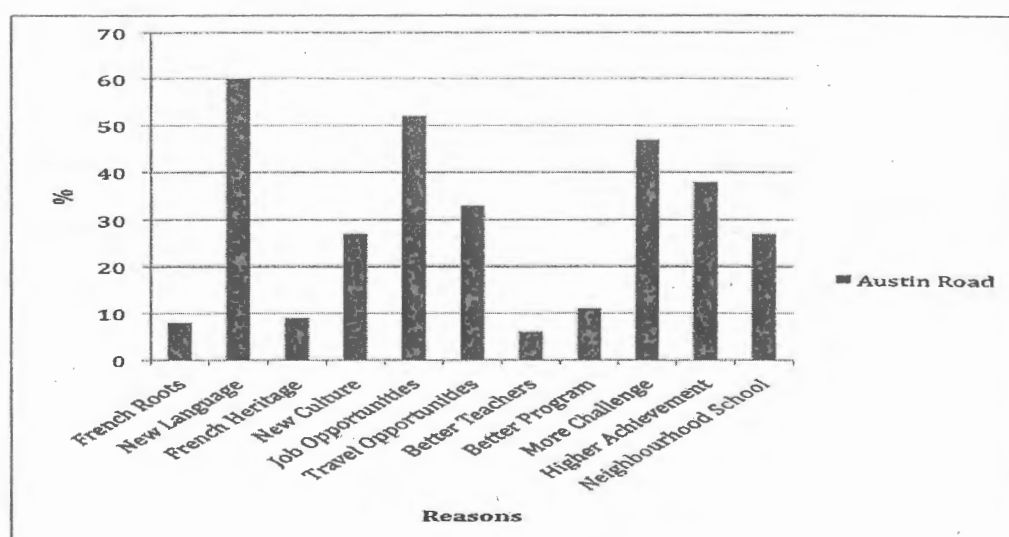


Figure 4 Reasons why parents chose a French Immersion program at Austin Road Elementary School

Reasons why parents chose to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at Austin Road Elementary School compared to their age:

The researcher also examined the reasons why parents chose French Immersion at Austin Road Elementary according to age group. Results indicate that 17.5% of parents of children attending French Immersion at Austin Road were between 31 and 45 years old. As indicated in figure 6, the results indicate

that according to their age group, parents who chose to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at Austin Road did so for different reasons.

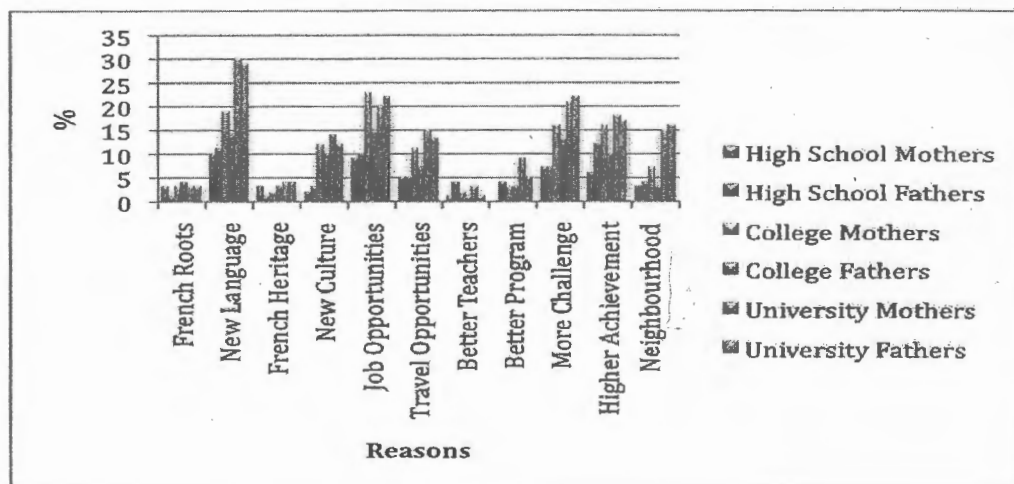


Figure 5 Education level, parental figure, and reasons why parents chose French Immersion at Austin Road Elementary School

The 20 to 25 age group, which represents 3% of the population, gave more importance, by order, to acquiring a new language, having better job opportunities, and for more travel opportunities. Parents in age group 26 to 30, 8% of the population, gave more importance to learning a new language, having better job opportunities, and having more challenges. Parents in age group 31 to 35 years of age, 17% of the population, thought that enrolling their children in a French Immersion program was going to give their children better job opportunities, learn a new language, and gave the same importance to travel opportunities, higher achievement, and more challenges. Parents in age group 36 to 40, 18% of the population, linked French Immersion with learning a new

language, better job opportunities, and higher achievement. Parents in the 41 to 45 years of age group, 14% of the population, thought that their children would learn a new language, have more challenges, and gave the same importance to higher achievement and job opportunities when they enrolled their children in a French Immersion program. Parents in age group 46 to 50, 1% of the population, chose French Immersion for their children to learn a new language, have better job opportunities, and have more challenges. Parents in age group 51 to 55, 1% of the population, clearly indicated the opportunity to learn a new language and gave little importance to the others reasons. At Austin Road Elementary School, no parents older than 56 years of age had children enrolled.

Summary for school #1: Austin Road Elementary School

This first section has presented the findings for Austin Road Elementary School. A review of the 65 surveys that were completed and returned showed that 17.5% of participants were between 31 and 45 years old, 31% had a university degree, 18% had a college degree, and 11% had a high school diploma.

After comparing the S.E.S. variables of age and education level to the reasons parents chose French Immersion for their children, the findings clearly showed that parents in every age group and at all education levels chose French Immersion because they felt it was important for their children to learn a new language, to have better job opportunities later in life, to give them more of a challenge, and to become higher achievers. In addition, some parents added that they chose French Immersion hoping that the program would improve their

children's linguistic abilities and that they would learn additional languages more easily in the future.

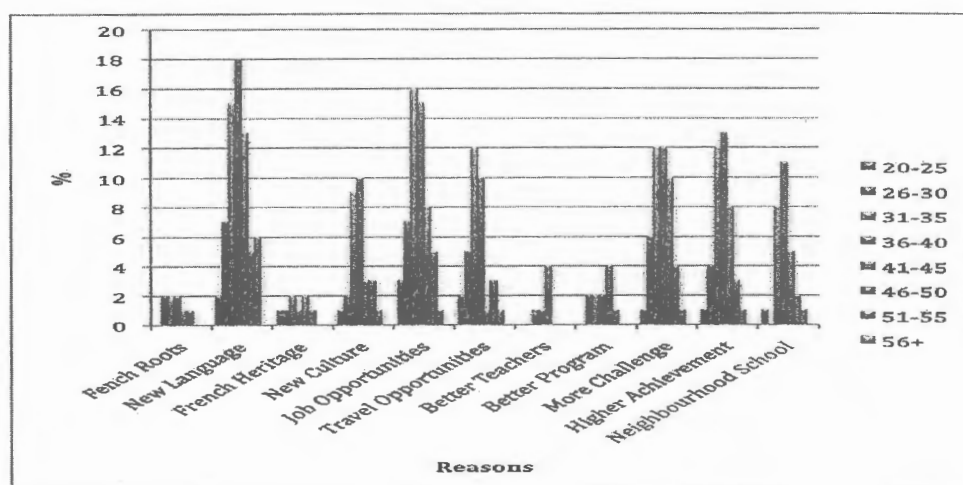


Figure 6 Parents' reasons for choosing French Immersion by age group at Austin Road Elementary School

Presentation of findings for School #2: Spruceland Elementary School

Age:

The first S.E.S. variable studied for Spruceland Elementary School was age. Figure 7 indicates that 4% of parents who had one or more children attending Spruceland Elementary School in French Immersion, were between the age of 20 and 25 years old, 12% were between the age of 26 and 30 years old, 23% were between the age of 31 and 35 years old, 35% were between the age of 36 and 40 years old, 17% were between the age of 41 and 45 years old, 6% were between the age of 46 and 50 years old, and 1% between the age of 51 and 55 years old. No parents older than 56 years of age had children attending

this school. Results indicate that the majority of parents who chose to enroll their children at this school were between 36 and 40 years of age.

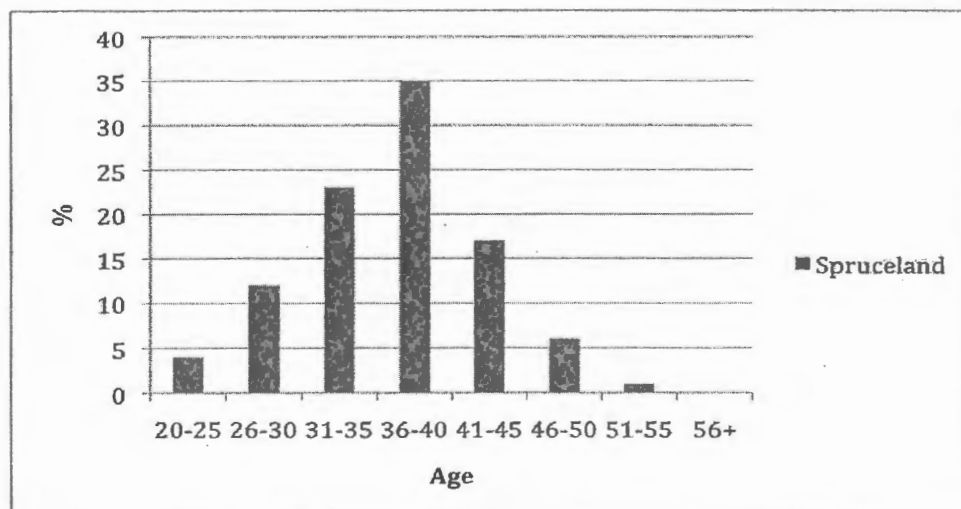


Figure 7 Parents who chose to enroll their children at Spruceland Elementary

School by age

Education:

The second S.E.S. variable studied was parents' level of education. Figure 8 shows that 43.5% of parents had a university degree, 36.5% had a college degree, and 12.2% had finished high school. As for parental figures, Figure 8 clearly indicates that the percentage of mothers who went to college is higher than the fathers' percentage; the percentage of fathers and mothers who went to university is similar, and 11% of fathers compared to 14% of mothers graduated from high school.

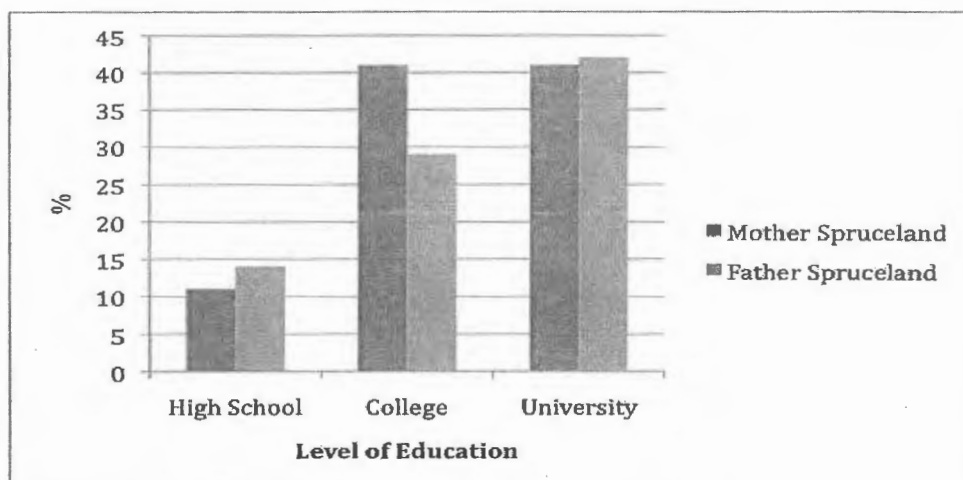


Figure 8 Level of education and parental figure of parents who chose to enroll their children at Spruceland Elementary School

Reasons why parents chose to enroll their children at Spruceland Elementary School:

In the survey, parents had a choice of 11 reasons, and could choose more than one. The survey also contained an open section for additional comments. Figure 9 indicates that 10% of parents chose French Immersion for their children to regain their language and their French roots, 90% to learn a new language, 12% to regain their French heritage, 41% to learn about a new culture, 90% to have more job opportunities, 55% to give opportunities to travel in foreign countries, 3% thought that French Immersion had better teachers, 2% thought French Immersion had better programs, 53% thought they provided more challenges for their children, 41% associated it with higher achievement, and 13% chose it because the program was offered in their neighbourhood.

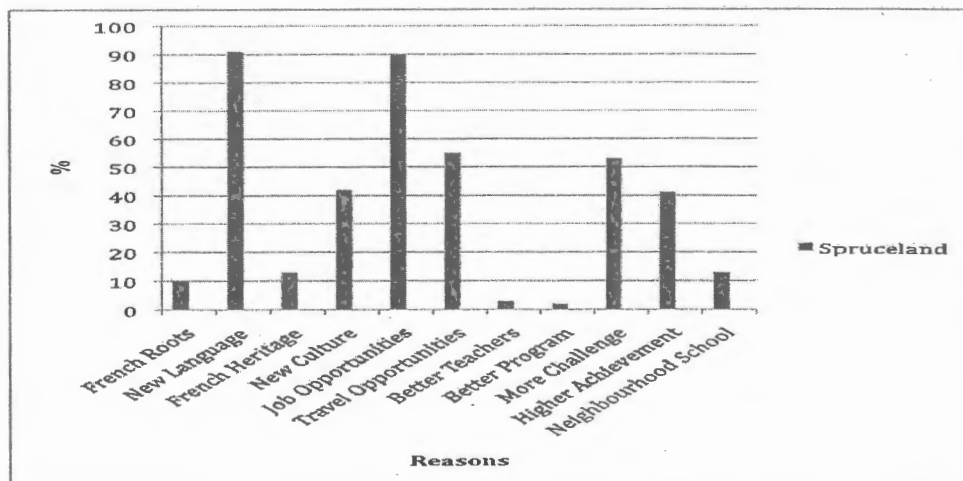


Figure 9 Reasons why parents chose French Immersion program at Spruceland Elementary School

Reasons why parents chose to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at Spruceland Elementary School compared to their level of education:

The reasons why parents chose to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at Spruceland Elementary School compared to their level of education and parental figure were also examined. The reasons were also rated according to parents' level of education. Parental figures that have a university degree were compared to other parental figures having a college or a high school degree.

All parents, regardless of parental figure, considered that acquiring a new language and having better job opportunities were the two most important reasons for choosing French Immersion. Greater challenges and travel opportunities were equally placed in the third position. The fourth most important reason was linked to higher academic achievement.

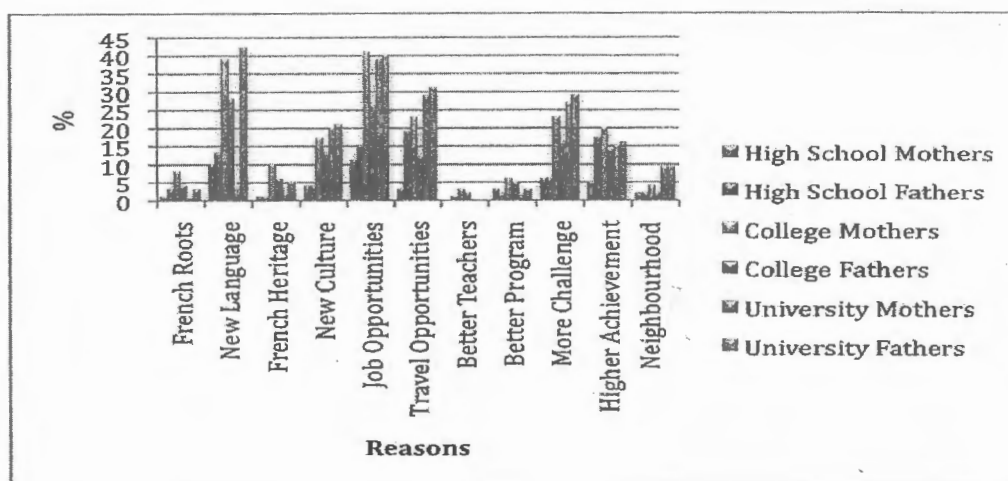


Figure 10 Education level, parental figure and reasons why parents chose

French Immersion at Spruceland Elementary School

Reasons why parents chose to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at Spruceland Elementary School compared to their age:

The researcher also examined the reasons why parents chose French Immersion at Spruceland Elementary according to age group. At Spruceland Elementary school, 35% of parents of children attending French Immersion were between 36 and 40 years old. As indicated in figure 11, results indicate that according to their age group, parents who have chosen to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at Spruceland gave importance to different reasons.

The age group 20 to 25 represented 4% of the population. This group gave more importance, by order, to better job opportunities, acquiring a new language, and having more challenges. Parents in age group 26 to 30, 12% of the population, gave more importance to learning a new language, and the same importance to obtaining better jobs and travelling in foreign countries. Parents in

age group 31 to 35 years of age, 23% of the population, thought that enrolling their children in a French Immersion program was going to give better job opportunities to their children; they would learn a new language, and have more challenges if they were enrolled in French Immersion. Parents in age group 36 to 40, 35% of the population, and 41 to 45, 17% of the population, linked French Immersion with learning a new language, and having better job and travel opportunities. Parents in age group 46 to 50, 6% of the population, chose French Immersion for their children to have better job opportunities, learn a new language, and gave the same importance to having more challenges and travel opportunities. Parents in age group 51 to 55, 1% of the population, indicated the opportunity to learn a new language, have better job opportunities, and regain their French roots as significant reasons. Finally, no parents older than 56 years of age had children enrolled at Spruceland Elementary School.

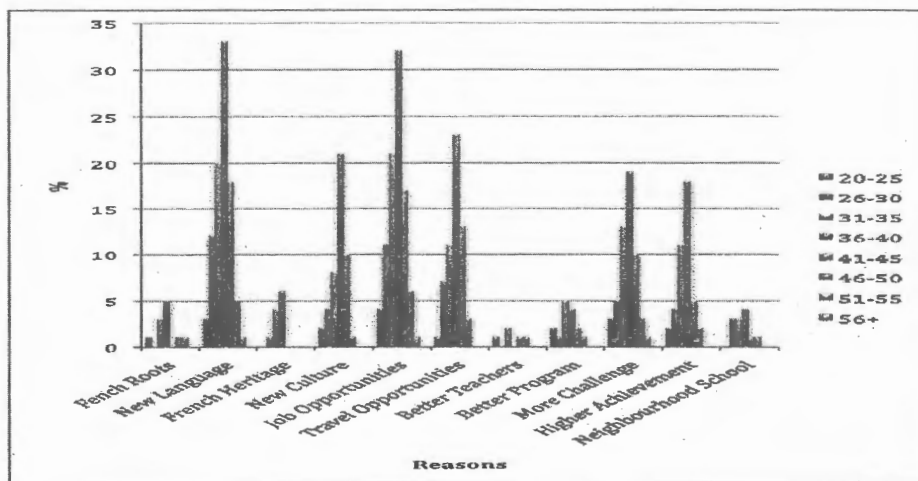


Figure 11 Reasons for choosing French Immersion at Spruceland Elementary School by age group

Summary for school #2: Spruceland Elementary School

Section two has presented the findings for the second school. A review of the 95 surveys that were completed and returned from Spruceland Elementary School showed that 35% of parents of children attending French Immersion were between 36 and 40 years, 43.5% of parents had a university degree, 36.5% had a college degree and 12.2% had a high school diploma.

After comparing the S.E.S. variables of age and education to the reasons why parents of Spruceland Elementary School chose French Immersion for their children, the findings clearly showed that parents in every age group and at all education levels chose French Immersion for their children first to learn a new language, second to have better job opportunities later in life, and third to give them more challenges and obtain higher academic achievement.

Presentation of findings for School #3: College Heights Elementary School

Age:

The first S.E.S. variable examined at College Heights Elementary School was age group. Figure 12 indicates that 0% of parents were between the age of 20 and 25 years old, 2% were between the age of 26 and 30 years old, 16% were between the age of 31 and 35 years old, 43% were between the age of 36 and 40 years old, 28% were between the age of 41 and 45 years old, 9% were between the age of 46 and 50 years old, 3% were between the age of 51 and 55 years old, and only 1% were older than 56 years of age had children attending this school. Results indicate that the majority of parents who chose to enroll their children at this school were between 36 and 40 years of age.

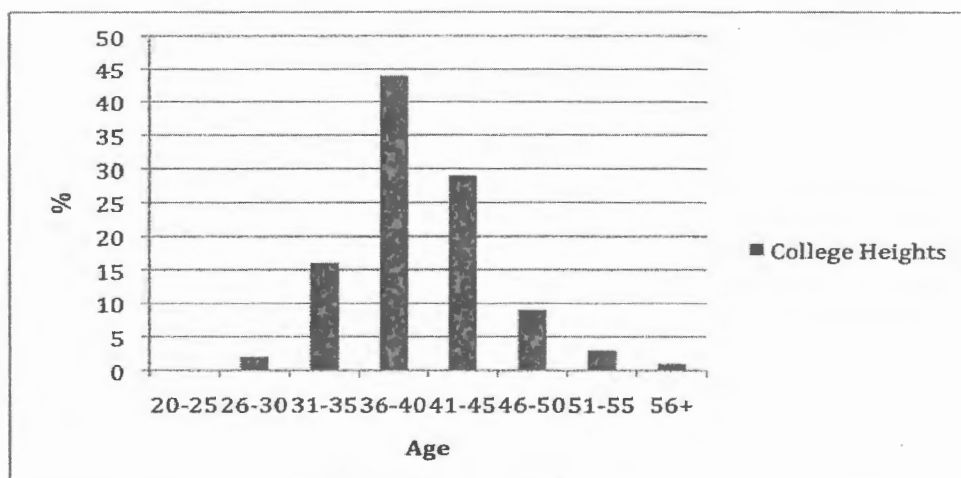


Figure 12 Parents who chose to enroll their children at College Heights elementary school by age

Education:

The second S.E.S. variable studied was parents' level of education. Figure 13 indicates that 59.5% of parents had a university degree compared to 22.5% who had a college degree and 17.5% who graduated from high school. As for parental figure, 73% of mothers and 48% of fathers went to university.

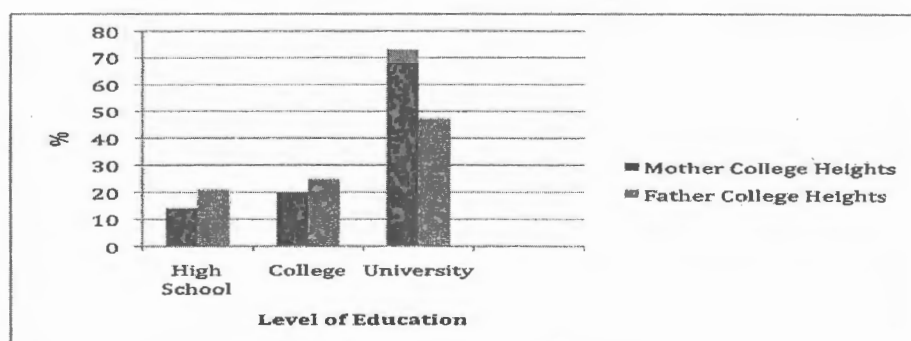


Figure 13 Level of education and parental figure of parents who chose to enroll their children at College Heights Elementary School

Reasons why parents chose to enroll their children at College Heights Elementary School:

The reasons why parents chose French Immersion at College Heights for their children were also examined. In the survey, parents had a choice of 11 reasons, and could choose more than one. The survey also contained an open section for additional comments.

Figure 14 indicates that 7% of parents chose French Immersion for their children to regain their language and their French roots, 89% for their children to learn a new language, 9% to regain their French culture, 47% to learn about a new culture, 88% to have better job opportunities, 61% to give opportunities to travel in foreign countries, 5% thought that French Immersion had better teachers, 12% thought that French Immersion had better programs, 55% for their children to have more challenges, 60% associated it with higher achievement, and 25% thought it was important that the program was offered in their neighbourhood.

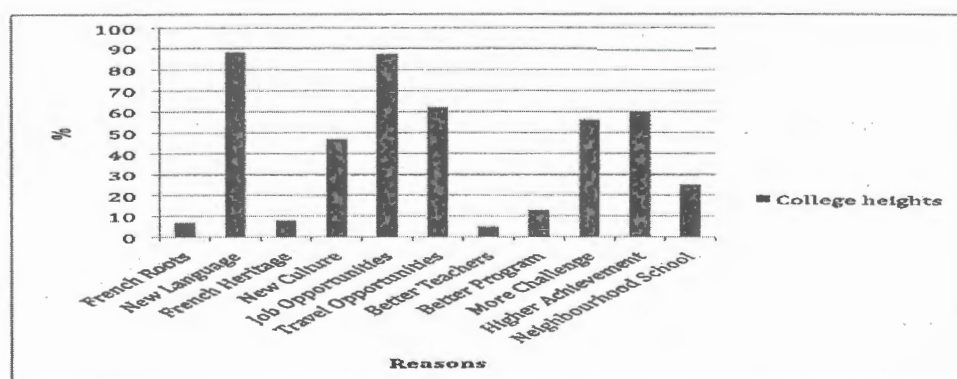


Figure 14 Reasons why parents chose French Immersion program at College Heights Elementary School

Reasons why parents chose to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at College Heights Elementary School compared to their level of education:

The reasons why parents chose to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at College Heights Elementary School were compared to their level of education and parental figure (see figure 15). Parental figures that have a university degree were compared to other parental figures having a college or a high school degree. All parents reported that acquiring a new language and giving better job and travel opportunities to their children were the three most important reasons for choosing French Immersion. The fourth most important reason was clearly associated equally with more challenge and higher achievement.

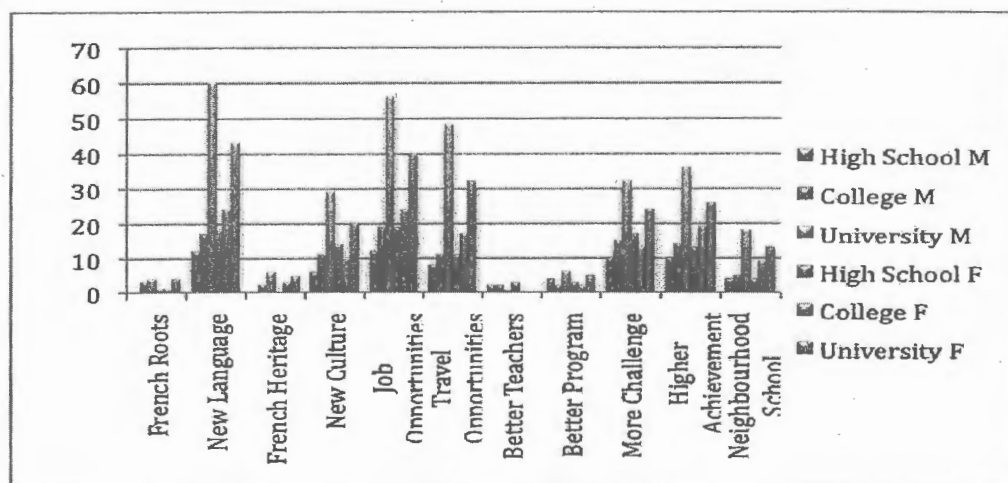


Figure 15 Education level, parental figure and reasons why parents chose French Immersion at College Heights Elementary School

Reasons why parents chose to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at College Heights Elementary School compared to their age group:

The researcher also examined the reasons why parents chose French Immersion at College Heights Elementary. According to age group, 43% of parents of children attending French Immersion at College Heights were between 36 and 40 years of age. As indicated in figure 16, findings show that according to their age group, parents who have chosen to enroll their children in a French Immersion program at College Heights gave importance to different reasons.

At College Heights Elementary School, no parents between 20 and 25 years of age had children enrolled. Parents in age group 26 to 30, 2% of the population, gave more importance to learning a new language, having better job opportunities, and to higher achievement. Parents in age group 31 to 35 years of age, 16% of the population, thought that enrolling their children in a French Immersion program was going to offer better job opportunities. Importance was also given to learning a new language and bringing more challenges. Parents in age group 36 to 40 years, 43% of the population, linked French Immersion with learning a new language, having better job opportunities and opportunities to travel in foreign countries. Parents in the 41 to 45 years of age group, 28% of the population, thought that their children would have better job opportunities, learn a new language, and new culture. Parents in age group 46 to 50 years, 9% of the population, chose French Immersion for their children to learn a new language, have a better job, and more challenges. Parents in age group 51 to 55 years, 3% of the population, clearly indicated that the first reason why they enrolled their

children in French Immersion was to give them more challenges. They also gave the same importance to learning a new language, having better job opportunities, attaining higher achievement, attending neighbourhood school, and learning about a new culture. Parents older than 56 years of age, 1% of the population, gave the same importance to job opportunities, a new culture, travel to foreign countries, more challenges, and higher achievement.

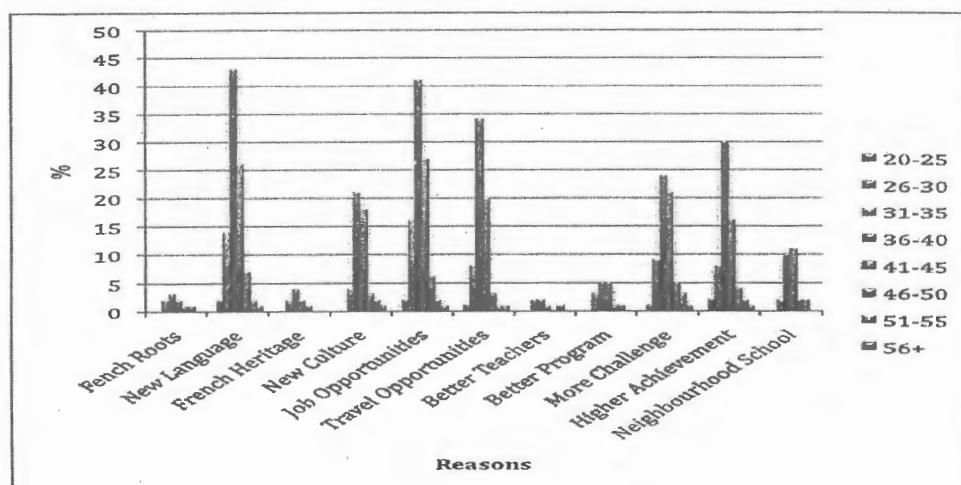


Figure 16 Reasons for choosing French Immersion at College Heights elementary by age

Summary of school #3: College Heights Elementary School

This section has presented the findings for the third school. Overall, the 96 surveys that were completed and returned indicated that 43% of parents were between 36 and 40 years old, 59.5% of the parents had a university degree, 22.5% had a college degree and 17.5% had a high school diploma.

After comparing S.E.S. variables of age and education level as to the reasons why parents chose French Immersion for their children, the findings clearly showed that parents in every age group and at all education levels chose French Immersion first for their children to learn a new language, second to have better job opportunities later in life, and third to give them more challenges and obtain higher achievement.

Summary of reasons for all three schools

This last section presents a summary of reasons that the parents chose French Immersion for their children, for all three schools. This summary indicates (see figure 17) that 79.5% of parents for all three schools surveyed chose to enroll their children in a French Immersion school because they wanted their children to learn a new language.

These results also indicate that 76.3% of parents who chose French Immersion for their children thought that their children would have better job opportunities, 51.5% felt that their children would have more challenges in a French Immersion program, 49.3% believed that it would give their children more travel opportunities, and 46% of parents associated French Immersion with higher achievement. Figure 17 also indicates that 22% of parents gave consideration to the fact that the program was offered in a neighbourhood school, 9% wanted to regain their French heritage, 7.3% thought French Immersion had better programs, 9% because of their French roots and 3% thought that teachers in a French Immersion school were better teachers.

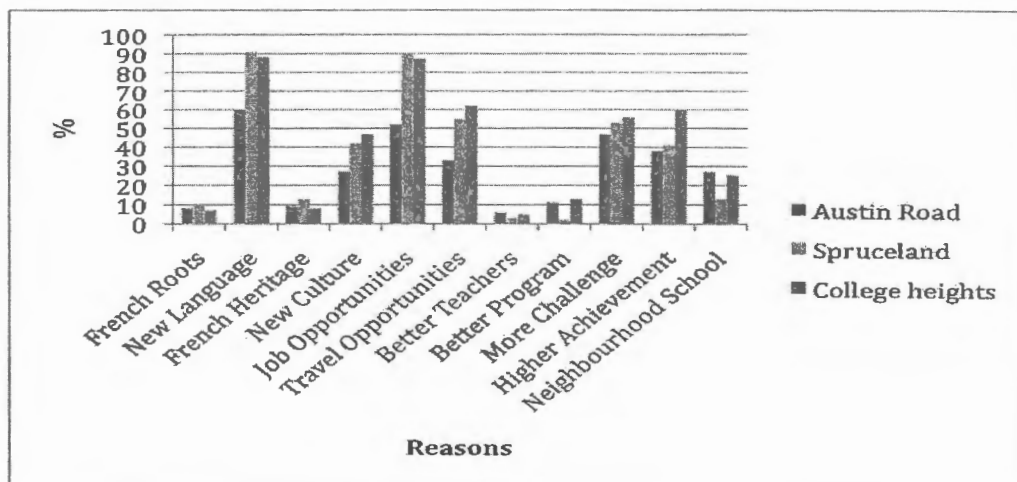


Figure 17 Summary of reasons for all three schools

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Interpretation of Results

This chapter discusses the findings and limitations of the study, the contribution to School District #57 as well as the individual schools that participated in this study, areas for further research, and concluding remarks.

This study investigated the reasons that parents send their children to a French Immersion school in Prince George, British Columbia. Variables such as parental figure, level of education, and age were investigated to see how they influenced parents' decision to enroll their children in a French Immersion school rather than an English only school. The study surveyed 256 families who had children attending one of Prince George's three Immersion schools. Parents were asked to complete a five-minute questionnaire (see appendix A) on their reasons for sending their children to a French Immersion school. Questionnaires were attached to a consent form and included a confidentiality letter (see appendix B). Once completed, responses to the questionnaires were returned to the researcher for analysis.

In the next section, the key elements of the analysis – parents' level of education, parental figure, parents' age, and reasons why parents enrolled their children in a French Immersion program, – are interpreted and discussed.

Key Elements of the study

Parents' level of education

The National Center for Education Statistics (2000) indicates that parents' education is a more significant reason than family income in determining whether or not parents will be involved in their children's education. The less education mom and dad have, the less likely they are to be involved. In regard to this study, when adding all the participants of every family, the findings on education for parents at all three schools indicated the sum of 82 participants who had finished high school, 152 who had a college degree, and 264 who had a university degree. Percentages of the parents at Austin Road and Spruceland who finished high school and/or college were similar. However, at College Heights, the results indicated that 30% more mothers than fathers had a university degree. This is contrary to Statistics Canada's findings (2006), in that only 30% of the population in Prince George had finished high school, 15% had a college degree, and 13% had a university degree. It is also important to note that 25% of the adult population in Prince George did not finish high school (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Considering that the majority of the population in this study has a university degree, it seems that parents who enroll their children in a French Immersion program in Prince George have a higher level of education than the majority of Prince George's population. This suggests that French Immersion parents in Prince George may be more involved with their children's education both at home and at school than are the parents of Non-Immersion students.

According to Statistics Canada (2008), students in French Immersion programs tend to come from a higher socioeconomic background than do Non-Immersion students. However, Canadian Parents for French (2006) note that a French Immersion program is not a program that is only for privileged children of upper-class families. On the contrary, children registered in French Immersion usually come from all social and economic backgrounds. The results of this study may suggest that parents with a high level of education may have higher expectations for their children than do parents with a low level of education, especially when both parents have similar levels of education.

In summary, this survey supports the findings of the National Center for Education Statistics (2000) in that higher levels of education may be a significant factor at becoming increasingly involved with their children's education, and thereby facilitating their ability to acquire and model social skills and problem-solving strategies. This study therefore suggests that students enrolled in French Immersion programs are more likely than Non-Immersion students to have parents with a postsecondary education that play an active role in their language-learning performance and provide them with enhanced encouragement to succeed.

Parental Figure

The first key element of this study is parental figure. This section describes the father's and/or the mother's responses. Interestingly enough, these responses showed that 79% of students in French Immersion in Prince George came from Anglophone families who lived in the neighbourhood of one of the

three schools. This survey also indicated that 61% of the time, both parents jointly made the decision to enroll their children in a French Immersion program. When only one parent made the decision, it was the mother who made the choice. This is supported in the literature by the Ministry of Education of Manitoba (2009), which indicates that parents are concerned about their children's future and that parental involvement is a significant indicator of student achievement and that such involvement leads to academic success. This research suggests that parents enroll their children in a French Immersion program because they feel that it will benefit their children's education.

In addition, children enrolled in a French Immersion program in Prince George came from families who already spoke another language other than English at home. The results indicated that 30% of the families that participated in this study spoke another language at home such as: Italian, Portuguese, Flemish, Chinese, Dutch, German, Japanese, Spanish, Russian, Croatian, and French. This suggests that parents in Prince George enrolled their children in a French Immersion program not only to learn a second language, but also to learn a third one. In fact, Brinton, Kagan, & Bauk (2008), note that children in French Immersion programs come from families whose heritage may be Chinese, Japanese, German, and Ukrainian. It seems that the French Immersion program attracts and benefits students coming from more diverse backgrounds than do students from monolingual families. Nutt (2009) agrees with that notion and adds that bilingual children who are learning a third language are more likely than monolingual children to have a better understanding of how the third language

works by being able to recognize the similarities regarding grammar, spelling, and vocabulary, as well as identify similar words, phrases, and sentence structures. Nutt also notes that French Immersion students are more likely than monolingual students to practice the third language outside of the classroom because their self-confidence is increased.

Furthermore, Canadian Parents for French (2006) mentions that 65% of parents agree that learning French will allow students to understand French-Canadian culture. However, findings of this study indicate that parents showed little interest in learning a new culture. Instead, parents were more interested in their children learning a new language. Perhaps parents took for granted that their children would learn about the French culture at the same time. According to Lessow-Hurley (2005), students learning a second language will develop an appreciation and understanding of another culture because teaching a second language is combined with that language's culture. Canadian Parents for French (2006) indicate that knowing another language and culture allows the chance to see someone's own culture from an outside perspective. In contrast, a monolingual, monocultural understanding of the world limits one's point of view.

In regard to occupation, the findings of this study showed that 75% of Prince George French Immersion parents were employed in health, trade, finance, social, and education domains. These findings suggest that French Immersion students may come from families with higher socioeconomic status including having more financial, social, and educational support than families of monolingual students. This is supported in the literature by Canadian Attitudes

Toward Learning (2007), which indicates that parents with higher incomes are twice as likely as lower income parents to enroll their children in a French Immersion program. The same report mentions that children enrolled in a French Immersion program come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds than monolingual children.

Parents' age

The findings for all three schools indicate that the participants were between 25 and 56 years of age and 82% of participants were between 31 and 45 years of age. According to Statistics Canada (2006), the average age of the population in Prince George is 36.5 years old. The majority of parents who have children registered in a French Immersion program from this study correspond to that age group.

There are fewer parents under the age of 30 and over the age of 46 with children in French Immersion. This study suggests that because French Immersion parents are more educated than are Non-Immersion parents, they may have chosen to have children later in life. For example, after finishing their postsecondary studies.

Reasons why parents enrolled their children in a French Immersion program

The results for the three schools indicated that there were four central reasons why parents enrolled their children in a French Immersion program: (1) to give their children the opportunity to learn a new language, (2) to have better job opportunities, (3) to meet more challenges combined with higher

achievement, and (4) to have travel opportunities. These are discussed in the following sections by their order of importance.

To learn a new language

Similar to the Canadian Parents for French, when they lobbied for French Immersion schooling 40 years ago, the most important reason why Anglophone parents in Prince George chose a French Immersion program was because they wanted their children to learn a new language. Parents felt that this would open a whole new world of opportunities for their children. In the same vein, the Ministry of Education of Manitoba (2009) agrees that a French Immersion program makes it possible for children to learn both official languages at a young age. In fact, by the time French Immersion students have completed their secondary schooling, they have acquired a level of bilingualism to function and work in a French-speaking environment or even go to a French speaking college or university. At the same time, French Immersion students continue to learn English and develop:

1. Knowledge in specific areas
2. Vocabulary
3. Grammar and writing skills
4. Confidence in their language skills

In Canada, French Immersion programs are designed for native speakers of the majority language (English) to become fluent in a minority language, French. Therefore, it appears that participants from this study chose a French Immersion program because it can significantly improve a child's ability to speak

the French language with no detriment to their English language skills. Indeed, Bournot-Trites (2002) states that learning a second language has a positive impact, enriches, and enhances intellectuality. Allen (2006) adds that it is estimated that between 60 and 75 percent of the world is bilingual, and bilingual education is a common approach used all over the world. It may be implemented in different ways for majority and/or minority language populations, and there may be different educational and linguistic goals in different countries. This is supported by McLaughlin (1992), who states that learning a language is like any other kind of learning: it is different for every individual and the teaching techniques have to be diverse to meet every kind of learner. It appears that parents are aware that French Immersion programs are effective in that their children can develop language-learning skills that can be applied to many academic subjects and life experiences.

Better career opportunities

Another reason why parents chose a French Immersion program was to give their children the tools to be able to access better jobs later in life. Clearly, 89% of the participants in this study felt that French Immersion programs provide their children with additional career opportunities. More than one language is a benefit to career development and will give children a competitive advantage in the job market. This is supported in the literature by Canadian Parents for French (2006), which states that bilingual students will find a job more easily because 30 percent of all job opportunities for federal public services require the ability to speak French and English. Lawless (2009), alludes to the fact that speaking

more than one language will increase marketability because employers tend to prefer candidates who speak one or more foreign languages. Similarly, Mullen (2006) states that the world is becoming more dependent on technology, the need to hire bilingual workers grows, and many government offices look to hire people who are bilingual. At times, businesses are looking only for people who can speak two languages fluently and hiring a person who speaks more than one language gives a business an extra advantage. Mullen also adds that even if there is a bigger need for bilingual employees in certain parts of the country, these jobs can be found almost anywhere.

Meet more challenges and high achievement

The third most important reason why parents in this study chose a French Immersion program for their children is because they felt that in a French Immersion program there would be more challenges. The results showed that more than 55% of the parents thought that learning a new language was linked to higher achievement. This notion is supported by Statistics Canada (2004), which indicates that French Immersion students appear to have better reading scores than do Non-Immersion students. In addition, Early Advantage (2008), states that children who learn two languages can often perform certain cognitive tasks more accurately than can monolinguals and they are more capable of sorting out intangible and ambiguous information.

Consequently, a number of factors may contribute to the high achievement of students in French Immersion. According to this study, relative to parents of Non-Immersion students, the parents of Immersion students are generally from

higher socio-economic backgrounds, more likely to have a postsecondary education, and have a professional occupation. Statistics Canada (2008) supports the idea that there is a strong relationship between high student achievement and family S.E.S. Families with a higher S.E.S. background add to the high achievement of students in French Immersion programs by providing them with various resources to support their children's development. Consequently, French Immersion students are more likely to be better prepared when they enter school than are Non-Immersion students. When S.E.S background is taken into account, the results of this study suggest that French Immersion students are more likely to perform better in school and become higher achievers than are Non-Immersion students. According to Canadian Parents for French (2006), French Immersion programs draw the following benefits:

1. Develop their listening skills, focus, and concentration
2. Learn organization, self-discipline, and resourcefulness
3. Increase cognitive abilities to understand complex and abstract concepts
4. Enhance their ability to communicate in their first language
5. Acquire a third or fourth language much easier
6. Strengthen their problem-solving skills
7. Learn tolerance, insight, and understanding of other cultures

Additionally, Manitoba Ministry of Education (2009), notes that when French Immersion students are taught math and science, they develop their skills

in French as well as developing the dimensions of numeracy and scientific thinking. The literature clearly indicates that French Immersion students show advantages in reading and writing skills, but their bilingualism may also positively influence their performance in other subjects.

Travel opportunities

The fourth reason why parents chose French Immersion for their children was to provide them with travel opportunities. According to Lawless (2009), when you lack the ability to communicate in the native language of a foreign place, you cannot fully participate in the day-to-day life, understand the culture, or communicate with the people. Lawless also notes that French Immersion children will enrich their travel experiences in both ease of communication and friendliness if they speak the language. In addition, she indicates that learning a foreign language helps to develop the ability to communicate when travelling or in one's own community and to help to understand, accept, and respect other cultures.

Moreover, language ability allows seeing and doing things that many visitors who do not speak the language cannot. Specifically, Canadian Parents for French (2006) note that for students enrolled in French Immersion, intercultural experiences have a monumental influence on shaping their identity, heightening their self-awareness, and giving them a full appreciation of their situation in life. Language is a barrier that can become frustrating but knowing another language allows those speakers to be comfortable in various situations, meet and interact with people, and have a more positive travel experience. In

light of the fact that there are 30 countries where French is spoken, and it is possible to travel to foreign countries without speaking the native language, travellers' experience will be more pleasant when they can see beyond the surface of the foreign culture and speak the language.

Additional Comments Reported by Parents at all three schools

In addition to the survey questionnaire, some parents reported other reasons for choosing a French Immersion program. One of the most common reason was to provide their children with linguistic abilities that would help them learn an additional language more easily in the future. This is supported in the literature in that learning a foreign language helps to develop the ability to communicate with other people when travelling to a foreign country or to communicate in our own community (Lawless, 2009). That is, it may help us to understand and accept other cultures and learning a new language can open the door to new people, ideas, careers, and ways of understanding the world. Hence, some parents believed that a French Immersion program is a free and accessible option for children to learn a different language at an early age.

Many parents also commented that learning another language would help to expand their child's mind. This reason is supported by Petitto (1997), who indicates that children who learn two languages can perform certain cognitive tasks more accurately than children who learn only one language. She notes that the brain is not programmed to learn only one language.

Parents mentioned that developing language skills at a young age best enhances mental capacity and brain development. They also indicated that they

thought that their children would achieve better than would monolingual children in both math and science. According to King and Fogle (2006), parents encourage their child to learn a second language for both academic and cognitive advantages.

Some parents chose French Immersion because they felt they had the ability to be more involved with their children's schooling whereby their children would receive more enhanced academic support that would assist them to become increasingly committed to their work. Those same parents also preferred a French Immersion program for their usually smaller class sizes, and better peer choices. They also wanted to avoid public schools that had severe discipline problems or were overburdened with special needs students. They considered French Immersion "a program of choice."

Very few parents made comments about administrators or teachers. However, some parents reported that their children were provided with more extra-curricular activities in French Immersion and felt that their children were exposed to a more diverse student population than were children in monolingual education programs. They also commented about learning a third language to enhance inter-cultural interaction and to develop an appreciation for diversity and inclusivity. They reported that attending French Immersion helped their children to understand their heritage language and culture much better than Non-Immersion students. This notion is supported in the literature. For example, Lawless (2009) indicates that learning a new language could help to understand the one that is already spoken and make a third one easier to learn.

Some parents reported that their children benefited from having a French education because it might increase their chances of being admitted to a college or university in other provinces or countries. To some extent, this notion is supported in the literature. For example, Foust (2003) indicates that young children who acquire a new language have a natural way of absorption, they will perform better in math, explore new cultures and heritage, and will have better travel skills. Some parents who went to French Immersion themselves stated that it was important because Canada is a bilingual country.

Throughout Canada, parents are being offered new academic choices and can give their children the opportunity to learn a second language. These opportunities are believed to increase our understanding of new cultures, ideas, and careers.

Limitations of the study

This study had certain limitations. First, the findings of this investigation were limited to families living within the school district of Prince George who had their children registered in a French Immersion School at Austin Road, Spruceland, or College Heights Elementary School. Consequently, these results cannot be generalized to other populations. Second, in all three schools, questionnaires were given to students (one per family) attending French Immersion in the school. The completed questionnaires came back from some but not all of the families. For this reason, these results do not entirely represent the targeted population of families at the three Prince George schools. Third, at Austin Road Elementary School the principal did not know that the

questionnaires were in his office and for this reason, the questionnaires were sent out to parents only two days before the return date. This may have reduced the number of returns. Fourth, the questions asked were designed to find out the reasons why parents enrolled their children in a French Immersion program; despite this design and intention, the participants might have understood or interpreted the questions differently. Finally, one person in the household or one of the two parents may have filled out the questionnaire; as a result, the researcher does not know if the other parent might have answered differently.

Summary

In summary, the findings of this survey suggest that parents in Prince George enroll their children in a French Immersion program to provide them with the opportunity to achieve a level of bilingualism that will enable them to be more competitive in the job market and become high achievers. By choosing a French Immersion program rather than a conventional school program, parents in this survey believe that their children will meet more challenges, become higher achievers, and be more open-minded to other cultures and foreign countries that will Non-Immersion children.

Areas for Further Research

The results of this study suggest two interesting topics for subsequent research. First, the findings of this survey indicate that French Immersion parents chose French Immersion hoping that their children would be more challenged and meet higher expectations that would Non-Immersion students. As a result, a comparison study could be beneficial to find out about English-only school

parents' reasons for not enrolling their children in a French Immersion program. Second, some parents initially choose a French Immersion program only to pull their children out after a few years. It would be interesting to learn why these French Immersion students left the program so early.

Conclusion

On the whole, the reasons why parents in Prince George send their children to a French Immersion school appear to be influenced by variables of parental figure, level of education, and age. Parents with higher S.E.S. backgrounds enroll their children in a French Immersion school rather than an English only school because they expect the French Immersion experience will result in higher achievement. According to the Canadian Council on Learning (2007), the main purpose of French Immersion is to promote bilingualism in an increasingly diverse community. Advocates of the program have insisted on the benefits that it brings to students and the assets it provides them for their futures. Students will learn the same material that they would if they were not enrolled in French Immersion because there are no differences in the curricula. The only distinction is the language of instruction and this difference has been shown to have many positive effects for its students. By enrolling their children in a French Immersion program, parents in Prince George are contributing to the future growth and development of our society. French Immersion students who develop competencies in both official languages are more likely to bring socioeconomic advantages to the community of Prince George, the province of

British Columbia, and to Canada as a whole by making each place a stronger, more diverse and more vibrant multicultural society.

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Appendix A

Why was French Immersion Chosen for your Child(ren)?

1- Your age group: 20-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50 51-55 55+

2- Who made the decision to enroll your child(ren) in a French Immersion program?

Mother ____ Father ____ Both ____

3- Occupation: Mother _____ Father _____

4- Education level of parents: Mother _____ Father _____

5- Language spoken by parents:

Mother: English French other _____

Father: English French other _____

6- Language spoken at home: English ____ French ____ other _____

7- What are the reasons you decided to enroll your child(ren) in a French Immersion program? (May choose more than one)

____ To regain our language and our roots

____ To learn a new language

____ To regain our culture

____ To learn about a new culture

____ Better teachers

____ Better program

____ More challenge

____ Higher achievement

____ To have more job opportunities

____ To be able to travel in foreign countries

____ The program is offered in the neighbourhood school

8- Comments _____

Thank you for your cooperation!

Appendix B

Letter of Introduction and Confidentiality



Principal investigator: Guylaine Pouliot, MEd Student, School of Education, University of Northern British Columbia and teacher at École Franco-Nord.

Contact numbers: Home: 250-563-3908 Work: 250-612-0755

Email: pouliot@unbc.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Yvon Cloutier, Assistant Professor, School of Education, University of Northern British Columbia Work: 250-960-5926

Email: cloutier@unbc.ca

Ethics Board: University of British Columbia 250-960-5650

As a Master's student, and to fulfill the requirements of my degree, I need your help by means of completing a questionnaire for a project. The purpose of this project is to investigate the factors that influence the decision of parents to enroll their children in a French Immersion program in Prince George.

There are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study for you, your children, or any other occupant of your household and results will be available for interested participants.

Note that this is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. You only have to answer each question as honestly and accurately as possible.

Research Method

This part will involve completing once, a five-minute questionnaire on reasons why you enrolled your children in a French Immersion program and return it with your child(ren) at school.

Participation and Confidentiality

Your participation in this study is voluntary, however, your full contribution may help to bring changes in the school district politics, help teacher to understand and cope with socio economic variables in their class, and guide parents in their choice to enroll in a French immersion program.

Should you decide to participate, your name and personal information will not appear on any of the questionnaire or on the results and data analysis. Your identity will remain confidential.

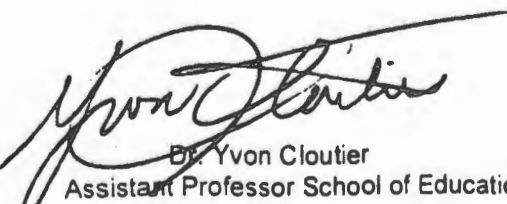
A copy of the results will be available at the end of the study.

Data Storage

All information and data will be kept in a safe place for a period of four years as required, after which it will be removed and destroyed from my computer and including electronic devices. Hard copies will also be destroyed.

This is voluntary participation and you can withdraw from the study at any time. This includes withdrawal of all information provided also. However, you should understand that full participation is anticipated and required for this study to be successful.

Thank you for your cooperation!



Dr. Yvon Cloutier
Assistant Professor School of Education



Guylaine Pouliot
Med Student School of Education

Appendix C

Consent form

- ✓ I consent to fill out the questionnaire on factors that influence the decision of parents to enroll their children in a French Immersion program in Prince George.
- ✓ I fully understand that I may withdraw from this research project at any time without penalty.
- ✓ I know that I am free to ask questions about any procedure regarding this project.
- ✓ I understand that the data will be destroyed once the study is completed.
- ✓ I have read all of the above information regarding this study.
- ✓ The procedures and requirements have been explained to me, and I understand them.
- ✓ I freely and voluntarily consent to be a participant.

Print name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Please, return this consent form and survey with your child before

December 10th

Appendix D

Letter of Permission from UNBC Research Ethics Board

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

MEMORANDUM

To: Guylaine Pouliot
CC: Yvon Cloutier

From: Henry Harder, Chair
Research Ethics Board

Date: October 23, 2009

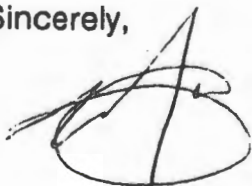
Re: **E2009.0922.130**
Factors that influence the decision of parents to enroll their children in a French Immersion program in Prince George

Thank you for submitting the above-noted research proposal and requested amendments to the Research Ethics Board. Your proposal has been approved.

We are pleased to issue approval for the above named study for a period of 12 months from the date of this letter. Continuation beyond that date will require further review and renewal of REB approval. Any changes or amendments to the protocol or consent form must be approved by the Research Ethics Board.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



Henry Harder

Appendix E

Letter of Permission from the Prince George School District

**SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 57 (PRINCE GEORGE)**

2100 Ferry Avenue, Prince George, B.C. V2L 4R5

Phone: (250) 561-6800 • Fax (250) 561-6801
www.sd57.bc.ca

October 15, 2009

Guylaine Pouliot
1885 Aintree Drive
Prince George, BC
V2K 1H6

Dear Guylaine:

This letter is to confirm the discussion at our meeting on October 14, 2009 regarding your request to access to schools in the Prince George School District for the purpose of educational research. As we discussed, the school district recognizes the integral part that research plays in education. We support the research sponsored by our local tertiary institutes as a priority. Your project, investigating the link between socioeconomic status and registration in French Immersion programs, is very interesting and should provide useful information for you and the district.

This letter's purpose is to indicate that you have district approval to proceed with your project. "District approval" allows the researcher to approach principals, and subsequently teachers, to request their permission to conduct research in their school/classroom. Your next step will be to contact the principals of Spruceland, College Heights and Austin Road Elementary Schools to set up a meeting to discuss your project and obtain their permission to undertake the project in their school. A copy of this letter has been forwarded to the principals.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me. Good luck with your project. I look forward to receiving a copy of the final report.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Chappell
Director, School Services

