

FINAL REPORT

FRENCH IMMERSION REVIEW

WATERLOO REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

October, 2020



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ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

BA	Bachelor of Arts Degree
CEFR	Common European Framework Reference
CELF	Common European Linguistic Framework
CF	Core French
CI	Collegiate Institute
CMA	Census Metropolitan Area
CYC	Child and Youth Care
DELF	Diplôme d'études en langue française
Dual track	Offer French immersion and English programs
EA	Educational Assistant
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EF	Extended French
EQAO	Education Quality and Accountability Office
ESL	English as a Second Language
FI	French Immersion
FSL	French as a Second Language
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
Gr	School Grade
HCDSB	Halton Catholic District School Board
HDSB	Halton District School Board
HSR	Hamilton Street Railway
HWDSB	Halton-Wentworth District School Board
IEP	Individual Education Plans
JK	Junior Kindergarten
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LIM	Low Income Measure
LTO	Long-term Occasional
Malatest	R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd
PDSB	Peel District School Board
SERT	Special Education Resource Teacher
Single track	Offer only French immersion programs
SK	Senior Kindergarten
Spec. Ed.	Special Education
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SW	Social Worker
TVDSB	Thames Valley District School Board
VP	Vice Principal
WRDSB	Waterloo Region District School Board

SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background and Objectives

In the spring of 2019, the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) partnered with R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (Malatest) to conduct a review of WRDSB's French immersion programming. The review involved engaging parents/caregivers, students, and school staff (i.e. teachers, principals, vice-principals, and superintendents) to better understand their experiences as they relate to the program.

The objectives of this review were to:

- Examine WRDSB French immersion programming in order to identify successes and challenges related to the current model;
- Evaluate alternative approaches to WRDSB French immersion program delivery; and
- Develop recommendations that will inform strategic planning related to:
 - French immersion program delivery in WRDSB; and
 - Operational goals and vision for WRDSB French programming – both immersion and core programming.

1.2 Methodology

Malatest conducted the following activities for this review:

- An analysis of WRDSB's documents and data relating to the French immersion program;
- A literature review and jurisdictional/environmental scan of other French immersion delivery models currently found in southwestern Ontario – specifically French immersion programs in Halton District School Board (HDSB), Hamilton Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) and Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) (information from this environmental scan is also referred to as 'literature' or 'jurisdictional scan' throughout this report);
- Online surveys with: 1) 1,530 parents/caregivers of students at WRDSB schools (including schools offering French immersion and schools not offering French immersion); and 2) 559 school staff (principals, vice-principals, classroom teachers, designated early childhood educators (ECEs), and educational assistants (EAs)); at all regions in WRDSB¹
- Focus groups with parents/caregivers (three groups with a total of 32 participants), senior high school students (three groups with a total of 32 participants), and teachers (two groups with a total of seven participants);
- One-on-one interviews with 12 principals and vice-principals and one with a WRDSB superintendent; and
- Interviews with superintendents from three other school boards: 1) HDSB; 2) HWDSB; and 3) TVDSB.

1.3 Summary of Key Findings and Analysis

1.3.1 Enrollment Pressures

Numerous program and survey statistics were analyzed, including those from three comparative boards to understand the enrollment and program pressures faced by French immersion in WRDSB. Overall,

¹ Among school staff who participated, 20% were from the City of Cambridge, 34% from the City of Kitchener, 33% from the City of Waterloo, 6% from The Township of Wilmot, 6% from the Township of Woolwich; less than 1% were from the Township of Wellesley, and less than 1% were from the Township of Dumfries.

there are some statistics to indicate that the program is under a fair amount of enrollment pressure, and others indicate that even with the pressure, WRDSB can manage the program fairly well.

Some findings that indicate the program is under pressure include:

- WRDSB's program has grown by 63% from 2011 to 2016. This is the largest growth compared to the three other boards examined. HDSB, by comparison, had a 38% growth in the same period;
- Hiring French immersion teachers has been described as problematic in the WRDSB, and virtually all principals and vice-principals indicate that the quality of teachers is more of an issue than the quantity of French language teachers; and
- Growth in WRDSB's elementary French immersion program is far outpacing growth in children aged five to 14 in the Waterloo Census Metropolitan Area (Kitchener – Cambridge - Waterloo), and 48% of parents/caregivers with children in kindergarten say more French immersion is needed in WRDSB.

Despite these findings, there are equal if not more signs that despite growth, the program is being managed fairly well. Specifically: 1) In 2019-2020, WRDSB was able to fully staff its French immersion program at the start of the school year; 2) The growth in grade one enrollment appears to be slowing/declining over the last number of years; 3) The proportion of schools in the WRDSB closed to out-of-boundary French immersion students is falling from 45% in 2017/2018 to 25% in 2019/2020; and 4) Satisfaction with French immersion is solid, with 75% of parents/caregivers with children in French immersion indicating satisfaction with their child's French programming.

Also, of note, and by comparison, HDSB, a board that recently implemented a change to grade two entry, experienced more significant enrollment pressures than WRDSB on many factors. Specifically, the board had a higher growth in elementary French immersion enrollment than WRDSB (25.1% compared to 15.6%) from 2011 to 2016, and it had to manage a 37% uptake from senior kindergarten into the former grade one French immersion program. Despite the pressures, the results have been seen as positive after two years of implementation. Uptake dropped to 25% in 2018/2019 and 28% in 2019/2020. Malatest's interview with HDSB indicated that they expect the total number of the students in the program to continue to increase though as the population in the area continues to increase.

Although there are positive opinions of the French immersion program overall, there are some parents with concerns about either enrolling or keeping their children in the program. Specifically parents with children in grade one (59%) and those with children in kindergarten (65%, caution small base n=65) feel that their children should attend the same school. Those with children in grade one (59%) feel that their children prefer to learn in their current language of instruction. There is also a sense that French immersion is not the best learning environment, with over 50% of parents with young children and those who removed their children from French immersion feeling this way. Over four in ten of the same parent groups feel that there are better supports for their children in non-French immersion environments.

1.3.2 Equity and Enrichment: Statistics and Opinions

Overshadowing most any actions WRDSB may take regarding its French immersion program are issues concerning equity and enrichment. Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) statistics, which can be seen in detail in **Section 5.7** indicate that higher proportions of students in grade three and grade six French immersion perform better on academic and attitudinal scores than their non-French immersion counterparts. Moreover, higher proportions of students with special needs and English language learners enrolled in French immersion also perform better on these scores than their English language counterparts. An analysis conducted by Malatest on areas in which dual track schools are located shows that they tend to be located in higher income areas compared to core French only schools.

The surveys showed an equal concern about equity of access and streaming. Over six in ten teachers (65%) say that they frequently transfer students out of the French immersion program because of learning issues, and 41% say they transfer out because education supports are not available. Streaming is cited by 86% of parents/caregivers who oppose French immersion as a reason for not supporting the program. Qualitatively, Malatest regularly and strongly heard that streaming and equity issues were significant concerns to parents/caregivers. It is likely that any action taken by the WRDSB regarding French immersion will be viewed through this lens. It is worth noting, that although EQAO results demonstrate better performance from many French immersion students relative to core French students, WRDSB structures the immersion program to provide equal access and support to all students who are in the program. One of the main findings of the study is that the perception of the immersion program among some stakeholders is that it does not provide equitable to every student in the board, in areas such as academics and transport.

Despite concerns about equity there is fairly strong support for liberal access for all students to French immersion. Specifically, 73% of parents/caregivers strongly support access for everyone, and even though support drops to 59% among those who do not have children in French immersion, it is still a majority strongly agreeing with access for everyone.

Given this support, WRDSB's new grade one class creation policies were compared to other boards' policies. WRDSB is the only board to have a largely parent-driven demand system, whereby a new grade one class can open when 20 senior kindergarten parents/caregivers' express interest in enrolling their children in French immersion. In contrast, for the last three years, HWDSB has operated a centralized system of enrollment where students are guaranteed a space in the French immersion program, but not in a particular school. This system, according to documentation from the board, indicated that it allows them to select sites that are based on: 1) Availability, vacant, leased or under-used sites; 2) Community support; 3) Program accommodation costs; 4) Grouping; 5) Equitable distribution and 6) Nearness to next school ([HWDSB: Procedure for Policy No. 6.8](#)). A centralized system may make distribution of classes more equitable, especially since data in WRDSB show a higher percentage of dual track schools in higher income neighbourhoods. However, WRDSB would have to conduct a planning study and address bussing/transportation challenges.

To further help with the issue of class creation and distribution throughout the system, WRDSB could consider altering the minimum class size needed to start a French immersion program. In areas with higher income it could raise the enrollment number to 23 interested parents/caregivers of students² (the maximum class size allowable) and lower it to about 18 in areas with lower income as a way of encouraging enrollment in lower income areas and as an equity measure. However, a centralized system would allow for WRDSB to plan class sizes more directly, and it could include this class structure recommendation or others that suit the board's enrollment situation or in support of other French immersion strategies.

1.3.3 Entry Points and Single Track Schools

The literature review for other boards showed that adjusting entry points and the creation of single track schools tend to be viewed as fairly significant changes to French immersion programs. While WRDSB is indeed facing enrollment pressures, it may not be at the point where it is ready to take such actions. For example, HDSB moved its entry point to grade two, with 100% immersion, and it found that uptake from senior kindergarten to grade two French dropped from 37% (at the previous grade one level). However, HDSB staff indicate that they may not expect the drop to continue long term as population increases cause uptake and enrollment to rise again ([HDSB Minutes, December 2019](#)).

² It is recognized that by law only 10% of all grade 1 classes can have this maximum amount.

Similarly, jurisdictional scans from Peel District School Board (PDSB) and TVDSB suggest that creation of a single track school is not necessarily used to decrease enrollment as much as it is to balance-out dual track schools where there is a high proportion of students in French immersion. PDSB created a set of criteria in order to decide whether a single track school should be formed within the board, and it included enrollment in schools where the French proportion exceeded about 65% to 70% of students. They also indicated that the new single track school should be underutilized and have fairly close surrounding schools so displaced students can walk to them and so students leaving the French immersion school would not have to make such significant changes to their school routine. Also, single track schools have myriad advantages and disadvantages to them, and TVDSB, that uses only single track schools has an overriding pedagogical belief that single track schools offer a more immersive experience, outweighing other potential issues with single track implementation.

The survey data also show that opinions of the existing structure of the grade one entry point and dual track options are fairly positive. Specifically on the survey: 1) 72% of parents/caregivers selected grade one as an entry point, and 59% of staff selected it as an entry point; 2) Even though there is a preference for grade one as an entry point, about half (58% of parents/caregivers and 47% of staff) indicated that there should be more than one entry point; 3) Staff tend to favour entry points at higher grades, while parents/caregivers favour them at lower grades; 4) 51% of parents/caregivers feel that French immersion should be offered in single track and dual track schools, with 27% indicating dual track only and 12% indicating single track only; and 5) Quantitative results among staff regarding single and dual track schools are more divided. Specifically, 62% of principals and vice-principals prefer single track implementation only, compared to only 30% of teachers. The difference is likely a result uncovered in the qualitative research that shows principals and vice-principals spend more time and effort managing issues created by a dual track school, such as having to balance teaching resources and student separation and use of language throughout the school (e.g., in a dual track school, recruiting of staff to include a balance of English and French speaking; materials around the school in both languages to accommodate English students and FI students, balancing expenses for activities/trips planned for students). It should be noted that the literature review on the issue of single or dual track schools was decidedly mixed. There was little evidence to show strong differences/improvements in learning outcomes. Rather decisions on opening single track schools (i.e. French only schools) seemed to be more based on a Board's pedagogical beliefs and/or logistic rationale (e.g. enrollment in schools becoming tilted strongly towards one language or another; the availability of schools to actually house a single track program; ability to deal with displaced students; closeness of schools to each other).

1.3.4 Issues with WRDSB's Operational Goals and Vision

Malatest qualitatively discussed WRDSB's operational goals with key stakeholders, and compared the operational goals to those used by other boards. While there were a number of individuals who found the statement to be satisfactory, there were an equal number who found issues with it. The issues centre around a few key issues: 1) Vagueness of the statement, in that issues such as confidence and competence were not easy to define and measure; 2) That there were no measures or outcomes associated with the statement; 3) Some felt based on experience with the program that it was not living up to the expectations set in it; and 4) It was missing a number of factors included in other statements such as equity of access, growth and stability of the program, finding quality teachers, measuring outcomes and retention and alignment with CEFR frameworks that help provide standards for French language education.

WRDSB provided statistics to Malatest that indicate 254 out of 513 elementary teachers who speak French within the board have special education qualifications, while 31 out of 40 secondary teachers who speak French have special education qualifications. This does not necessarily indicate the amount of French immersion teachers with special education qualifications, as some French teachers may be in the core and extended programs as well.

1.3.5 Opinions Regarding French Immersion and Core Teachers

One of the main findings of this review is that there is clearly a shortage of French teachers in Ontario. Virtually all stakeholders, through focus groups and key informant interviews, state that the shortage is one of quality as much as it may be about quantity. For example, 75% of French immersion teachers indicate that they are fully fluent in French. While this is a high number, it does indicate that some teachers in the board may not have the skills necessary to fully teach an immersion class. Another key issue is that only 50% of WRDSB French immersion elementary teachers have special education training (based on data provided by the WRDSB), meaning that it may be challenging for teachers to support students with special learning needs through the program. Principals and vice-principals report devoting a fair degree of effort to managing the process of finding proper substitute teachers and hiring qualified French staff to teach immersion classes. It is not uncommon to hear that English language teachers act as substitute teachers for immersion classes, and that finding qualified and quality French staff once the school year has started is problematic.

According to both focus groups and the review by ([Lapkin, Mady, & Arnott, 2009](#)), core French teachers feel somewhat marginalized and have difficulty doing their jobs because they do not have classrooms and only spend 40 minutes a day with students, a time they say, that is not sufficient to build strong relationships that will lead to good educational outcomes.

1.4 Recommendations

1.4.1 Address Inequity and Access Issues

Given that over six in ten teachers (65%) say that they frequently transfer students out of the French immersion program because of learning issues, and 41% say they transfer out because education supports are not available, special education training and support should be increased so that students in the French immersion program can remain in it and succeed. As discussed in **Section 3.2.4**, creating increased supports to address access and equity likely involves ethical issues. Specifically, if supports are to be offered, and access is to be broadened, the special education and support provided needs to indeed be effective at keeping students in the program. That likely means the board has to make efforts at offering support that likely exceeds current expectations and may even involve working towards providing best-in-class special education services within French immersion within the WRDSB. To this point, literature provides some suggestions about potential in-class implementation of educational strategies for students requiring special education. It is possible that the WRDSB could survey French immersion teachers to determine which strategies are needed and create board-specific training for those issues. Funding may be able to be procured from Base Amount for Collaboration and Integration within the Special Education Grant, and could be implemented in classrooms using educational assistants.

The rationale for such a suggestion comes from the fact that the potential to impact children's self-esteem, and the ethical considerations involved in that are somewhat significant. A research article addressing access French immersion programming among high-needs students does not take a stand towards advocating and/or denying access to such students. Rather, it simply points out the strong ethical implications either way:

Research on the suitability of bilingual education for at-risk learners goes beyond questions concerning academic success. It also includes important ethical, pedagogical, professional development and assessment issues. Ethical issues are implicated because it could be considered unethical to admit at-risk children to bilingual programs if they are not likely to benefit from participation or if participation is likely to jeopardize their educational success. ([Genesee & Fortune, 2014](#))

The article continues by saying:

Conversely, it could be considered unethical to exclude at-risk students since to do so would, arguably, deprive them of the opportunity to acquire valuable language and cultural skills that would benefit them in their future personal and professional lives. The latter issue is particularly relevant when competence in additional language is important from a real-world perspective – as in the case of French for English-speaking students in Canada or where there are real benefits in the local community to being bilingual or, increasingly, around the world, where bi/multilingual competence is becoming important for reasons related to globalization. ([Genesee & Fortune, 2014](#))

If the WRDSB spends a fair degree of time and effort to address this issue in a best-in-class approach, it may address some of the ethical issues involved, by implementing a program that can assure parents and other stakeholders of the viability of admitting high-needs students into the program.

1.4.2 Consider Altering Class Size Minimums to Make Distribution of Classes More Even Throughout WRDSB

Another equity issue is that dual track, French immersion schools tend to be located in areas that have higher incomes. At present, WRDSB will consider forming a French immersion class in any school where 20 senior kindergarten parents/caregivers' express interest. An option may be to consider setting the minimum French immersion class size number to 23 in economically advantaged areas, and 18 in economically disadvantaged areas. A lower class size though would require the WRDSB to ensure that the program is sustainable as it progresses through progressive years and grades. It should be noted though, that the recommendation below, 1.4.3, that discusses a centralized registration system can be rolled together with recommendations regarding class sizes. A centralized registration system would allow WRDSB more direct influence over class sizes (within provincial bounds) so that it could address some of the issues involved in equity and access based on geography or other factors more directly.

1.4.3 Consider a Centralized Registration System

The research for this review specifically investigated a later entry point for French immersion and the addition of single track schools within WRDSB as ways of adjusting the program. Research shows that these are options that are fairly significant steps to take for a board. Surveys with parents/caregivers and teachers indicate that while some want changes to these aspects of the program, there is a sense that the current program configuration can be maintained. Along with the survey results, comparisons to other boards, especially HDSB, which implemented a grade two entry point, show that at first it had more program pressures than WRDSB has at present, but after two years of implementation, the results have been seen as positive at reducing enrollment pressure. One option that may be more in line with the program pressures faced by WRDSB is to take more centralized control of registration and class formation, like the system launched in HWDSB. This will allow WRDSB to create classes in ways that meet various goals of the program including equity, utilization rates in various schools, management of teacher resources, and limit over expansion of the program to too many sites. In addition, part of this review also alludes to placing more focus on community dynamics and less on research or educational beliefs in regard to choosing an entry point as the HDSB process was based more on community consultation and a desire to stem French immersion enrollment than it was on pedagogical belief or guidance based on previous moves to a different entry point. It should be noted that transportation and other planning issues may be impacted by such a system. For example, HWDSB has decided to use a centralized bussing depot for its French Immersion transportation. The distances to schools remain the same across the board, but instead of individualized pickup for French immersion students, the central depot is used. Under the central depot system, transportation costs for French immersion elementary students are about the same as for English track students. Some secondary students have to travel quite

a distance which results in an increase of about \$250K to their transportation costs. This indicates that WRDSB may need to look at transportation issues more thoroughly if it moves towards a centralized enrollment system.

1.4.4 Do not Consider Alternate Entry Points, Single Track Schools or Enrollment Caps at This Point

While WRDSB is facing some enrollment pressures, and hiring quality teachers can be problematic and challenging, a centralized enrollment system as outlined in **Section 1.4.3** may be a less disruptive way to handle such issues at the moment than changing the entry point or instituting a single track school. This does not mean that there are not advantages and disadvantages to these changes. Alternate, or later entry points, have the advantage of allowing students, parents/caregivers and teachers to determine if French immersion will be a good fit for their child. However, later entry points often involve a higher intensity program in order to account for less time spent in an immersive environment than if earlier entry occurred.

Also, single track schools have numerous advantages and disadvantages associated with them, and the board must weigh them very carefully. The literature is inconclusive on the benefits (or disadvantages) of single and/or dual track schools. Specifically, the literature lists numerous positive and negative factors for both single and dual track options. Articles either state that results are inconclusive, or if they are conclusive there is no consensus of conclusion among articles. However, one disadvantage is that a single track school could be perceived as making an already enriched program even more so, and in light of strong opinions about these factors in WRDSB, creation of an even more separated environment for French immersion needs to be considered. However, advantages of a single track school include a more immersive environment for French immersion students and less divided schools in the dual track system. It would also be important for the WRDSB to ensure the viability of the core French program in creating a single track school. The reviews of other boards that have considered and even implemented these options tend to do so more based on programmatic issues, such as enrollment pressures or uneven distribution of English and French programs in a dual track school, and less-so on pedagogical beliefs or overall outcomes.

1.4.5 Enhance the WRDSB Operational Goals and Vision for French Programming

The operational goals and vision for WRDSB programming could be enhanced to include such issues as equality of access, retention, better definitions and measures of confidence and fluency. It is possible to create key performance measures (or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) associated with outcomes added to the statement. For example, outcome measures addressing equity could include: 1) The number of special education students enrolled in French immersion; 2) Number of teachers with special education qualifications teaching French immersion; 3) Availability of supports; and 4) Does the community feel French immersion is equitable and accessible. Program viability could be measured by attrition rates, and characteristics of students leaving the program, the number of immersion classes cancelled and the use of triple graded classes.

1.4.6 Investigate Class Length Time and Pedagogical Changes for Core French

While there is a general level of satisfaction with core French programming from parents, both parents and teachers who participated in interviews, reported some challenges with the program. Some issues include a lack of classroom space, large classroom sizes in the core program, behavioural concerns among some students in core, and ability of teachers to form constructive relationships with students in order to foster learning, given that core French is only 40 minutes a day. The literature shows that consideration of a semester system as an option. However, it may not be possible to implement such a change at the elementary level in WRDSB. Given the literature and the findings from the interviews, the WRDSB may wish to consider ways time can be increased between French teachers and their students so as to better develop a collaborative educational relationship in the core French programs. This could

be combined with, pedagogical changes to more collaborative activities and interactive discussions to increase French language learning even among core groups, may lead to similarly positive impacts in core French students as identified among French immersion students. A literature review confirmed many of the beliefs held by core French teachers including a change in pedagogy towards more collaborative and student-lead exercises. **Section 12** further details some of the differences and challenges between core French, extended French, and French immersion; and touches on ways to potentially address these challenges.

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND METHOD

2.1 Background and Objectives

Waterloo Region District School Board's (WRDSB) French immersion program has grown in enrolment since it has been established. As the demand for French immersion increases, WRDSB feels it is imperative to establish operational goals and vision for the program in addition to success criteria. During the 2017/18 school year, the Board of Trustees approved an initiative to acquire the services of a third party to conduct a review of the French immersion program to commence within the 2018/19 school year.

The review involved engaging parents/caregivers and students to better understand their experiences as they relate to the program and motivations for registering, continuing or withdrawing from the program. In addition, front-line educators including school principals, vice-principals, classroom teachers, designated early childhood educators and educational assistants were engaged to provide opinions about the program.

Objectives of the review involve:

- Reviews WRDSB French programming in order to identify successes and challenges related to the current model;
- Reviews alternative approaches that could improve WRDSB French program deliver; and
- Development of recommendations that will inform strategic planning related to:
 - French program delivery in the WRDSB; and
 - Operational goals and vision for WRDSB French programming.

Results of the review will inform the future direction of French immersion programming in WRDSB.

2.2 Methodology

The methodology used to conduct the review of French immersion programming in the WRDSB is outlined below.

2.2.1 Data and Document Review

Malatest began this project with a review of documents and data relating to the French immersion program in WRDSB. This included an examination of enrollment in the program (including number of applications as compared to placements) the number of students who left prior to completion and similar data.

2.2.2 Literature Review and Environmental Scan

Concurrent with the data and document review, Malatest conducted a literature review and environmental scan of delivery models of other French immersion programs currently found in southwestern Ontario including such issues as concepts of single or dual track schools, entry levels, other programs' enrollment pressures and substitutes for the program such as enhancements to core French. The environmental scan included a high-level market analysis with regard to regional growth, staff recruitment, transportation, and other related conditions that may affect the success of the program. The purpose of the review/scan was to situate the Waterloo French immersion program within the broader context of southwestern Ontario.

2.2.3 Online Surveys

Parents/Caregivers

With input from the WRDSB, Malatest constructed and programmed an online survey for parents/caregivers. The WRDSB promoted the parent/caregiver survey to families via their website, and through school communications to families and newsletters. The parent/caregiver survey was open for just over three weeks from April 23rd until May 17th, 2019. After cleaning the data and removing incompletes and non-qualifiers, the total number of responses was 1,530.

The objective of the survey was to gather feedback regarding overall experiences broadly with French language programming in WRDSB as well as directly with French immersion programming, among parents/caregivers who have or have had children in the program. More specifically, the survey collected the following information:

- Parent and child profiles, including geographic location of school and residence, and how children were transported to school;
- Type of French programming child(ren) were enrolled in or had taken previously;
- Satisfaction with French language programming;
- Support for French immersion programming in WRDSB;
- Impressions of French immersion programming including perceptions about quality of French language programming and the perceived impact of French immersion instruction throughout the WRDSB education system;
- Reasons why children leave French immersion;
- Reasons for not enrolling child(ren) in French immersion;
- Preferred models for French immersion (i.e. single or dual track); and
- Preferred entry points for French immersion.

At the end of the survey, parents/caregivers were asked if they would be interested in participating in future discussions about French language programming in WRDSB. Interested respondents who provided their email address were randomly selected and invited to participate in a focus group.

School Staff

As with the parent/caregiver survey, a school staff survey was also made available online. The staff survey was promoted by the WRDSB and open from April 23rd until May 17th, 2019. After cleaning the data and removing incompletes and non-qualifiers, the total number of responses was 559.

The objective of the staff survey was to gather feedback regarding their overall experiences with French language programming, including French immersion delivered in the school in which they work. Principals, vice principals and all teaching staff (i.e., classroom teachers, educational assistants and designated early childhood educators), regardless of the language in which they taught were invited to participate in the survey. The staff survey collected the following information:

- Staff profile, including geographic location of school, length of tenure at school, number of children in class, grade taught, number of children identified as newcomers, gifted, having special needs and/or learning disabilities;
- Type of French programming taught and available at school;
- Need and support for French immersion programming in WRDSB;

- Impressions of French immersion programming including perceptions about quality of French language programming and perceived impact of French immersion instruction throughout the WRDSB education system;
- French language staff recruitment and retention challenges;
- Reasons why students leave French immersion;
- Preferred models for French immersion (i.e. single or dual track); and
- Preferred entry points for French immersion.

At the end of the survey, staff were asked if they would be interested in participating in future discussions about French language programming. Interested respondents who provided their email address were randomly selected and invited to participate in a focus group.

The survey instruments are included in **Appendix A**.

2.2.4 In-depth Interviews

WRDSB Principals and Vice-Principals

A total of six principals and five vice-principals participated in one-on-one phone interviews; seven participants were administrators at schools offering core and immersion French, and four were administrators at schools offering core French only.

School Board Officials

Representatives from three selected school boards in Southwestern Ontario, Halton District School Board (HDSB), Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) and Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) were interviewed via teleconference to better understand the French programming models used by these boards.

All interview guides are included in **Appendix B**.

2.2.5 Focus Groups

Parents/Caregivers

Three focus groups with parents/caregivers were conducted on June 13, 2019 at the WRDSB Education Centre. A total of 32 parents/caregivers participated; 17 had children in French immersion or extended French, four had some of their children in French immersion and other children taking core French, three had children who were previously enrolled in French immersion but were currently taking core French, and eight had children in core French with no previous French immersion programming.

Parents/caregivers indicating that they could not attend a focus group were given the opportunity to provide written feedback on the topics to be discussed during the focus groups. A modified copy of the focus group discussion guide was sent by email and those interested were given approximately 10 days to respond with their comments. Those attending the focus groups were also welcome to provide additional written feedback. Among the 32 parents/caregivers who participated, 20 provided additional written comments; eight had children in French immersion or extended French, three had some of their children in French immersion and other children taking core French, one had children who were previously enrolled in French immersion but were currently taking core French, five had children in core French with no previous French immersion programming, and three did not disclose the type of French programming their children were taking.

Students

Three focus groups with high school students were conducted on June 13, 2019 at three WRDSB secondary schools that offered French immersion and/or extended French; Galt Collegiate Institute, Waterloo Collegiate Institute and Kitchener Collegiate Institute. A total of 32 students participated: nine students joined the Galt Collegiate Institute focus group (five in French immersion, one in extended French, and three in core French); 11 students joined the Waterloo Collegiate Institute focus group (all in extended French); and 12 students joined the Kitchener CI focus group (eight in French immersion, and four in core French).

School Staff

Three teleconference focus groups were conducted with teachers and educational assistants. A total of seven teachers participated; two taught French immersion, one taught core French, two taught both French immersion and core French, two taught in English only (one at a school that offers French immersion). Staff were also offered the opportunity to provide additional written feedback. A total of four forms with additional feedback were received.

All focus group guides are included in **Appendix C**.

2.3 Data Analysis

2.3.1 Analysis of Qualitative Data

Qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo, a software program that categorizes text transcripts of qualitative research into groups of key themes. Interviews and focus groups were coded based on themes developed from the discussion guides. Areas of concurrence or divergence within and across the stakeholder groups were identified and, where appropriate, triangulated with survey data.

2.3.2 Analysis of Online Survey Data

The survey data were cleaned for any incomplete surveys. Verbatim responses were coded using approved code lists. Statistical methods for analysis and reporting included: summary and descriptive statistics (e.g. means, modes, medians), and cross tabs for comparison of nominal data distributions. Data were analyzed by the following groupings:

Parent/Caregiver Survey:

- Region (Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo, and the Townships of Woolwich, North Dumfries, Wilmot and Wellesley³);
- Grade grouping;
- School program (core French, French immersion, extended French);
- School type (French immersion, non- French immersion)
- Income (less than \$60,000, \$60,000 to less than \$90,000, \$90,000 or more);
- Level of education (less than Bachelor's degree, Bachelor's degree, university certificate/diploma/degree above the Bachelor's level);
- Support for French immersion (completely/somewhat in favour, completely/somewhat against); and
- Satisfaction with French immersion programming.

Staff Survey:

³ Due to low base sizes, the townships were combined for sub-group analysis.

- Job title (principal and vice-principal, teacher, educational assistants, designated early childhood educators⁴);
- Region (Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo, and the Townships of Woolwich, North Dumfries, Wilmot and Wellesley¹);
- School program (core French, French immersion, extended French²);
- Support for French immersion (completely/somewhat in favour, completely/somewhat against); and
- Grade taught (kindergarten, grades one to five, grades six to 12).

2.4 Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

Malatest consulted with a research working group on many aspects of the study design, including sampling. It was recognized that a fully random representative sample of a given population (in this case the entire parent/caregiver, teacher and student population within WRDSB) is an ideal standard. Malatest and WRDSB discussed various ways to achieve this kind of sample. Discussions occurred around whether Malatest should be provided with a list of the relevant population base and sample it in a method to achieve a random representative sample. However, privacy concerns prevented disclosure of this information to Malatest. Other sampling strategies that would help manage potential for bias in the results (i.e. purposive or targeted sampling) were also discussed. Malatest and the WRDSB decided that the best sampling approach would be for WRDSB to openly promote the study in its newsletters online and communications through students and school councils, a strategy used by the WRDSB in promotion of other surveys it implements⁵. Such an approach cannot ensure that a random and/or representative sample of parents/caregivers and staff were solicited to participate in the surveys. The survey findings cannot be inferred as representative of all parents/caregivers and staff of the WRDSB. It is possible that only individuals who were highly passionate about French programming completed the survey; as such, their opinions may systematically differ from those who are less passionate about French language programs and opted to not participate in the survey.

There does appear to be a bias in the data towards parents/caregivers and teachers involved in the French immersion program. Overall parents, even those whose children are in core French, have positive views regarding the French program and therefore, parents who participated in this research may particularly value French education and potentially biased the results. Specifically:

- On the parent/caregiver survey, approximately 70% of parents/caregivers indicated that their child is in the French immersion program. Data for 2016-17 enrollment shows that only 11% of all students in the board are enrolled in French immersion suggesting a significant over-sampling of parents/caregivers with children in the program.

⁴ Due to low base sizes educational assistants, designated early childhood educators were combined with teachers for sub-group analysis.

⁵ A work plan created for the study indicated that WRDSB would promote the survey in three ways: 1) A newsletter including information about the survey and access instructions (i.e., the online link (URL) to the survey and toll-free number parents/caregivers can call to complete the survey over the phone) was sent home with students; 2) WRDSB's website and each school's website included information about the survey and an access link; 3) School councils encouraged students to remind their parent(s)/caregiver(s) to participate in the survey, and access was provided to parents that may have had difficulty with online access; and 4) WRDSB promoted the staff survey via school councils and internal communication channels.

- Similar results occur in the staff survey, where 32% of respondents are French immersion teachers, 3% are extended French teachers, 23% are core French teachers and 50% are English only teachers⁶.

This has the potential to bias the total responses for the survey but does not bias the results when looking at each group of respondents themselves. To mitigate this, when the responses among each group differ significantly from the total, the results are broken-out and reported, showing the exact proportion of respondents in each sub-group who answered based on the type of French programming received by their child and/or taught in schools by staff.

In addition, qualitative data are based on the opinions of the individuals who participated and are subject to the biases of each participant. The findings should not, therefore, be interpreted as fact. A detailed break-out of respondent profiles is provided in **Section 13**.

Finally, given that parents/caregivers answering the survey could have more than one student enrolled in the French immersion program, part of the survey data gathered information for each child, and other questions just gathered overall opinions from the parents, not attached to a particular child. During the data collection phase, Malatest's CallWeb computer programming hard-coded and assigned students to one of three groups: 1) Junior/Senior kindergarten; 2) Grade one to five; and 3) Grade six to twelve. It is understood that program changes are more likely to occur at the grade eight level. However, it was challenging to accurately disaggregate the hard-coded groupings assigned during interviewing. As such, some questions are reported on this grade grouping.

⁶ Note that percents may sum to more than 100 as teachers who answered their instruction included French could indicate that they taught more than one type of French programming.

SECTION 3: KEY FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Key Findings

3.1.1 French Immersion Program Pressures

Overall, there are signs that the Waterloo Region District Schools Board (WRDSB) French immersion program is facing stress in enrollment. However, such stress does not appear to be as pronounced as in other boards. Some key findings that indicate this include:

- WRDSB had the highest percentage of growth in its French immersion program between 2011 and 2016 at 63% compared to three other equivalent boards under study.

**Table 3-1: Comparative Growth in Enrollment
2011-2016 for Four Boards**

Percentage (%) Growth in Enrollment between 2011 to 2016 ⁷	WRDSB	HDSB	HWDSB	TVDSB
Total elementary enrollment	4%	13%	2%	3%
Total French immersion enrollment	63%	38%	27%	16%

- Hiring French immersion teachers once the program year has started has been called “problematic” by the WRDSB human resources department;
- To the above point, many stakeholders in the qualitative research conducted for this review make the strong distinction between being able to find a qualified teacher (i.e. a minimum French as a Second Language (FSL) -1 Certificate), versus finding a quality teacher to staff French immersion classrooms;
- Growth in French elementary French immersion enrollment is outpacing growth in children aged five to 14 in the Waterloo Region (Kitchener – Cambridge – Waterloo); and
- The proportion of parents/caregivers with children in kindergarten who strongly feel more French immersion classes and facilities are needed is 48%.

However, while there are pressures as outlined above, there are also signs that the board is managing enrollment demand somewhat well, and that other boards face other enrollment pressures:

- For 2019-2020, WRDSB was able to fully staff its French immersion classes at the start of the year; and
- Halton District School Board (HDSB) has a higher proportion of students in its elementary French immersion classes (25.1% of all elementary enrollment) compared to WRDSB at 15.6%; HDSB had a 37% uptake of senior kindergarten into its grade one French immersion classes prior to shifting entry to grade two; HDSB had the highest overall growth in its elementary enrollment between 2011-2016 at 13% among three comparative boards (suggesting an overall pressure on the French immersion program due to overall growth in the elementary program); 54% of its dual track schools had more than 60% enrollment in French immersion (this compares to 37% for WRDSB); and a majority of all HDSB elementary students (54%) were enrolled in French immersion across all their dual track schools.

These statistics and a review of the literature show that they likely led to HDSB’s decision to investigate implementing a grade two entry point. Moreover, by comparison, WRDSB is not facing the same enrollment pressures as HDSB overall.

⁷ Source is : <https://www.ontario.ca/data/french-second-language-enrolment>

- **Table 3-2** below shows that WRDSB's enrollment in grade one French immersion is still growing, but growth is decreasing. In fact, in a few years, there was even lower enrollment in grade one French immersion year-over-year in WRDSB;

Table 3-2: Growth in Grade One French Immersion in WRDSB

French Immersion Enrollment	Grade One	Difference in Grade One Enrollment		Grade Five	Grade Eight
		Number	Percent (%)		
2008/09	769	N/A	N/A	381	319
2009/10	813	44	5%	442	291
2010/11	943	130	16%	456	355
2011/12	992	49	5%	578	332
2012/13	1,072	80	8%	590	421
2013/14	1,142	70	7%	607	411
2014/15	1,104	-38	-4%	707	511
2015/16	1,160	56	5%	740	490
2016/17	1,142	-18	-2%	784	562
2017/18	1,184	42	3%	851	682
2018/19	1,217	33	2%	829	669
Percentage Change First to Last Year	58%	N/A	N/A	110%	93%

- Analysis of three years of WRDSB's "French Immersion Projected Grade One Enrollment" reports to the Committee of the Whole ([WRDSB: FI 2018-2019 Enrollment Report, 2019](#)) ([WRDSB: French Immersion Review Committee, 2018](#)) indicate that the proportion of schools closed to out-of-boundary students has fallen from 45% in 2017/18 to 24% in 2018/18 and 25% in 2019/2020. This resulted from opening more classes at existing sites and expanding the program to new sites; and
- Satisfaction with both French immersion and other French programming in WRDSB is at solid levels. Specifically, 75% of parents/caregivers with children in French immersion indicate that they are satisfied with their child's French programming. Though this drops to 58% among those with children in non-immersion programs, a majority are still satisfied with this programming.

3.1.2 Desire for More Access to French Immersion

Parents/caregivers and staff were asked if all students should have access to French immersion. Among parents/caregivers, 73% completely agree that all children should have access to French immersion, while this is somewhat lower among staff, with only 53% completely agreeing to this. In fact, even 59% of parents/caregivers who do not have children in French immersion completely agree that all children in WRDSB should have access to French immersion. Those with lower incomes and education appear to be more likely to support access to French immersion across all students in the board. In other words, virtually all segments have at least a majority of individuals who completely agree that all children should be able to access French immersion. **Table 3-3** shows agreement with access for French immersion across different segments of the parent/caregiver survey population.

Table 3-3: Percent (%) Parent Agreement with the Statement "All Students Should Have Access to French Immersion"

Percent (%)	Program	Region	FI School	Income	Education
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	Tot	CF	EF	FI	Cam	Kit	Wat	Twn	Yes	No	<60	60-90	90+	No BA	BA	BA+
Completely	73	59	68	80	76	77	68	69	75	62	84	82	71	82	74	70
Somewhat	14	18	20	13	12	14	17	13	14	17	11	13	15	12	15	15
Total	87	77	88	93	88	91	85	82	89	79	95	95	86	94	89	85

Note regarding acronyms: CF: Core French; EF: Extended French; FI: French immersion; Cam: Cambridge; Kit: Kitchener; Wat: Waterloo; Twn: Townships of Waterloo Region; BA: Bachelor Degree level (~4 years of post secondary).

Given this support, WRDSB's new grade one class creation policies were compared to other boards' policies. WRDSB is the only board to have a fully parent-driven system, whereby a new class can open when 20 senior kindergarten parents/caregivers express interest in enrolling their children in French immersion. Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) has for the past three years operated a centralized system of enrollment where students are guaranteed a space in the French immersion program, but not in a particular school. This system, according to documentation from the board indicated that it allows them to select sites that are based on: 1) Availability, vacant, leased or under-used sites; 2) Community support; 3) Program accommodation costs; 4) Grouping; 5) Equitable distribution and 6) Nearness to next school. ([HWDSB: FI in HWDSB](#))

3.1.3 Equity and Enrichment Statistics and Research Results

One of the main findings from the research conducted for this study is that there are fairly strong concerns about equity, enrichment and streaming of students in the French immersion program. The WRDSB provided some Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) statistics for this review, and in summary, higher proportions of French immersion students in grades three and six perform better academically than their peers in non-French immersion classes. Moreover, higher proportions of French immersion students tend to have better opinions of their academic abilities. It is noteworthy that although EQAO results demonstrate better performance from many French immersion students relative to core French students, the program is structured to provide equal access to children; it is not structured to create equity issues or enrichment divisions.

Malatest also conducted an analysis of school location by income, and dual track schools (i.e. those that offer French immersion), are more likely to be located in areas with higher incomes compared to single track (i.e. English only) schools. An analysis conducted by English language learner students showed equal distribution of schools.

The survey with teachers showed several statistics in relation to streaming:

- 65% of teachers say students frequently transfer out of French immersion because of learning issues in the French immersion setting;
- 41% say transfers out occur frequently because special education supports are not offered in French immersion;
- 35% say transfers out occur frequently because of behavioural challenges; and
- The average number of special education students is higher among English teachers (4.52 per class) compared to French immersion teachers (3.00 per class).

Quantitatively, 86% of parents/caregivers who do not have children in French immersion and who do not favour French immersion programming indicate that their opposition to it comes directly from streaming students. Moreover, qualitatively, many parents/caregivers in focus groups directly complained about issues related to equity, access and streaming of students on the basis that the French immersion program was largely seen as elitist program, or that their children were excluded because of special needs issues.

3.1.4 French Immersion Teachers

One of the main findings of the environmental scan for this review is that there is a shortage of French immersion teachers. Principals, vice-principals and parents/caregivers very strongly indicated that the shortage is not just one of quantity but of quality. Most principals and vice-principals interviewed qualitatively indicate they are aware of teachers who use the lowest level of FSL designation more to receive permanent employment in a board than to actually teach French because of a passion for the language and/or culture. Quantitatively, 75% of French immersion teachers in the WRDSB describe their level of French as being fully fluent, suggesting that not all are able to fully converse in the language in an immersion setting themselves. Also, 50% of parents/caregivers say one of the reasons they do not favour French immersion programming is because of teacher quality. Also, data provided by the WRDSB shows that only about 50% of French immersion teachers also have special education qualifications and/or training, suggesting that other supports besides teacher support are required to help those with special needs in the program.

One additional piece of data regarding teachers is that principals and vice-principals indicate that they do devote a fair amount of time to having to manage the hiring and staff process for French immersion teachers, given the shortage of them. On the quantitative survey, 90% of principals and vice-principals indicate that it is difficult for them to find substitute teachers for French immersion classes and that it is frequent that an English-only teacher will substitute (n=22)⁸.

3.1.5 Entry Points and Single Track Schools

A jurisdictional scan of similar school boards⁹, and the reviews of their French immersion programs, indicated that adjusting entry points and composition of schools represent a significant adjustment to the program in the minds of parents, teachers and students, and will require a significant amount of administrative work to implement. For example, HDSB which implemented a grade two entry did so in large part to help reduce uptake of the French immersion program, given the enrollment pressures it was facing, as highlighted in **Section 3.1.1**. That section also noted that WRDSB is not facing the same enrollment pressures as HDSB is, and the literature for HDSB clearly showed that it considered several initiatives in order to directly stem concerns about the long-term viability of the program. Similarly, the Peel District School Board (PDSB) created a set of criteria in order to implement a single track school within the board, and it included enrollment in schools where the French proportion exceeded about 65% to 70% of students. They also indicated that the new single track school should be underutilized and have fairly close surrounding schools so displaced students can walk to them and so students leaving the French immersion school would not have to make such significant changes to their school routine. More importantly for single track schools, there are myriad advantages and disadvantages to them, and as an interview with TVDSB indicated, there has to be a very strong pedagogical belief in one system over another in order to implement a single track school. Finally, a jurisdictional scan of PDSB's did not show that creating a single track school stemmed enrollment pressures into the French immersion program. Rather, single track schools were created in order to reduce existing schools that have unbalanced enrollment where there is a high proportion of one language of students or another.

The survey data also show that the existing structure of the grade one entry point and dual track options generally suffice in the WRDSB at present. Specifically:

- 72% of parents/caregivers selected grade one as an entry point, and 59% of staff selected it as an entry point;
- Even though there is a preference for grade one as an entry point, about half (58% of parents/caregivers and 47% of staff) indicated that there should be more than one entry point;

⁸ Base size is small (n=22), this result should be interpreted with caution.

⁹ TVDSB, HDSB, PDSB and HWDSB were reviewed in detail.

- Staff tend to favour entry points at higher grades, while parents/caregivers favour them at lower grades;
- 51% of parents/caregivers feel that French immersion should be offered in single track and dual track schools, with 27% indicating dual track only and 12% indicating single track only; and
- Quantitative results among staff regarding single and dual track schools are more divided. Specifically, 62% of principals and vice-principals prefer single track implementation only, compared to only 30% of teachers.

3.1.6 Issues with WRDSB's Operational Goals and Vision

Malatest qualitatively discussed WRDSB's operational goals with key stakeholders and compared the operational goals to those used by other boards. While there were several individuals who found the statement to be satisfactory, there were an equal number who found issues with it. The issues centre on a few key issues:

- Vagueness of the statement, in that issues such as confidence and competence were not easy to define and measure;
- That there were no measures or outcomes associated with the statement;
- To the above point, some felt based on experience with the program that it was not living up to the expectations set in it; and
- It was missing several factors included in other statements such as equity of access, growth and stability of the program, finding quality teachers, measuring outcomes and retention and alignment with the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) that help provide measurable standards and outcomes for French language education.

3.1.7 Core French and Entry into Secondary School French

Parents/caregivers favour their children receiving any kind of French education in WRDSB. Three quarters (75%) of parents/caregivers completely agree that they want their children to learn French. While about eight in ten parents/caregivers with children in immersion and extended French completely agree with this, even 54% of parents/caregivers with children in core French completely agree, and 33% somewhat agree, thus suggesting that even parents/caregivers with children in the core program value French education in the WRDSB.

While there is strong support for any level of French education in WRDSB, core French teachers that participated in a focus group for this research, indicated that they feel undervalued. The feelings gathered from the focus groups, however, are very similar to those uncovered by Lapkin, Mady, & Arnott, 2009, in a combined review of literature on French immersion in Canada. Core French immersion teachers are concerned because they do not have a classroom, and only spend 40 minutes a day with students, thus having less opportunity to form strong relationships with students. Some core teachers felt that they could not teach to the board's standard set-out in its existing operational goals concerning the outcomes of core French because of the transient nature of core French teacher's relationships with students and an overall focus on STEM subjects. The perceptual issues with core French are held by parents/caregivers and principals and vice-principals as well. Parents/caregivers feel that teachers who have a real passion for the subject will teach immersion, and that they feel less is expected from core French students than immersion students. Principals and vice-principals somewhat agreed that families with children in French immersion are more supportive and enthusiastic about French, but that teaching core French is a challenge that requires core French teachers to be able to build relationships with students given that it is challenging to do so.

The literature review provided some solutions including offering core French on a semester basis so that longer times are spent with students. This helps develop relationships and allows for extended use of French in an 80 minute setting. Also, the literature advocated a change in pedagogy towards more collaborative and student-lead exercises. However, if a semester system is not possible in the WRDSB elementary system, then thoughts should be given to increasing time with core French teachers, and/or methods of encouraging an educational relationship between core French teachers and students.

Finally, students in focus groups were asked about transferring out of the French program later in their secondary school years. Students indicate transfers occur because they want to take a different program, that French immersion is not offered at their school, that the quality of teacher becomes more important to them and that extended French is a viable option for them. Students also want to choose programs based on friendships and whether they can see themselves using French in their future studies or careers.

3.2 Analysis of Key Findings

3.2.1 **There are Some Issues with Enrollment Pressures and Teacher Shortages for WRDSB, but Overall, They Appear to be Managed Fairly Well. Also, WRDSB is Not Facing the Same Pressures as Other Boards**

This review had a very broad scope attached to it, and there were no direct and specific research or evaluation questions to be answered. Rather, it is to provide guidance based on an exhaustive examination of quantitative and qualitative data and findings from other boards. One of the most common findings in other boards' reviews is the shortage of French teachers in Ontario and the increased demand for French immersion programming leading to unsustainable program growth and unbalanced English and French programming, especially in dual track schools. As such, many boards are looking to implement programmatic steps that would have a result of reducing demand for the program. HDSB perhaps has taken the most drastic step of the boards that have been reviewed in detail for this study, by introducing a grade two entry point. However, WRDSB does not seem to have the same enrollment pressures as HDSB was facing at the time. For example, a majority of HDSB's dual track schools had more than 60% enrollment in French immersion, while only 37% in WRDSB have more than 60% enrollment in French immersion. Also, in 2016-17, HDSB had 25.1% of all its elementary enrollment in French immersion, compared to 15.6% for WRDSB. Moreover, WRDSB for the 2019-2020 year was able to staff all its French immersion classes at the beginning of the year.

However, this does not mean WRDSB has a program without pressures. Compared to four other comparable boards in Southwestern Ontario, WRDSB had the highest increase in enrollment in its French immersion program between 2011 and 2016 (68%). Moreover, even though WRDSB's French immersion programs were fully staffed at the beginning of the year, WRDSB's human resources department describes finding replacement staff as "problematic". Also, principals spend significant time finding replacement and qualified teachers for regular class and substitute duties. Further, parents, principals and vice-principals and students are concerned about finding quality teachers who will remain committed to French immersion, core French and having a passion for teaching the French language and culture, and providing experiences to students that impart French education in an effective manner. Also, the initial WRDSB "French Immersion Review Committee Report" indicates "the WRDSB is beginning to experience enrollment pressure at some of our sites... several of our sites become closed to out-of-boundary students... As more sites become closed to out-of-boundary students, the system's ability to accommodate students is reduced." ([WRDSB: French Immersion Review Committee, 2018](#)) Finally, and as discussed in **Section 3.2.3** below, the issue of equity is fairly significant within the WRDSB and is an issue that needs to be addressed.

3.2.2 **There Appears to Be a Need to Address Program Structure, but Change Does Not Need to Be Extensive at This Point**

Given that WRDSB is presently managing enrollment and the program fairly well, it may not be in a position to have to take significant steps in regard to changing the program at the moment. Specifically, the research for this review asked direct questions about a later entry point and the creation of single track schools in WRDSB. Both of those can be considered fairly significant changes to the program that may not be necessary at this point. The literature review did reveal that a significant benefit of a later entry point is that it does give parents/caregivers and teachers the opportunity to make a more informed decision about a child's ability to manage French immersion, by observing the kind of student they are in grade one (and or possibly higher, up until the entry point). Compared to kindergarten, grade schools start teaching students more academic subjects, and WRDSB also exposes them to core French thus allowing for more informed decisions prior to the entry point.

However, both parents/caregivers and staff seem to favour a grade one entry point, according to the survey conducted for this review. Specifically, 72% of parents/caregivers selected grade one as an entry point and 59% of teachers selected it as an entry point¹⁰. Moreover, HDSB implemented a later entry point in order to reduce enrollment pressure on its program. WRDSB does not have the same enrollment pressures, and according to the views of board administration and management that were expressed in November 2019, they anticipate population growth over the next few years may offset the decrease in enrollment created by a later entry point.

Another fairly significant step that was investigated in this review is creating a single track French school. However, the literature reviews and reviews of other boards show that moving to a single track school is both an even more drastic change to the community than changing the entry point, and it is not a strategy that is generally implemented to manage, or specifically reduce, enrollment. Instead it is done to either address current and significant over-capacity issues at or some schools and/or as a result of a pedagogical stance towards a strong immersive environment for students. Also, results from the surveys of parents/caregivers and staff indicate that dual track is the option preferred by many, though staff are more likely to prefer a single track option. While only 27% of parents/caregivers prefer dual track only (the current option offered by WRDSB), 51% prefer both single and dual track options. Staff are more divided. Principals and vice-principals are more likely to prefer single track schools only (62%), compared to only 30% of teachers. This is likely because principals and vice-principals recognize the difficulty of managing two streams of programming in dual track school settings.

PDSB also listed some criteria for the creation of a single track school, such as finding a school that is underutilized and has another school within very close walking distance from the school about to be converted into a single track institution. In other words, there are criteria that can be used to determine how to successfully implement a single track option.

3.2.3 **The Issue of Equity Hangs Over Any Decision Made by WRDSB. Changes to Program Structure Can Address This Issue**

Besides stakeholder preferences, or results from a review of other boards' findings regarding school tracks or entry point, any action that will be taken by WRDSB towards French immersion will be viewed through a strong lens of equity and enrichment. Though it was not asked directly in any of Malatest's surveys or focus groups, it is quite possible – given the strong feelings about equity and enrichment in the board - creating a single track school, without addressing the perception of equity and enrichment runs the risk of further promoting such perceptions. In fact, both the literature and opinions gathered

¹⁰ Parents/caregivers and staff feel that there should be more than one entry point, with about half of each saying that the WRDSB should have more than one entry point. As such, the issue of entry point is not just when entry should occur but how many opportunities should be given.

through research for this review show that the impact of a single track school is exceptionally mixed, and that there are an equal number of positives and negatives for both single and dual track schools. The literature does show, however, that single track schools, especially if they displace a school that is not under-utilized, may further the perception of equity and enrichment, by grouping together and even isolating French teaching resources and students that would be more valued at all institutions throughout the entire WRDSB community.

Equity and enrichment may also be an issue in WRDSB's policy that enables grade one classes to be formed at any school where at least 20 parents/caregivers show interest in forming such a class. The data show that the location of French immersion schools throughout the board does tend to somewhat favour areas that have higher incomes to them. **Figure 5-4** shows that 38% of dual track schools are in lower income areas, and 62% of dual track schools are located in higher income areas. This compares to about a 50/50 even distribution of single track schools among income areas.

Moreover, both the WRDSB superintendent interview and the one from HWDSB indicated that spreading the program too thinly or in too many schools creates a quality issue. It spreads resources too thinly and may require triple grading if future enrollment is not there to continue to support the creation of additional classes.

The HWDSB, over the past few years has adopted a centralized enrollment plan, whereby they "guarantee child a place in the French immersion program, but not at a particular school" ([HWDSB, 2019](#)). According to literature from the HWDSB, the system was created to "to ensure that all students who wish to take French immersion programming are able to do so. In addition, the Board is able to plan accommodation needs to prevent accommodation pressures within the system. It is recommended that a system-wide application process for grade one entry to French immersion programs be established to allow for program placement of students, monitoring of accommodations, balance of enrolment, and long term stability of the French immersion program" ([HWDSB Board Meeting, 2016, pp. 11.2-A22](#)). **Section 11.3.3** indicates other benefits of this system for the board, but the representative in the key informant interview indicated that "parents/caregivers are demanding additional programs, so they do not have to leave their home community... I work with [Trustees who approve French immersion schools] to make them aware that program quality may be impacted by over-expansion." The informant describes his strategy as one to "Open additional classrooms in schools rather than adding schools." In many ways, the WRDSB system is somewhat similar to this in that if a student is not offered a space in their home school, they are offered one at a school outside the catchment area, and can attend if the parent is able to arrange transportation. This aspect is similar across both systems, but the HWDSB system provides a more centralized process under which the board has more control on how to select sites, thus giving it more sway over how the French immersion program progresses throughout the board. In fact, given that the outcomes of both systems are fairly similar, moving the WRDSB towards a similar model may likely be perceived as much less radical to the system than a later entry point or opening a single track school. However, if such a system were adopted by WRDSB, transportation would have to be reconsidered as well. HWDSB has a centralized bussing system for French immersion students, where parents drop students off at a stop/depot, rather than having a bus come directly to a house. Though this particular change may not be required in WRDSB, but it indicates that transportation should be examined under such a system.

Another option for WRDSB to consider is to continue to allow parent formation of grade one French immersion classes, but to consider allowing the formation of a class with a minimum of 18 students (or even less, if the board decides to do so) in economically disadvantaged areas, and in areas that are relatively wealthier, consider raising the limit to 23 students. This can be implemented if a central registration system is not put in place. This has a few potential impacts. It both reduces the perception of elitism, and can actually promote more mixing of different economic groups, should parents/caregivers choose to send their children to schools with a lower starting threshold. Also, it may

act as a natural filter to the overall program as some parents/caregivers make a decision not to enroll their children in French immersion in a school that is too far out of their neighbourhood. However, implementation of a centralized system could incorporate this class size strategy within it, or most any class size strategy. With WRDSB having more influence over class sizes and locations under a central system of registration, it can implement this class size allocation strategy or others in order to meet strategic goals and/or changes in the program or demographics.

3.2.4 Special Education for French Immersion and the Broader French Program in WRDSB

Equity and enrichment is also an issue for special education and overall performance of students in the French immersion program. Overall, 68% of parents/caregivers say that French immersion enriches a child's education overall. However, within the focus groups this was expanded-upon, and many parents/caregivers participating in the groups felt that the program was elitist and promoted streaming of students in one way or another. Among parents/caregivers who do not support French immersion, an exceptionally strong majority of them, 86%, indicated their opposition to the program was because it promotes streaming, and 74% feel that French immersion does not provide equity of education.

Malatest has analyzed the EQAO results of French immersion and non-French immersion students in WRDSB, and the results are clear. Students in French immersion perform better academically in all areas, including language and math, and have better opinions of their academic abilities compared to their non-French immersion counterparts in both grade three and grade six. This is detailed in **Section 5.7**. Another key finding is that 65% of teachers say that transfers out of French immersion occur frequently because of learning difficulties in immersion, and 41% say transfers out occur frequently because special education supports are not offered in French immersion. One of the ironies of transferring-out students with special needs and/or learning difficulties is that the EQAO data shows that those with special education needs and English language learners who are enrolled in French immersion do better than special needs education and English language learner students in English classes. This is detailed in **Figure 5-1** and **Figure 5-2**.

As the EQAO results indicate, the issue of special education, however, is multi-faceted and not one with an easy solution. It is one that will require a much more in-depth solution and way of thinking beyond transferring students from one program to another. Rather there are significant ethical issues involved, as pointed out in an article from Genesee and Fortune in 2014 that indicates:

Research on the suitability of bilingual education for at-risk learners goes beyond questions concerning academic success. It also includes important ethical, pedagogical, professional development and assessment issues. Ethical issues are implicated because it could be considered unethical to admit at-risk children to bilingual programs if they are not likely to benefit from participation or if participation is likely to jeopardize their educational success. ([Genesee & Fortune, 2014](#))

A parent in the focus group summarized this dynamic by saying “Students [generally and regardless of English or French stream] get a solid foundation in the early years in math and literacy. Some students who leave FI never catch up and it impacts their future schooling. They have failed and have to leave their social group. It has a large impact on self- esteem.”

The article continues by saying:

Conversely, it could be considered unethical to exclude at-risk students since to do so would, arguably, deprive them of the opportunity to acquire valuable language and cultural skills that would benefit them in their future personal and professional lives. The latter issue is particularly relevant when competence in additional language is important from a real-world perspective – as in the case of French for English-speaking students in Canada or where there are real benefits in the local community

to being bilingual or, increasingly, around the world, where bi/multilingual competence is becoming important for reasons related to globalization.

The survey identified the fact that 61% of parents completely agree that learning a second language increases a students' employment prospects. These findings may support the idea of working hard to make the French immersion program more inclusive overall, especially for learners who need extra attention.

3.2.5 WRDSB Does Have Some Key Successes and Support in Managing the French Immersion Program

Despite enrollment pressures, issues of equity and structure of the program, the WRDSB's French immersion program has some strong successes and support. Data show that WRDSB can generally meet the demand for the program, especially if some parents, who do not receive placement in their home schools, are willing to drive children to another school's French immersion program. Also, as mentioned before, WRDSB indicated that it was able to fully staff its French immersion programs at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year.

Attitudinal successes and support for the program area also high. Three quarters of parents/caregivers with children in French immersion say that they are satisfied with their child's French education, and over half of all parents/caregivers who have children in extended or core French also indicate satisfaction with the French education received. Also, even among this group of parents/caregivers who do not have children in French immersion, 55% of those non-immersion parents/caregivers indicate support for the French immersion program. Teachers are split on their support of French immersion, with only 58% of those who teach English supporting French immersion, but 95% of those who speak French support it. Finally, all stakeholders feel quite strongly that French immersion should be available to everyone in the WRDSB. Specifically, 77% of parents/caregivers with children in core French, 88% of parents/caregivers with children in extended French and 93% of parents/caregivers with children in French immersion support the notion of access to the immersion program among all students. Similar support can be seen among staff, with about eight in ten (79%) agreeing that French immersion programming should be available to everyone in the board.

3.2.6 Adapting WRDSB's Operational Goals and Vision Will be Important to Implementing Future Change

One way of bringing together the many dynamics involved in managing a French immersion program is WRDSB's operational goals. The statement was compared to the provincial statement as well as the statements of other boards. In comparison to other boards, WRDSB's operational goals does not address some of the key factors addressed by other boards, and issues that have been found to exist among WRDSB's stakeholders in this review. Specifically, other boards' operational goals directly mention: 1) Managing the quality of the program; 2) Equity; 3) Increasing retention throughout the program; 4) Improving assessment outcomes; and 5) Cultural growth of students. Implementing and disseminating Key Performance Indicator (KPI) information in support of new operational goals and vision, as well as existing goals, will be fairly important for WRDSB at present and the ongoing success of the program. In a significant number of qualitative interviews across all stakeholder groups (i.e. parents, teachers, principals and vice-principals and students), participants questioned whether existing goals of fluency, confidence and competence in French language skills were being attained, and producing KPI results to support this will be important.

3.3 Recommendations

3.3.1 Address Equity and Access Issues

Special education training and support should be carefully considered so that students in the French immersion program can remain in it and succeed. The EQAO results between French immersion and non-French immersion show academic and attitudinal differences that suggest French immersion students perform better academically and engage in activities (both in and out of class) that enhance their academic success. **Table 7-6** shows that between four-in-ten and over six-in-ten parents who have removed students from French immersion, or have not enrolled their child in French immersion, feel that it is not the best learning environment, or because there are better supports in non-French immersion classes. The focus group comments suggest that increased time with special needs students is required, along with better instruction in STEM subjects in French immersion, and even teachers with a better knowledge of French to help students with learning challenges more easily understand the material. Core French teachers also indicate that they need more special education training. Increasing access and addressing equity means providing exceptional supports to students and even working to be best-in-class at providing special education services within French immersion, as encouraging students to remain in a program that may prove too challenging to them can have negative consequences for the child in terms of educational development and impact on self-esteem.

Finally, the literature provides some suggestions about potential in-class implementation of educational strategies for students requiring special education. It is possible that the WRDSB could survey French immersion teachers to determine which strategies are needed and create board-specific training for those issues. Funding may be able to be procured from Base Amount for Collaboration and Integration within the Special Education Grant, and could be implemented in classrooms using educational assistants.

3.3.2 Consider a Centralized Registration System

The research for this study specifically investigated a later entry point for French immersion and the addition of single track schools within WRDSB. Data and research show that these are options that are fairly significant steps to take for a program, and surveys with parents/caregivers and teachers indicate that while some want changes to these aspects of the program, there is stronger sense that the current program configuration can be maintained. As such, one option for WRDSB to consider is to take more centralized control of registration and class formation, similar to the system launched in HWDSB a few years ago. A centralized system will allow WRDSB the opportunity to configure classes in ways that meet various goals of the program including equity, utilization rates in various schools and manage teacher resources more appropriately, and limit over expansion of the program to too many schools. The HWDSB representative indicated ““parents/caregivers are demanding additional programs, so that they don’t have to leave their home community... I work with [Trustees] to make them aware that program quality may be impacted by over-expansion.”

3.3.3 Consider Altering Class Size Minimums to Make Distribution of Classes More Even Throughout WRDSB

Another equity issue is the fact that French immersion classes tend to be located in areas that are more economically advantaged, and are geared towards parents/caregivers that are able to drive students to a school that is out of their area. At present, WRDSB will consider forming a French immersion class in any school where 20 senior kindergarten parents/caregivers express interest. Moreover, the Ministry allows 10% of any grade panel’s classes to have a maximum of 23 students, the maximum class size allowable by law for grades one through three. WRDSB indicates that it currently allocates all its 10% allotment to French immersion classes at the grade one level. As such, consider setting the minimum French immersion class size number to 23 in economically advantaged areas, and 18 in economically

disadvantaged areas. A lower class size though would require the WRDSB to ensure that the program is sustainable as it progresses through progressive years and grades. It should be noted that a centralized registration system, or management system of classes, where WRDSB can manage the location and size of classes may be able to address this point directly.

3.3.4 Do not Consider Alternate Entry Points, Single Track Schools or Enrollment Caps at This Point

As alluded to in **Section 3.2.3**, alternate entry points and single track schools are fairly extreme options to take for a French immersion program. While WRDSB is facing some enrollment pressures, and hiring quality teachers can be problematic and challenging, a centralized enrollment system may be a less disruptive way to handle such issues at the moment. Alternate, or later entry points, have the advantage of allowing students, parents/caregivers and teachers to determine if French immersion will be a good fit for their child, by exposing them to French and more academic subjects and teachings in grade school. Moreover, the creation of single track schools can also be based on addressing the needs of school principals and vice-principals who indicate that managing a dual track system can be challenging for them. According to the data, implementing a single track school is not done to limit uptake into the program (though it may have that impact), but rather it helps balance out French and English enrollment across schools in a board, or a particular area. It should also be noted that single track schools have numerous advantages and disadvantages associated with them, and the board must weigh them very carefully. One disadvantage is that a single track school could be perceived as making an already enriched program even more so enriching. However, advantages include a more immersive environment for French immersion students and less divided schools in the dual track system. It would also be important for the WRDSB to ensure the viability and continued quality of the core French program in creating a single track school, as some parents and literature suggest that a single track French school would draw the best French resources, and possibly students, from dual track schools to work in the single track schools. Parent feedback surrounding this topic included the following:

“I believe that there should be immersion schools or non-immersion schools. This would require equitable student transportation to the immersion schools but would eliminate the social and resource inequities that French immersion is creating in public schools today. There is a fear of keeping your child in “core” as the stigma is that this is for students of lesser ability where they will have less support and larger class sizes. I would not have chosen immersion were it not for the stigma associated with Core vs. immersion.” Parent feedback

“It doesn’t really matter if French immersion is offered in single or dual track schools as long as the necessary resources are allocated and are readily available. It is probably easier to manage single track schools and makes staff’s life much easier. However, offering it into dual track schools makes French immersion much more accessible to everybody. It all depends on the purpose, mission and WRDS’s goal... I would continue with dual track schools.” Parent feedback

3.3.5 Consider Increasing the Time Core French Teachers Spend with Students and Pedagogical Changes for Core French

While there is a general level of satisfaction with core French programming, some teachers report challenges in teaching the program, and jurisdictional scans from other school boards confirm these views. Some issues include a lack of classroom space and ability to form constructive relationships with students in order to foster learning, given that core French is only 40 minutes a day. The literature shows that consideration of a semester system addresses the issue of spending more time with students. However, it may not be possible to implement a full change to elementary programming in order to accommodate a semester system for French. However, WRDSB should explore ways of increasing the time and/or concentration of time core French teachers spend with students so that relationships can be improved. The literature recommends pedagogical changes to a more collaborative activities and interactive discussions for core French as well.

3.3.6 Enhance the WRDSB Operational Goals and Vision for French Programming

The operational goals for WRDSB programming should be enhanced to include such issues as equality of access, retention, better definitions and measures of confidence and fluency and language. Consider moving program measures and outcomes towards the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) and enhancing key performance measures associated with particular outcomes for each portion that is added to the statement. For example, outcome measures addressing equity could include: 1) The number of special education students enrolled in French immersion; 2) Number of teachers with special education qualifications in French immersion; 3) Availability of supports; and 4) Does the community feel French immersion is equitable and accessible. Program viability could be measured by attrition rates, and characteristics of students leaving the program and the number of immersion classes cancelled. **Table 6-4** indicates key areas of the operational goals and vision and performance indicators that can be used to measure effectiveness.

SECTION 4: COMPARISON OF OTHER BOARDS' FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS

4.1 Key Findings Discussed in this Section

The goal of this section is to provide a brief summary of other school boards operating in Southwestern Ontario. There does not appear to be a significant amount of consistency between boards and the entry points used for French immersion. This corresponds to findings from the literature¹¹ that suggest results on specific structures of French immersion programs are inconclusive, leaving boards to implement a French program based on student, community and operational dynamics. There is also a split between boards that offer a combination of single and dual track and dual track only. Only one school board (of those reviewed in detail as part of this study) offers single track as its only mode of French immersion.

When comparing Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) to the other three boards in specific and in detail (Halton District (HDSB), Hamilton-Wentworth District (HWDSB) and Thames Valley District (TVDSB)), WRDSB had the highest percentage growth in its elementary French immersion program between 2011 to 2016 (63%). However, HDSB experienced significantly more enrollment pressure on its French immersion program than other boards under study, thus prompting its move to a grade two entry point. Very early and preliminary data shows that uptake into the French immersion program has been reduced in HDSB.

HWDSB uses a centralized model of admission and a central bussing stop program for French immersion students. According to our key informant interview with HWDSB, their operational belief is that they have the capacity throughout the board to offer French immersion for all students that want it. As such, they can guarantee a placement for all students in French immersion, but do not guarantee a school, per-se.

TVDSB operates a majority of single track French immersion schools, with the pedagogical belief that single track schools offer a more immersive experience. This contrasts with HWDSB, where the preference is for dual track schools in order to keep and solidify the French immersion program within the local community, as opposed to separating students from their broader community surroundings. This illustrates, however, that programs are structured more so on community dynamics and realities, and less-so on research or educational beliefs.

4.2 Summary of Single/Dual Track Models and Entry Points Used in Other Boards

A review of French immersion programs offered at 21 school boards (Public & Catholic), within and adjacent to Southwestern Ontario, revealed that all offer French immersion programs with the exception of the Wellington Catholic District School Board which offers only core French. Approximately half of the school boards offer their elementary French immersion programs in a combination of single and dual track schools. The majority of the remaining school boards offer dual track only in their elementary French Immersion programs. One school board offers single track only. All school boards offer dual track only in their secondary French immersion programs. The model of elementary French immersion programs offered in Southwestern Ontario school boards are summarized below:

- Boards offering dual and single track: Bluewater, Bruce-Grey Catholic, Halton, Hamilton-Wentworth (HWDSB), Grand Erie, Thames Valley (TVDSB), London District Catholic, Greater Essex County, Windsor-Essex Catholic, Upper Grand;
- Boards offering dual track only: Avon Maitland, Halton Catholic, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic, Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic, Niagara, Niagara Catholic, Lambton Kent, St Clair Catholic, Waterloo Catholic, Waterloo Region; and

¹¹ A detailed literature review on entry point and single/dual track is discussed in **Section 9.2** and **Section 10.2** respectively.

- Huron Perth offers single track only.

The majority of school boards offer access to their French immersion programs at either year two of kindergarten or grade one. A few school boards offer multiple access points which include kindergarten and grade one. HDSB defers access to their French immersion programs until grade two. Details are summarized below:

- Boards starting French immersion in kindergarten: Bluewater, Bruce-Grey Catholic, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic, Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic, Lambton Kent, St Clair Catholic, Greater Essex County, Windsor-Essex Catholic, Upper Grand;
- Boards starting French immersion in grade one: Avon Maitland, Huron Perth, Halton Catholic, Hamilton-Wentworth, Niagara, Waterloo Catholic, Waterloo Region;
- HDSB offers French Immersion starting in grade two; and
- Boards offering multiple access points (including kindergarten and grade one): Grand Erie, Niagara Catholic, Thames Valley, London District Catholic.

It should be noted, however, that in the detailed review of HDSB's change to a grade two and in PDSB's French immersion review overall, both boards indicated that the literature around these issues is inconclusive and in the case of entry point, and subsequent intensity of French programming, somewhat dated. As such, both boards recommend looking at operational and community dynamics within the board to make decisions on single and dual track schooling and entry points. Detailed information on the literature and dynamics of these decisions for both boards can be found in **Section 9.2.1.** and **Section 9.2.2.**

In terms of single and dual track schools, a study was conducted in Alberta in 2007 to compare dual track and single track French immersion programs. Evidence from this study ([Doell, 2011](#)) suggests that a single track French school encourage a more intense French environment – school corridors are likely to display more French material, assemblies conducted in French, and administration and other staff are more likely to be bilingual. These schools, according to the study, devote all their staff, programs and resources to immersion, making the budget more manageable. Single track immersion schools also tend to attract more committed parents. Meanwhile, the study shows that unilingual administration in dual track often lack pedagogical knowledge of French learning, and have challenges communicating about educational issues with supervising staff and French immersion teachers. Despite the additional challenges of balancing between two cultures and maintaining a unified school, the same source shares that there are advantages to dual track, primarily the exposure to diversity, the expanded opportunity for students to learn two languages, and the elimination of neighbourhood cliques.

4.3 Summary of Other Boards' French Immersion Operations

In order to gain a better understanding of the factors that could impact WRDSB's French immersion program, three school boards were selected for further analysis with regard to regional growth, staff recruitment, transportation, and other related conditions that may affect the success of their French immersion programs. The boards selected include HDSB, HWDSB and TVDSB. **Table 4-1** summarizes the models used in each of the three boards as compared to WRDSB and provides brief comparative statistics. WRDSB, as can be seen, has the largest number of elementary schools, and also the largest growth in its elementary French immersion program (63%).

It is important to note that a significant amount of detail is provided about these boards and their operations throughout the report. The table below is provided as a quick, comparative summary.

Table 4-1: French Immersion Models Used by Three School Boards vs. WRDSB

	WRDSB	HDSB	HWDSB	TVDSB
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Elementary schools with French immersion (2018)	48 elementary schools Dual track only	35 elementary schools Mostly dual track; Six single track	17 elementary schools Mostly dual track; 1 single track	11 elementary schools Mostly single track; 1 dual track
Access points	Grade one	Grade two	Grade one	SK and grade one
Bussing provided	Yes (catchment area)	Yes (catchment area)	Yes (catchment area)	Yes
% of French language instruction in program	Gr 1-8 – 50%	Gr 2 – 100% Gr 3 – 80% Gr 4-8 – 50%	Gr 1 – 68%-85% Gr 2-6 – 68%-80% Gr 7-8 – 50%-60%	SK – 80% Gr 1-8 – 80%
Enrolment caps/wait list in 2018/19	If more applicants than spaces, an ordered lottery system: - With sibling in FI - Home school students - Out of boundary students - Wait lists	Can currently accommodate all requests	Wait list of 26 students for 2018/19 Guaranteed entry if sibling in FI; random selection for remaining applicants (child may not be offered place at home school)	Can currently accommodate all requests
Student population¹² (2016-2017)	63,077	63,955	49,626	75,761
Growth in elementary student enrollment 2011-2016	4%	13%	2%	3%
Growth in elementary French immersion enrollment 2011-2016	63%	38%	27%	16%
% Enrolled in French immersion¹³ (2016-2017)	15.6% (Elementary) 2.2% (Secondary)	25.1% (Elementary) 13.1% (Secondary)	9.3% (Elementary) 3.8% (Secondary)	9.3% (Elementary) 3.6% (Secondary)
Median household income¹⁴	\$100,627	\$119,554	\$98,603	\$93,500
% with Post-Secondary Education¹⁵	24%	35%	20%	20%

4.4 Qualitative Summary of Other Boards' French Immersion Operations

The three sections below provide a summary of the qualitative interviews conducted with administrators in each of the three boards that were examined in detail for this review. It should be noted that additional details about each board are provided throughout the report in relevant sections.

¹² www.ontario.ca/data/enrolment-grade-elementary-schools ;
www.ontario.ca/data/enrolment-grade-secondary-schools

¹³ <https://www.ontario.ca/data/french-second-language-enrolment>

¹⁴ Median after-tax income of couple economic families with children (Statistics Canada, 2015)

¹⁵ Percentage of the population aged 15 years and over with a university certificate; diploma or degree at bachelor level or higher (Statistics Canada, 2015)

4.4.1 Focus on Halton District School Board

In 2018, HDSB implemented a grade two entry point for its French immersion program. The jurisdictional review shows that while several model options were explored during HDSB's review (e.g. early entry, late entry, single track only, dual track only and combinations of the above), the justification for choosing the grade two start was that it was more practical to implement and was one option that did not require large-scale boundary reviews ([HDSB Minutes, December 2019](#)). HDSB was able to maintain their mix of single and dual track schools which, according to their stakeholder feedback, was most desirable in that it maintained the continuity of communities ([HDSB: Program Viability Summary and Recommendations, May 2016](#)). Adopting this model also meant that the HDSB had two years to plan for the implementation of the model which prevented any drastic changes in overall enrolment numbers and allowed time to make the necessary adjustments to the curriculum (core French only in grade one and 100% French instruction in grade two, 80% in grade three and 50% for grade four and beyond) ([HDSB: Program Viability Summary and Recommendations, May 2016](#)).

The switch to a grade two entry point is the most significant shift in programming in the boards under study for this review. It represents a significant change for the entire HDSB, parents/caregivers and students as well. As is discussed in detail in **Section 5**, HDSB's program appeared to be under more enrollment pressure than many of the other school boards. Specifically, HDSB had:

- A higher proportion of dual track schools where French immersion enrollment exceeded English enrollment. Specifically, 54% of its dual track schools had 60% or more French immersion enrollment. This compares to 37% in WRDSB (**Section 5.3**);
- Compared to all boards under study, HDSB had the highest proportion of elementary French immersion overall at 25.1% in 2016/2017. This compares to 15.6% for WRDSB (**Section 5.5**);
- An uptake of 37% from senior kindergarten to grade one French immersion (**Section 9.2.1.3**); and
- Growth of 13% in their overall elementary enrollment from 2011-2016. This is the highest increase in elementary enrollment overall among the boards under comparison, suggesting an overall pressure on the French immersion program due to overall growth in the elementary program. (**Section 5.6**).

The change to grade two entry has resulted in a reduced uptake¹⁶ into the program from 37% in 2017/2018 to 25% in 2018/2019 and 28% in 2019/2020. HDSB representatives participating in an interview for this review suggested that the decline in enrollment may be because parents/caregivers can now make a more informed decision when considering whether to enroll their child in the program after seeing how a child responds to core French language programming in grade one and can better determine if French immersion is right for the child. Board representatives also noted that they expect the decline in grade two French immersion enrollment to eventually stop over the next few years and perhaps begin to increase due to overall growth in population for the region.

Anecdotally, HDSB indicated it is aware of an improvement in French proficiency among its grade two and grade three French immersion students as they are encouraged to speak French during the school day; they seem to be more proficient in French language skills than when they spent two years in a 50%/50% model. HDSB has observed a change in the balance of students in some of their dual track schools. At a maximum some dual track schools had 70% French immersion and 30% English, now it is about 60%/40%. They hope to move closer to 50%/50% in the coming years across the entire board.

¹⁶ Uptake is defined as the proportion of students from the grade prior to the first French immersion year that enter into the French immersion program in the following year.

The model change has also meant that HDSB has not needed to recruit as many teachers thus reducing their costs for recruitment. In addition, representatives noted that the board has introduced a screening tool to test the French proficiency of prospective candidates to ensure that they are hiring quality teachers. In order to accommodate the increase in French language instruction which will now include math instruction in French, French teachers are encouraged to complete mathematics qualification courses similar to those required by English program teachers¹⁷.

With respect to accommodating students with special needs, representatives noted that they do not exclude students from French immersion due to behavioural or learning issues. While the later entry for French immersion can help with early identification of students with special needs, should students with special needs and/or individual education plans (IEP) enroll in French immersion, they are provided supports. However, not all supports are provided in French as they have limited special education resource teachers who are fluent in French and most of their other support specialists (e.g. child and youth worker, psychologist or social worker) do not speak French. Curriculum, teaching, learning, and assessment supports for French programs and teachers are supported by a central school program department which provides support to all programs and teachers in both the French and English streams.

4.4.2 Focus on Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

HWDSB French immersion programming is offered at 17 elementary schools (one single track, 16 dual track) and two secondary schools (dual track only). Board representatives indicated that they have seen a significant increase in demand for French immersion over the past 5 years; a 10-12% increase in the past year over the previous year. For the 2018/19 school year they had 669 spots for students and a waitlist of 26 students; however, the waitlist was comprised of those who applied outside the application window (i.e. were late entries).

To accommodate the growing demand for French immersion, HWDSB uses a pupil accommodation review process to identify where French immersion schools are to be located. Their preference is to have dual track schools so that French immersion can be available in or close to a family's home area. Representatives noted that they do have sufficient capacity system-wide and have a plan in place to add French immersion spaces through a new program pending Ministry funding. The new plan would see additional dual track French immersion programs added to high demand areas, along with space to add additional French immersion classes at a central school and a mountain area school for out-of-catchment area placements. This strategy will also help to increase access to French immersion for those in socioeconomically marginalized communities in central and mountain areas. In addition, HWDSB reserves the 10% of grade one classes that can be run with 23 students for French immersion to save on staff and minimize the number of French classrooms needed.

HWDSB uses a community-stop bussing model for French immersion, up to grade six where students are picked up from a central location, but bussing is still only provided for students within the catchment area for the French immersion school. From Grade 7-12, if trip will not exceed an hour, bus tickets are used for local Hamilton Street Railway (HSR). When HSR is not feasible, HWDSB provides taxi or school bus. As a result, transportation costs for French immersion elementary students are about the same as for English track students. Some secondary students have to travel quite a distance which results in an increase of about \$250K to their transportation costs.

In terms of the goals of the program overall, HWDSB wants students in all French programs to acquire a high level of French proficiency and it has focused on bringing their core French programming on par with French immersion as an equally valid pathway to bilingualism by the end of grade 12. To this end, HWDSB has built a cohort of educators who are "Diplôme d'études en langue française" (DELF)

¹⁷ HDSB French Immersion Final Report October 2016

assessors¹⁸. They have refocused the French programs from traditional grammar and translation to the Common European Linguistic Framework (CELF). Results of DELF assessment among their students suggest that the performance of HWDSB core French students is very close to that of their French immersion students.

Also, over the past two years, HWDSB's focus is to make sure all students are reading at standard in French and English by the end of grade one. As a result, their grade one French immersion population has a high number of students getting a grade of "B" in both English and French. They also noted that in general French immersion students do as well as English track students on EQAO scores. HWDSB has also created a series of resources in French for the assessment of French and are seeing engagement among educators using those tools and feeling valued as educators.

The board representative also noted that there was very little difference in academic performance between French immersion students in single and dual track schools. While their preference is for dual track schools, they do have two single track schools; one has been in existence for many years, while the other single track school was opened more by necessity than design in order to accommodate space issues in one school and a surplus in another. The interviewee noted that dual track schools provide a rich multi-linguistic environment and roots the French immersion program in the local school community more than a single track school.

4.4.3 Focus on Thames Valley District School Board

TVDSB has 10 single track and one dual track French immersion school with kindergarten to grade eight with 80% French language instruction in all grades and five secondary schools that are dual track only. According to the key informant interview, while they are currently able to meet the demand for French immersion, TVDSB is currently undertaking a review of their French immersion program to understand what motivates parents/caregivers to pursue French immersion for their children and to explore ways to alleviate enrollment pressures. Options being explored include:

- Capping enrollment; however, they anticipate pushback and as an alternative may consider converting some schools with English only programming to dual track in areas with greatest demand/need;
- Using a lottery system and/or waitlist if over-subscribed;
- Grade one entry point for all French immersion schools; and
- Eliminating extended French.

Historically, TVDSB prefers single track schools as they are a more immersive experience. However, they opened a dual track school a few years ago because of enrolment pressure. TVDSB indicated that they like the idea of a later start (grade three or four) for French immersion so students have good command of basic English before learning another language but feel this would be too radical for the community and could have a ripple effect on other programs.

TVDSB has a fairly high retention rate for their French immersion program, especially in their single track schools. Transportation is provided to students within the French immersion catchment area, and this catchment area is larger than the catchment area for schools offering English. Out-of-bounds attendance is allowed on a case by case basis; however, if granted, parents/caregivers are responsible for transporting their child to the school. If children drop out of the single track French immersion, they must attend an English school within their catchment area.

¹⁸ These are standardized French proficiency exams, which upon passing, gives the student an international credential/certification in French language proficiency, according to CEFR standards (DELF DALF). DELF is an abbreviation of "Diplôme d'études en langue française" and DALF is "Diplôme approfondi de langue française"

TVDSB uses the same supports for both English and French programs. Educational assistance support can be provided in English and French, while early childhood educators are English-speaking only. They also have two learning coordinators for French programming; one for elementary school staff and one for the secondary school staff. The learning coordinators provide language support to core French, extended French, and French immersion teachers.

TVDSB is considering the elimination of their extended French program. Currently five schools offer extended French starting in grade seven (four single track and one dual track school). The program has a higher attrition rate than for French immersion and only a small proportion of students from the extended French program continue with extended French or French immersion past grade nine. As a result, they have had to implement some blended grade seven and eight extended French classes as the program is under-subscribed. By eliminating the extended French program they would free up more staff for their French immersion program.

SECTION 5: FRENCH IMMERSION ENROLLMENT STATISTICS IN WRDSB

5.1 Key Findings Discussed in this Section

WRDSB's enrollment statistics are provided, and some comparisons are made to other boards. WRDSB, generally, does not have enrollment pressures that are as extreme as HDSB, which moved to a grade two entry point, in large part to reduce enrollment pressure. However, WRDSB's program is showing stress, with an increasing number of unplaced students and close to four in ten dual track schools (37%) having more enrollment in French immersion than the English program. Growth in French immersion enrollment is outpacing growth of those aged five to 14 in the Waterloo Region population. Moreover, WRDSB has the highest increase in elementary French immersion enrollment from 2011 to 2016 (63%) among the other boards compared in this study.

HDSB experienced much more enrollment pressure on its program, and had statistics to indicate that the English language elementary program was starting to be placed in a slight degree of jeopardy. Specifically, HDSB had a majority of its dual track students enrolled in French immersion, and a majority of their dual track schools had 60% or more enrollment in the French immersion program. Moreover, at its highest point the French immersion program in HDSB had a 37% uptake from senior kindergarten to grade one French immersion. According to our key informant interview, these factors made it fairly important for them to consider a change to their program. HDSB also had the highest proportion of total French immersion enrollment (25.1%) compared to all other boards, including WRDSB (15.6%). Just based on the fact that WRDSB is not at the same level of enrollment pressure as HDSB was, it may make sense to examine other models of delivery that are not as drastic a departure from what it is currently offering overall. For example, this section shows that HWDSB does not have the same enrollment pressures as either HDSB or WRDSB. **Section 4.4.2** detailed that HWDSB uses a central enrollment system, where students are guaranteed a place in French immersion, but not at a particular school. Though it may require WRDSB to re-think forming a class with interest from 18 to 20 parents, depending on pre-existing French immersion parent interest, it may be a less radical change than the entry point or the creation of a single track school.

Also, statistics are provided regarding Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) performance differences between French immersion and non-French immersion students in WRDSB. Generally, the data show that higher proportions of French immersion students perform better academically and are more likely to have positive opinions towards themselves and their education. Survey data is also presented that shows French immersion teachers appear to have lower numbers of students in their classes, and lower numbers of students with special needs in their classrooms compared to non-French immersion teachers. Finally, data is presented showing that dual track French immersion schools are more likely to be located in higher income areas than single track schools in WRDSB. These statistics would seem to lend credence to the notion among parents/caregivers and staff that the French immersion program is a form of special education for either gifted or privileged students. This opinion is discussed in depth in **Section 7.4.2**.

5.2 Unplaced Students

Perhaps one sign that the French immersion program is growing is the number of unplaced students in the program. **Table 5-1** details the number of unplaced students by school for a two year period.

Table 5-1: Number of Unplaced Students in French Immersion Program

School	Number of Unplaced Students	
	2016-17	2017-18
Abraham Erb	2	3
Breslau		
Brigadoon	4	
Chicopee Hills		
Clemens Mill		2
Crestview		
Driftwood Park		
Elizabeth Ziegler		
Edna Staebler		
Elgin Street		3
Empire		
Franklin	5	3
Groh		
Hespler		
Highland		7
JW Gerth	3	
John Mahood		3
Keatsway		
Laurelwood		
Lester B Pearson		4
Millen Woods	7	1
NA MacEachern	7	4
Ryerson	4	5
Saginaw		1
Sandowne	4	
Suddaby		
Vista Hills	3	1
WT Townshend		
Westmount		
Williamsburg	6	1
Total Unplaced Students	45	38

Another potential sign of increasing numbers of unplaced students comes from a Report to Committee of the Whole on March 19, 2018, which states:

At present, there are a total of 114 French immersion home school and out-of-area students on waiting lists, as well as approximately 30 who have registered during Phase 2. If all designated sites open with full grade one classes, 50 student spaces will be available across the district for families interested in transporting their child to a French immersion site ([WRDSB: French Immersion Review Committee, 2018](#)).

As a comparator, according to our interview with them, HWDSB had 26 unplaced students in its previous year.

5.3 Sites with Higher French Immersion Enrollment in Grade One than English Enrollment in 2018

One of the issues that dual track schools face in offering French immersion programs along with English programs is the balance between the two. Other school boards, such as HDSB use this as a metric to determine the overall balance of students at schools and whether it is necessary to consider opening a single track school (i.e. if enrollment on the French side is at a very high proportion, then it may be worthwhile). Comments from the focus groups indicated some parents/caregivers felt that tipping more towards one or the other may involve using more school resources in one program at the expense of another, and may begin to create distance between student groups at the school. They indicated such a ratio may also involve more administration of the program from school management (i.e. principals or vice-principals). Principals and vice principals interviewed also indicated that they had to balance between two programs as well, but felt that they were able to manage this fairly well. Some parents/caregivers in focus groups also felt that school principals did a good job of integrating both programs throughout the school, in elective classes and combined school activities. **Table 5-2** shows that for 2018, the following schools had more French immersion enrollment in the grade one cohort compared to the English program:

Table 5-2: Elementary Dual Track Schools in 2018 with French Immersion Enrollment Surpassing English in Grade One¹⁹

Brigadoon	Lester B Pearson
Elizabeth Ziegler	Mary Johnston
Empire	Millen Woods
Franklin	NA MacEachern
Hespler	Sandowne
Highland	Sheppard
JW Gerth	Westvale
Laurelwood	

Given that there were 41 elementary²⁰ dual track schools in 2018/2019 in WRDSB the proportion of schools where this increased enrollment in French immersion occurs is approximately 37% of dual track schools. By comparison, HDSB had 22 elementary dual track schools at the time of its review, with 12 of them (54%) having more than 60% enrollment in the French immersion program. Moreover, HDSB had a majority of students in its dual track schools in French immersion (54%), compared to English students (42%) ([HDSB: Program Viability](#)).

Another way of looking at the data is an analysis of three years of WRDSB's "French Immersion Projected Grade One Enrollment" reports to the Committee of the Whole (WRDSB: FI 2018-2019 Enrollment Report, 2019) ([WRDSB: French Immersion Review Committee, 2018](#)) indicate that the proportion of schools closed to out of boundary students has fallen from 45% in 2017/18 to 24% in 2018/18 and 25% in 2019/2020. This resulted from opening more classes at existing sites and expanding the program to new sites.

¹⁹ Based on communication in December 2019 (WRDSB, 2019) in response to projected French immersion growth.

²⁰ This only includes elementary schools offering grade one French immersion to make the data consistent with the HDSB numbers.

5.4 Growth and Retention in the French Immersion Program

There are a few statistics that show the increased growth of the French immersion program in WRDSB, but there are also some numbers that indicate that growth is starting to slow. The total growth in enrollment in grade one over the last ten years is 58% as outlined in **Table 5-3**. Growth in the later grades has almost doubled. Grade five enrollment has increased by 110% over the time period, and grade eight enrollment has increased by 93%.

However, on a year-over-year basis, the rate of growth in the grade one panel appears to be slowing. As shown in **Table 5-3**, the 2018/2019 year had only 33 more students in the grade one French immersion class compared to the previous year, and this represented the lowest increase in students within the last ten years. On a percentage basis, enrollment only grew 2%. This, along with the overall trend observed in the table shows that the rate of growth of enrollment into the grade one French immersion year has been slowing for the last number of years.

Table 5-3: Growth in French Immersion Enrollment

French Immersion Enrollment	Grade One	Difference in Grade One Enrollment		Grade Five	Grade Eight
		Number	Percent (%)		
2008/09	769	N/A	N/A	381	319
2009/10	813	44	5	442	291
2010/11	943	130	16	456	355
2011/12	992	49	5	578	332
2012/13	1,072	80	8	590	421
2013/14	1,142	70	7	607	411
2014/15	1,104	-38	-4	707	511
2015/16	1,160	56	5	740	490
2016/17	1,142	-18	-2	784	562
2017/18	1,184	42	3	851	682
2018/19	1,217	33	2	829	669
Percentage Change First to Last Year	58%	N/A	N/A	110%	93%

A cohort analysis²¹ was conducted on a full four years of data from grade one to grade eight and shows that the retention from the grade one entry year through to the grade eight year is hovering around two thirds of all students. Also, the proportion of those staying in grade two from grade one is very high at well above nine in ten students. This is shown in **Table 5-4**. In terms of implications for the overall growth of the number of students in the program if retention continues to remain at around two thirds from grade one to grade eight, then the number of students going through the program will continue to increase, since attrition does not seem to be changing significantly.

²¹ Malatest was able to track the total number of students year-over-year for four years from grade one to grade eight through the system from 2008/2009 to 2011/2012. The analysis is done on total numbers enrolled in each grade only and not looking at individual students through the program. However, the analysis presents a decent estimate of retention, since grade one is generally the only entry-point to the program.

Table 5-4: Cohort Analysis of Enrollment

Year	Grade One	% Enroll Gr 2	Grade One Cohort ²¹ Traced Throughout...							% Gr 1
			Gr 2	Gr 3	Gr 4	Gr 5	Gr 6	Gr 7	Gr 8	
08-09	769	93	722	661	611	590	540	515	490	64
09-10	813	92	747	676	651	607	590	572	562	69
10-11	943	93	886	853	753	707	694	688	682	72
11-12	992	96	956	832	782	740	720	677	669	67
12-13	1,072	90	968	885	838	784	767	745		
13-14	1,142	92	1,057	945	889	851	818			
14-15	1,104	92	1,017	928	869	829				
15-16	1,160	95	1,111	1,004	968					
16-17	1,142	91	1,048	1,012						
17-18	1,184	97	1,152							
18-19	1,217									

Looking at the data on a non-cohort basis, the proportion of the grade eight to the grade one class has increased year over year from 41% in 2008/2009 to 55% in 2018/2019. This is outlined in **Table 5-5** below. Also, total enrollment has almost doubled (93%) across all grades in the last ten years.

Table 5-5: Total Elementary French Immersion Enrollment

	Grade One	Grade Eight	Proportion Gr 8/Gr 1	Total Enrollment
2008/09	769	319	41%	3,848
2009/10	813	291	36%	4,127
2010/11	943	355	38%	4,544
2011/12	992	332	33%	4,941
2012/13	1,072	421	39%	5,540
2013/14	1,142	411	36%	5,780
2014/15	1,104	511	46%	6,151
2015/16	1,160	490	42%	6,456
2016/17	1,142	562	49%	6,824
2017/18	1,184	682	58%	7,082
2018/19	1,217	669	55%	7,410
Total 10-Year Program Growth (%)	58%	110%		93%

Finally, to accommodate the increased growth, the total number of elementary schools offering French immersion programming has increased from 31 in 2008/2009 to 48 in 2018/2019²².

²² Spreadsheet provided by WRDSB.

5.5 Proportion of Elementary and Grade One Enrollment in WRDSB and Comparisons to Other Boards

It is worthwhile to compare WRDSB with other boards in order to understand how it is situated against some of the actions that have been taken in other districts. **Table 5-6** shows data for 2016-2017 from the Ministry of Education's website across numerous boards. It shows the total elementary enrollment and the percentage of elementary French immersion enrollment. HDSB has the highest proportion of elementary enrollment at 25.1% of all elementary students enrolled in the French immersion program. WRDSB is at 15.6%, but recent reports put it at 22% as of March 19, 2018 ([WRDSB: French Immersion Review Committee, 2018](#)).

Table 5-6: Comparative French Immersion Enrollment across Select School Boards²³

School Board	2016-17 Elementary enrollments	French immersion enrollments	Percent (%) French immersion enrollment
Greater Essex	23,971	4,376	18.4
Halton	44,880	11,279	25.1
Hamilton-Wentworth	35,108	3,265	9.3
Thames Valley	52,052	4,882	9.3
Upper Grand	23,094	4,741	20.6
Waterloo Region	43,244	6,779	15.6

There are a few other comparisons that can be made between WRDSB and other boards with other data. Specifically:

- PDSB caps enrollment at 25% of grade one in order to ensure the quality of its program ([Brown and Bennett: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017](#));
- Prior to its change, HDSB had a majority of its dual track students enrolled in French immersion ([HDSB: Program Viability Summary and Recommendations, May 2016](#)), and uptake from Senior Kindergarten to grade one French immersion at 37% ([HDSB, 2019](#)); and
- The HWDSB administrator contacted for a key informant interview describes its growth in French immersion as significant, with 511 students in 2014, with enrollment for the most recent year at 660. They have 669 spots and an unplaced waitlist of 26 for their home French immersion school.

5.6 General Population and Enrollment Comparisons

It is worthwhile to look at the overall population growth of the Waterloo area to investigate how it corresponds with the growth of the French immersion program. In 2011, the population of individuals aged five to 14 was 57,560²⁴ in the Waterloo Region, and this has increased to 62,945²⁵ for the 2016 census. The percentage increase is approximately 9.3% growth over five years. **Table 5-3** detailed that in the 2011-2012 year, the grade one French immersion enrollment was 992, and increased to 1,142 for the 2016-2017 year, leading to an increase of 15.1%. As such, the growth of enrollment in the program

²³ <https://www.ontario.ca/data/french-second-language-enrolment>

²⁴ <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CMA&Code1=541&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&Data=Count&SearchText=Kitchener%20-%20Cambridge%20-%20Waterloo&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=541&TABID=1>

²⁵ <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CMAC&Code1=541&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&Data=Count&SearchText=kitchener&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=1>

outpaced growth in the overall population in the area at the same time. In addition, population for ages zero to four in Waterloo Region also increased from 2011 to 2016, from 28,790²⁴ to 29,445²⁵, although this is only a 2% increase, one can anticipate a continued population increase of school aged children in the upcoming years.

Another way of looking at this is how enrollment in the elementary program has changed over time and comparing it to how enrollment in the French immersion program has changed. This can be done across comparative school boards. **Table 5-7** shows that WRDSB has seen drastic growth (63%) in its elementary French immersion enrollment compared to its overall enrollment in the elementary system overall.

Table 5-7: Percentage Growth in Enrollment across Different School Boards

Percentage (%) Growth in Enrollment between 2011 to 2016 ²⁶	WRDSB	HDSB	HWDSB	TVDSB
Total elementary enrollment	4	13	2	3
Total French immersion enrollment	63	38	27	16

5.7 EQAO Results for Grade Three and Grade Six French Immersion

The following data were obtained from WRDSB and show EQAO results for the 2017/18 school year for grade three and grade six students in WRDSB ([WRDSB, 2019](#)). **Table 5-8** below shows that higher proportions of French immersion students perform better on EQAO scores regarding reading, writing and mathematics.

Table 5-8: 2017/18 EQAO Results French Immersion and Non-French ImmersionError! Bookmark not defined.

Percent (%)	Grade Three		Grade Six	
	French immersion	Non-French immersion	French Immersion	Non-French immersion
Reading				
Level 3	65	57	75	66
Level 4	24	9	20	9
<i>At provincial standard</i>	88	66	95	75
Writing				
Level 3	74	61	62	60
Level 4	4	1	30	14
<i>At provincial standard</i>	78	62	92	74
Math				
Level 3	60	46	45	35
Level 4	13	7	16	12
<i>At provincial standard</i>	73	53	61	47

On an attitudinal basis, **Table 5-9** shows grade three French immersion students have a higher proportion who feel they are good listeners and like to read. They are also less likely to say that they never participate in artistic activities and use computers together with their parents.

²⁶ Source is : <https://www.ontario.ca/data/french-second-language-enrolment>

Table 5-9: 2017/18 Attitudinal Ratings among FI and Non-FI Grade Three Students

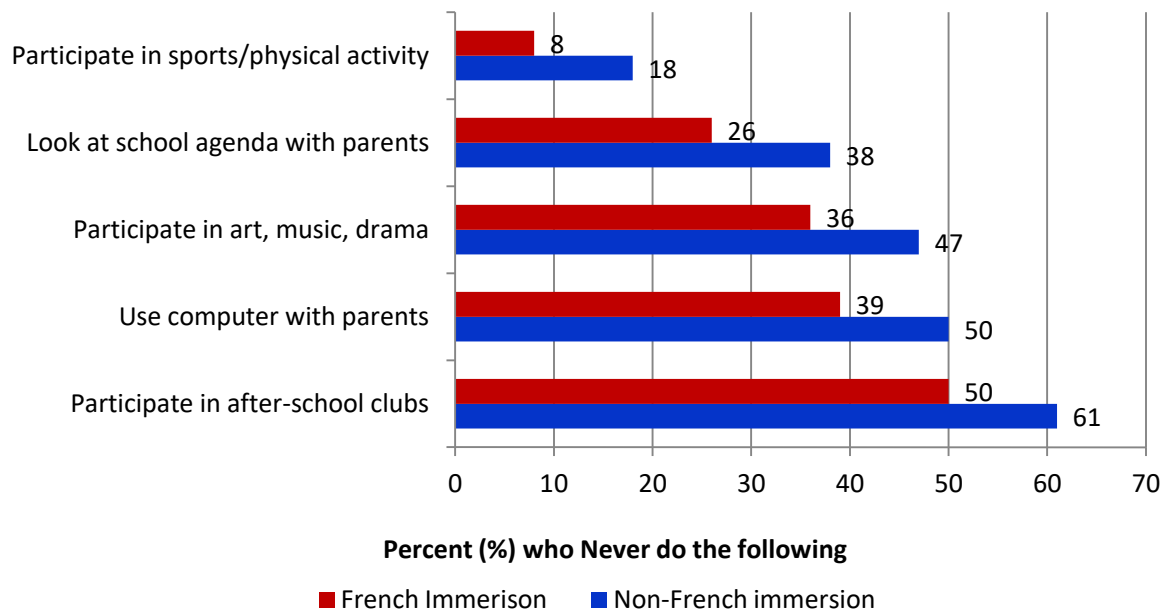
	Attribute	French immersion	Non-French immersion
Most of the time (%)	I am a good reader	78	64
	I like to read	60	45
	Manipulatives	21	25
	A computer to learn math	20	22
	Before I start to read, I try to predict what the test will be about	17	18
	A calculator	14	15
	A computer for reading activities	12	16
Never (%)	Participate in art, music or drama	27	37
	Use a computer with parents	37	46

The grade six results in **Table 5-10** show a similar pattern where higher proportions of French immersion students tend to indicate that they engage in various activities most of the time, compared to their non-immersion counterparts.

**Table 5-10: 2017/18 Grade Six EQAO Results
French Immersion and Non-French Immersion**

	Attribute	French immersion	Non-French immersion
Most of the time (%)	I am a good reader	82	69
	Check for spelling/grammar	64	54
	I like to read	63	43
	Communicate my ideas in writing	62	49
	Good at math	59	49
	I am a good writer	56	42
	Understand difficult reading passages	54	42
	I used reading/writing tools	38	26
	I use a calculator	35	46
	Before reading, try to predict test	13	16
	Computer for reading	8	14
Never (%)	Participate in sports/physical activities	9	19
	Look at school agenda with parents	26	38
	Participate in art, music, drama	36	47
	Use computer with parents	39	50
	Participate in after-school clubs	50	62

Similarly, the proportion of French immersion grade six students who never engage in certain activities is lower than their non-immersion counterparts. This is shown in **Figure 5-1**.

Figure 5-1: 2017/18 Grade Six EQAO Results – Those who Never Participate in the Following Activities

Finally, the results in **Figure 5-2** and **Figure 5-3** show that higher proportions of French immersion students receiving special education, and those who are English language learners perform better on the EQAO, in both grades three and six, than their Non-French immersion counterparts.

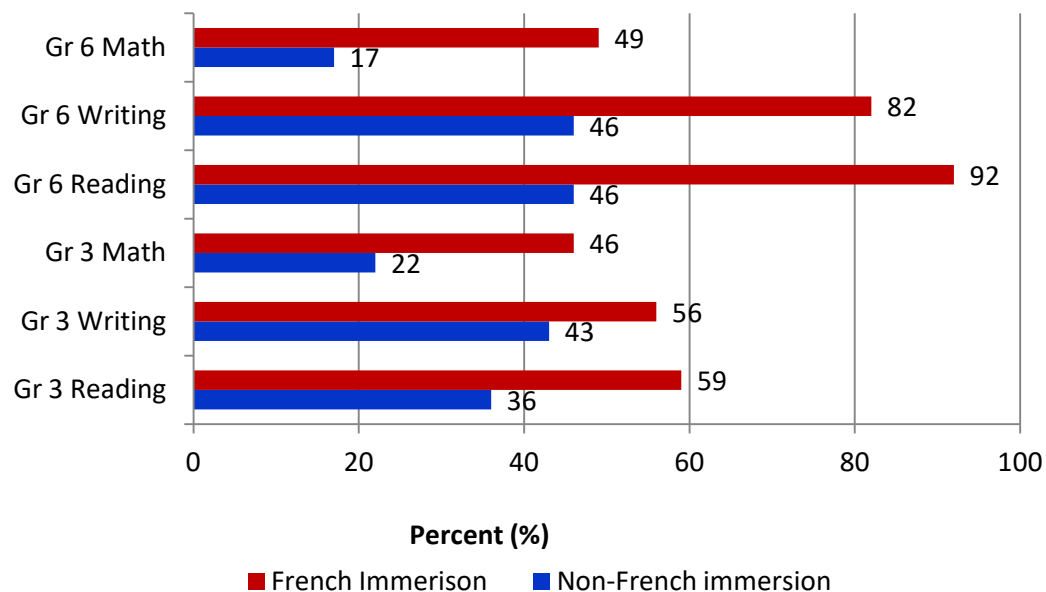
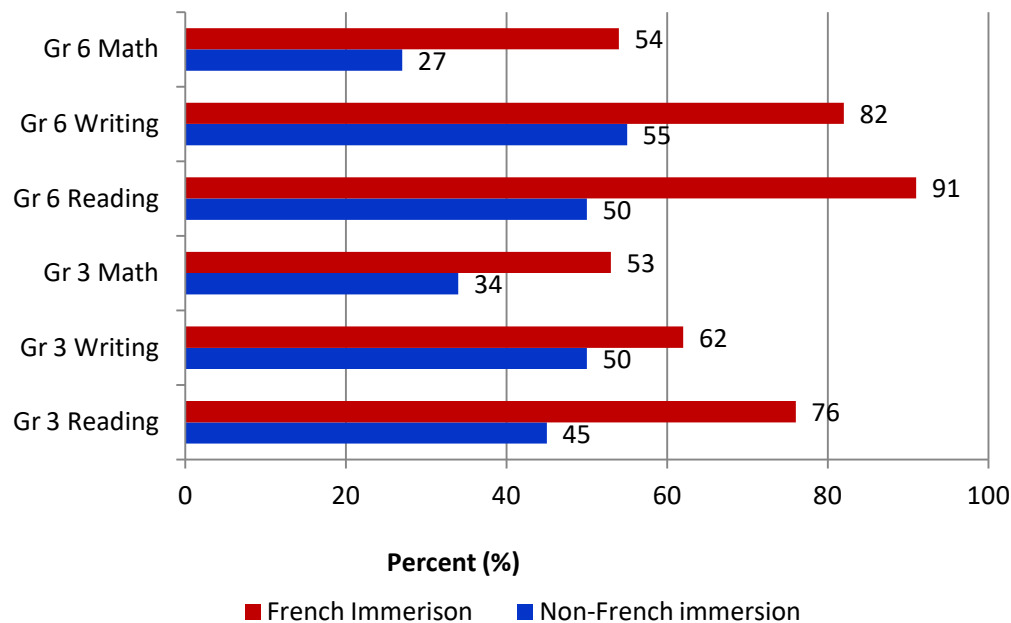
Figure 5-2: 2017/18 EQAO at Provincial Standard – Special Education

Figure 5-3: 2017/18 EQAO at Standard Level – English Language Learners

5.8 School and Classroom Characteristics

5.8.1 School Locations Relative to an Area's Income and Language

The Ministry of Education website ([Ministry of Education: School Information Finder, 2018](https://www.minedu.gov.on.ca/eng/sift/schools/index.asp)) provides some demographic information for elementary schools in WRDSB. For 2018, the Ministry catalogued 105²⁷ schools in WRDSB with 49 French immersion and 56 without French immersion schools. Malatest examined each school to determine an income measure for each school's area. **Figure 5-4** below shows that only 11 of 49 French immersion schools (approximately 22%) are in areas with relatively high proportions of individuals living with low income measures²⁸, whereas 37 of 49 French immersion schools (approximately 76%) are located in areas with relatively low proportions of families living with low income measures. That is to say, French immersion schools tend to be located in higher income neighbourhoods.

The proportion of schools without French immersion by each neighbourhood is spread-out much more evenly, such that 31 of 56 schools without French immersion (approximately 55%) are located in areas with higher proportions of families at the low income measure, and 22 of 56 schools without French immersion (approximately 39%) are located in areas with lower proportions of families at the low income measure. That is to say, schools without French immersion are more evenly split between higher and lower income areas.

²⁷ As per <https://www.wrdsb.ca/french/schools/> July 30, 2020

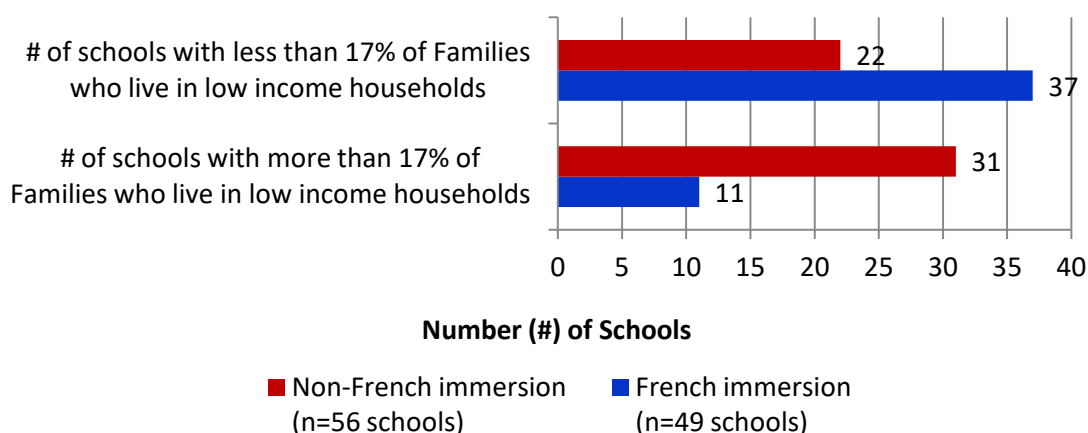
²⁸ Defined as the estimated percentage of children who attend the school and whose families' after-tax income is below the Low-Income Measure (LIM) of their family type and size. This is calculated using student postal code collected by the school and cross-referenced with Statistics Canada data about income from the 2016 Census.

(<https://www.app.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/sift/glossary.asp#demo1>)

How LIM is calculated. (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/2012002/lim-mfr-eng.htm>)

It should be noted that the results in Figure 5-4 are based on schools with French immersion, regardless of how many immersion grades they offer. Schools differ in their capacity to offer French immersion, some may offer more immersion grades than others, and this is not included in the analysis.

Figure 5-4: Number of Schools Based on Low Income Measure*



*Note: One French immersion school did not have low income household data, and three non-French immersion schools did not have data, hence, numbers do not add up to the base n sizes. Also note, 17% was used as a comparison point to be reflective of the WRDSB area's income distribution. The provincial average used was 15%. in terms of school families who live in low income households according the LIM.²⁸

The Ministry's website also provides data based on the proportion of students whose first language is not English. The same analysis was run, and the results indicate a much more even distribution of schools based on this factor. The table shows the distribution, in percent, of students at each school whose first language is not English.

Table 5-11: Proportion of Students, by Type of School, Whose First Language is Not English

Number (#)	Percentage of Students whose First Language is Not English*				
	0-10%	11-20%	21-30%	31-40%	40%+
Schools with French immersion	8	6	18	9	6
Schools without French immersion	11	13	12	6	8

*Note: No data available for 2 schools with French immersion, data is based on 47 of the 49 schools. Also, no data available for 6 schools without French immersion, data is based on 50 of the 56 schools.

5.8.2 Class Size Characteristics of Teachers Responding to the French Immersion Survey

The data below are from the survey conducted by Malatest among teachers and other classroom staff and indicate some classroom composition characteristics. As can be seen in **Table 5-12** higher proportions of French immersion teachers (22%) have less than 20 in their classrooms compared to those who teach English only (11%) and those teaching core French (11%). This suggests that there are smaller class sizes in the French immersion program.

Table 5-12: Class Size of Teachers on the Survey

Percent (%) Students in Classroom	Teach English Only	Teach Core	Teach Extended*	Teach Immersion
Less than 20	11%	6%	-	22%
20 to less than 30	71%	80%	82%	70%
30 to less than 40	8%	10%	18%	4%
40 or more	2%	2%	-	2%
Did not answer	8%	3%	-	2%
Base	<i>n=256</i>	<i>n=120</i>	<i>n=17</i>	<i>n=167</i>

*Note: Percentages in this column should be interpreted with caution given the small base size of 17 individuals on which it is based. Results from Staff Survey: Q23 How many students are in your classroom?

Table 5-13 shows the stated average number of newcomers to Canada, special needs students, gifted students and students with learning disabilities in teacher's classes based on the language taught. French immersion teachers state that they have lower numbers of students, on average, in their classes with special needs and learning disabilities, compared to those who teach English only and core French. Gifted students and those new to Canada appear to have fairly even averages across all four teacher groups.

Table 5-13: Average Number of Specific Student Groups in Classrooms

Average Number of Students in Classroom	Teach English Only	Teach Core	Teach Extended*	Teach Immersion
Special needs	4.52	4.28	2.36	3.00
Learning disabilities	4.35	4.94	4.56	2.60
Gifted	2.19	2.44	2.92	2.28
Newcomers to Canada	3.76	4.12	3.58	3.77

*Note: Averages in this column should be interpreted with caution. Base sizes are similar to base sizes in Table 5-12. Results from Staff Survey Q24 How many students in your class are [newcomers to Canada](#)? Just your best estimate is fine. and Q25 Approximately how many students in your class have been diagnosed or have tested as...

SECTION 6: WRDSB FRENCH LANGUAGE OPERATIONAL GOALS AND VISION

6.1 Key Findings Discussed in this Section

Various French immersion operational goals from different boards were compared to WRDSB's in a review of the literature. Moreover, many qualitative participants, in parents/caregivers and principals, vice principals and teachers, were asked to comment on WRDSB's French immersion vision directly. There were many suggestions and considerations that can be made about WRDSB's operational goals and the key performance indicators (KPIs) that can measure outcomes of it. Specifically:

- Compared to other boards, WRDSB's statement is the only one to break-out core and French immersion. Many participants among Waterloo parents, and some teachers, questioned whether the outcomes were significantly different for the two groups to actually be separated. Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) monitors outcomes on the Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELF) between the different streams of French as a KPI.
- The WRDSB statement describes the notions of confidence (for core) and fluency and comfort (for immersion). A number of qualitative participants questioned whether these outcomes were being achieved. French immersion students themselves, in the focus groups, also questioned whether they were fully fluent, or effectively fluent in French²⁹. Some parents/caregivers and staff directly mentioned that the goal of fluency and effective communication need to actually be measured as goals in order to make changes to the program, and that programs need to include a strong component of actually communicating with French-speakers in real-life situations outside of the classroom. These sentiments likely go beyond the notion of student evaluations in the minds of stakeholders. They relate to the stated goals of the program, and whether or not a parent decides enrollment in the French immersion program is worthwhile for their child, based on the goals of the program. Stakeholders felt that without an evaluation of the program itself, there may be ambiguity about what the expectations of the program actually are³⁰. Results of the survey show that some parents/caregivers may also over-estimate the benefit of the program to their children, compared to teachers (see **Table 7-4**).
- Besides DELF results, the Ministry of Education, and HWDSB are adapting courses and material to suit the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) as a way of standardizing quality and helping to measure outcomes.
- Other board's operational goals and visions include issues such as managing the quality of the program, equity, increasing retention throughout the program and improving assessment outcomes. Others contain goals for cultural growth of students as well. The literature review demonstrated how mention of these attributes in the board's operational goals lead them to implement various quality control procedures including Halton District School Board (HDSB) and Thames Valley District School Board's (TVDSB) move to later French entry, and even Peel District School Board's (PDSB) and Halton Catholic District School Board's (HCDSB) desire to maintain enrollment caps and lotteries for entry.

²⁹ The qualitative and quantitative research did not directly ask about formal assessment practices in WRDSB, such as report cards or standardized tests. The opinions discussed, especially qualitative ones, are based on the students' and/or parents perception of such factors as out-of-classroom confidence with the language, ability to understand French speaking and the ability to be understood and have a conversation in French, or engage in reading or other such French activities.

³⁰ Participants in qualitative research mentioned that there is a difference between the evaluations in classrooms and real-life situations such as job interviews, and conversations with fluent French-speakers. Though they did not say it directly, participants likely felt that it would be difficult for in-class evaluations to be a proxy for real-world situations.

- **Section 6.4.1.3** provides an example of how HWDSB incorporates equity of access statements into its planning and communications materials to help ensure the community understands how the board plans and executes these very important access issues.

Finally, the analysis suggests KPIs that could be measured for such issues as confidence, comfort, fluency, and effective communication. There are also suggestions for adding dimensions to the operational goals, such as stability of the program (e.g. program operations), equity of access and support for students and overall community support for the program. These are provided in **Section 6.6**.

6.2 WRDSB's French Language Operational Goals and Vision

WRDSB has two operational goals for French language programming, one for core French, and one for French immersion. The wording, taken from WRDSB's website for each is:

Waterloo Region District School Board French Programming Goals

Core French: Offer French instruction for part of the school day so that your child has the confidence to use French in simple daily situations and conversations.

French Immersion: Offer French instruction so that your child has a level of fluency and comfort to communicate effectively with other French speakers. ([WRDSB: French Program Options](#))

The sections below compare and contrast these statements to the provincial framework, and the other three school boards under study in this review. Additional context and analysis comes from the qualitative and quantitative data collected during the research for this review.

6.3 The Province's Framework for French as a Second Language

In 2013, the Ministry of Education published *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools: Kindergarten to Grade 12*. The document provides a vision, goals and guiding principles and strategic areas of focus for French as a Second Language (FSL) programming in Ontario. It is worthwhile to note that the document does not differentiate between French immersion, extended French and/or core French programs in its vision, so it does not provide guidance on specific achievement levels in French proficiency. Rather, it gives a broader framework for all three types of programs and addresses FSL more generally.³¹

Provincial Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools

Vision: Students in English-language school boards have the confidence and ability to use French effectively in their daily lives;

Goals: 1) Increase student confidence, proficiency and achievement in FSL; 2) Increase the percentage of students studying FSL until graduation; and 3) Increase student, educator, parent, and community engagement in FSL;

Guiding Principles: 1) FSL programs are available for all students; 2) Teaching and learning French, as one of Canada's two official languages, is recognized and valued as an integral component of Ontario's education system; 3) FSL serves as a bridge between languages and cultures; 4) Learning FSL strengthens literacy skills as well as cognitive and metacognitive development; and 5) Learning FSL is a lifelong journey; and

Strategic Focus Areas: 1) Heightened awareness of FSL programs and benefits; 2) Enhancing

³¹ The only differentiation between French immersion and the other two programs is more curriculum-based and not related to broader guiding principles.

leadership and accountability; 3) Strengthening programming to improve achievement in FSL; 4) Supporting all students; 5) Implementing effective practices in planning, teaching and assessment; and 6) Expanding student learning opportunities and heightening engagement ([Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 12](#)).

The sections below discuss some of the commonalities and differences between the provincial and WRDSB visions, as well as some of the performance indicators that can be used to measure successful implementation of each.

6.3.1 The Concept of Confidence and/or Comfort

The provincial framework mentions the notion of confidence fairly prominently, first in its vision, and second, within the goals itself. The WRDSB statements seem to correspond to the importance placed on confidence and/or comfort in the provincial statement. Specifically, the WRDSB statements mention confidence should be achieved for core French students in daily situations, and that French immersion students achieve comfort to communicate effectively with other French speakers. The notion of confidence and/or comfort can be assessed both in-class through formal evaluation and through other means. The provincial framework provides some suggestions on data collection and analysis that can be conducted to determine if confidence and comfort are being achieved. Specifically:

1. Are students engaging in French culture? ([Ministry of Education, 2013, p. Appendix B](#))
2. Are students participating in French extra-curricular activities, including public speaking and/or debates? For younger students, can they participate in public plays or singing French songs? ([Ministry of Education, 2013, p. Appendix B](#))
3. Can surveys be implemented to ascertain a student's opinion of their confidence and comfort? ([Ministry of Education, 2013, p. Appendix B](#))
4. If there are French exchange programs, how many students are enrolling in them?
5. Another measure of confidence, particularly for French immersion students is the number that may choose to take the DELF/DALF. Our key informant interview with the HWDSB representative indicated that the board monitored DELF/DALF participation and results. It should be noted that the DELF includes different levels for different ages and grades such as DELF-Prim and DELF for Juniors and Schools, meaning that the assessment takes into account the age of the learner. ([DELFDALF](#))
6. The number of students that intend to continue to study and/or pursue French after leaving high school (e.g. actual studies, direct use, seek employment opportunities using French).

Anecdotally, from the qualitative interviews with students, those in French immersion were more likely to discuss exposure to French culture and experiences both inside and outside the classroom as a benefit of the program and something they enjoyed compared to those in extended and core French.

Moreover, the qualitative results with all stakeholder indicate that the notion of confidence in French is an important goal for stakeholders and that it should be an outcome of the program. However, it was quite clear from the qualitative comments that confidence alone, without a specific measure or metric for proficiency or fluency is not specific enough for this kind of vision. Some specific comments about the vagueness of confidence, without a corresponding fluency or proficiency measure include:

- "I'm not sure what level of fluency and comfort means because kids... coming out of grades 7 and 8 are all at different levels and different levels of fluency and comfort when it comes to communicating with other French speakers so I am not sure what is meant by that." (KII with principal)

- “French immersion students are not that fluent in French, so I am not sure how comfortable they would be communicating with other French speakers.” (Staff focus group)
- “If the goal of French immersion is to have “a level of fluency and comfort”, then there is no standard for this. Assuming no standard or overall criteria to be met, then why have the program at all? If the goal is to have students achieve a level of comfort (but that may be different for everyone), then just have one French Program for everyone, which may address many of the identified issues.” (Parent feedback form)

Finally, in one of the student focus groups, French immersion participants were asked about their comfort in speaking French. They indicated that they would feel very comfortable speaking French with their peers and other students in the program, but would have very little confidence speaking French with anyone outside the program.

6.3.2 The Concept of Proficiency, Fluency and Effective Communication

The qualitative research regarding opinions of WRDSB’s operational goals and vision suggested that a level of proficiency or fluency be incorporated to provide more concrete goals and accountability for French language programming in WRDSB overall. The Ministry framework indicates that “In Ontario, [the CEFR³²] tool is recognized as a valuable asset for informing instruction and assessment practices in FSL education.” ([Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 4](#)). There are a number of academic references that attest to the quality of the framework and groups that endorse the framework itself. Specifically:

- The Canadian Parents for French in Ontario indicated “The Ontario Ministry of Education used the CEFR in developing the K-12 curriculum for FSL programs and professional learning resources” and that the Council of Ministers of Education feels that the CEFR is “the most comprehensive and understandable way to describe language proficiency and that it is flexible enough to be used in Canada where education is a provincial responsibility.” ([Canadian Parents for French: Ontario](#))
- Moreover, the framework has been subject of academic review in Ontario. One article indicated “The Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) emerged as the framework that meets the criteria for validity and is best suited to meet the needs of the Canadian context” ([Majhanovich, Faez, Smith, Taylor, Vandergrift, & al., 2010, p. 4](#)).
- HDSB indicates are also moving their program towards CEFR guidelines that are tested on the DELF³³ and Ministry guidelines. This allows the board educators to see their impact on improved test scores.

The CEFR itself designates six broad levels, defined as ([Council of Europe: Common Reference Levels/Framework](#)), these are outlined in **Table 6-1**:

³² Common European Framework of Reference

³³ Diplôme d’études en langue française

Table 6-1: Common European Framework of Reference Categories

PROFICIENT USER	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious search for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns and connectors.
INDEPENDENT USER	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
BASIC USER	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

The CEFR table and entire CEFR pedagogical program attempt to define very clear learning outcomes and pathways for French language instruction. Incorporating either the CEFR goals directly, or another set of clear goals into WRDSB's program vision seems important according to some of the qualitative research comments on WRDSB's operational goals. Specifically, qualitative comments regarding the vision show that it is perceived as vague and without concrete plans and steps to measure outcomes. A sample of comments supporting this includes:

- "A level of fluency seems vague and immeasurable." (Parent feedback forms)
- "The concept of 'communicating effectively' is wide and does indeed not indicate at which level. It did sound OK to me when I thought of choosing French immersion for my daughter. (Parent feedback forms)
- "I'm not sure what 'level of fluency and comfort' means... do they mean a kid can walk into a French community and speak French without using any English?" (KIs with principals/vice-principals)
- "If I were to rewrite that so it's less vague." (KIs with principals/vice-principals)
- "If the goal is always to communicate with other French speakers, the goal becomes very narrowly defined." (KIs with principals/vice-principals)
- "Set criteria and standards, otherwise there is a lack of accountability."³⁴ (Parent feedback forms)

Related to the sense of ambiguity around outcomes and goals is the fact that some comments from the qualitative research and results from the quantitative research show that stakeholders may feel the program is not necessarily meeting their expectations. From the quantitative survey, one clear benefit associated with learning French is that 61% of parents/caregivers completely agree that a second language increases a student's employment prospects. However, according to the CEFR, this benefit would likely only be achieved at the B2 intermediate level ("Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation") or the C1 proficient user level ("Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes") or the C2 level³⁵. The qualitative comments on the WRDSB's mission statement seem to indicate that the WRDSB may not be producing students that will achieve this outcome. Some specific comments on the operational goals in relation to the outcome of fluency, and/or employability include:

- "The goal is OK, but I don't think the program as currently designed meets the level of fluency." (Parent feedback forms)
- "I don't believe that kids graduating from the [REDACTED – specific program and school mentioned] have that level of fluency." (Parent feedback forms)
- "I think the definition of the goals are fine, but that's not the reality." (Focus groups with staff)
- "I don't know if it's true or not, but I have seen stats that say Ontario French immersion kids don't achieve fluency" (Parent feedback forms)

³⁴ The main goal of the research was to obtain input into WRDSB's vision statement. The comments above provide those opinions. However, interpreting the opinions beyond what was stated by participants, one way WRDSB can provide some clarity around assessments is to reinforce how it assesses students through report cards and other standard measures. This may address some of the ambiguity participants may feel.

³⁵ As a comparator, the HWDSB website encourages both core and Grade 12 students to challenge the DELF at the A2, B1 and B2 levels (HWDSB: French as a Second Language).

- “I think that if these kids want to pursue career opportunities, they also need the ability to write in French and the written/grammatical skills of most FI students are poor.” (Parent feedback forms)
- “Students should be comfortable and effective communicators in both English and French to enter the work force as future bilingual employees.” (Parent feedback forms)
- “It would be hard-pressed to expect someone in FI to have a conversation with a Francophone.” (Focus groups with parents and caregivers)
- “It’s debatable that they’d even be fully bilingual by the end of high school through FI.” (K11s with principals/vice-principals)

Moreover, some qualitative comments from interviews with principals and vice-principals about WRDSB’s operational goals and its outcomes clearly indicated that it would be important to say that such goals and outcomes can only be achieved by staying in the program for a certain length of time. Further, results from one of the student focus group suggested that the goal should be to have French immersion students communicate effectively in French with their peers in the program, as opposed to developing skills to communicate more broadly in French with others and more situations outside the program. That is, even among some students, there is a sense that they do not feel they will be able to communicate well outside the program.

An analysis of the survey results also seems to indicate that parents/caregivers and students may have higher expectations of the program - either in what the program is designed to do - or how well it is being taught to students themselves. Specifically:

- One third (33%) of parents/caregivers who state their child is no longer in French immersion indicate that they felt their child was not learning as much French as expected; and
- Of all parents/caregivers who do not support French immersion or do not have children in French immersion, 49% feel that the quality of instruction is an issue, and a similar proportion (50%) of teachers who oppose French immersion feel that quality of instruction is an issue.

The qualitative results also show a similar ambiguity about the perceived goals and outcomes of enrollment in WRDSB’s French programming. Although many participating parents/caregivers are appreciative for their children’s opportunity to learn French, they do question the extent to which their child will be fluent in French when they complete the program. Specifically, some parents/caregivers reported that their child was not successful in obtaining their DELF proficiency exam certificate.

Participating staff, principals and vice-principals acknowledged that while the goal of French immersion is to develop a level of fluency in French many students may not have a comfort level in French to attempt a conversation in French. Some principals noted that for true immersion, students need to have the opportunity to use the language in action and real-life situations, compared to just “learning” the language. One vice-principal noted that the combination of only learning in French for 50% of the day and the fact that they live in a non-French community means that students have very little opportunity to practice their French in everyday situations.

“The student won’t be fully bilingual by the end of elementary school and it’s debatable that they’d even be fully bilingual by the end of high school through French immersion. Is this because of the French language fluency of the teacher or is it because of the program itself?” *Vice-principal French Immersion Public School*

When asked to what extent they were fluent in French and could carry on a conversation in French, one group of French immersion high school students indicated that while they could converse in French with their classmates and teachers, they would have difficulty conversing in French with someone from Quebec, France or another Francophone community. A few students indicated that they did not feel

that their mastery of French was fluent enough to indicate as such on their resume. One student who was applying to study at a French-Canadian university admitted concern that their level of French may not be as strong as others in the course. The student intends to spend the summer in Quebec to improve French language skills.

Overall, the WRDSB operational goals should have more well-defined outcomes so that all stakeholders have clear indications of what WRDSB's French programs are designed to do, and the specific outcomes that can be expected as students and parents/caregivers make decisions about French immersion enrollment and/or pursuit of extended or core French. Some stakeholders feel the operational goals and vision is too broad, while the results of the quantitative and qualitative research show that without more clearly defined outcomes, some stakeholders may have higher expectations of the program than can actually be delivered to each and every student. The CEFR framework provides a method for describing learning outcomes from French instruction. More specifically, our interview with HWDSB indicated that they were moving their instruction more towards the CEFR framework as specified by the province in its vision. Specifically, the representative from HWDSB mentioned "We used that to shift the program from the traditional grammar and translation and move it more towards the Ministry expectations related to the CELF (Common European Linguistic Framework) so we've made that our reference framework. We push hard on the quality of instruction." Some specific ways to modify the operational goals based on the CEFR could include:

- Map proficiency for core, extended and French immersion based on the CEFR categories and then state those goals more clearly, so that stakeholders can have proper expectations of the outcomes of all French programs in the WRDSB system; and
- Use CEFR to more clearly define fluency, comfort, confidence and the situations in which students will be able to speak French. While the WRDSB core French vision indicates that students will be able to use French in simple daily situations, WRDSB could consider taking some potential situations outlined in the CEFR guidelines and include them as part of the operational goals and/or goals/outcomes of the French immersion program.

6.3.3 Additional Factors in the Provincial Vision

The provincial framework incorporates several other elements that may be useful to incorporate into WRDSB's vision and its delivery of FSL programming. Below are some selected aspects³⁶ of the provincial framework that may be useful for the WRDSB to consider in its operational goals and vision. The list is provided as guidance on potential areas to include in the operational goals and vision. A detailed analysis and/or discussion of each framework concept area is indicated in the table for more information on each, and how the research and findings of the review may potentially influence adoption and/or use of the framework concept in the operational goals for WRDSB FSL programming.

³⁶ Selection was based on the objectives of the review and results of the qualitative and quantitative research, which suggested key areas of concern or issues to be addressed by WRDSB as it moves forward.

Table 6-2: Areas of Provincial Vision and Potential for Use in WRDSB's Operational Goals

Ontario FSL Framework Concept	Ontario FSL Framework Area	Comments for WRDSB ³⁷
Increase the percentage of students studying FSL until graduation	Goals	This could be considered a metric WRDSB can use to measure outcomes for the FSL program
FSL programs are for all students	Guiding principles	Inclusivity of all learners is an issue identified from primary research with stakeholders. This is discussed in Section 7.4.2 of the report
Supporting all students	Strategic focus	
Learning FSL is a lifelong journey	Guiding principles	Such a statement, or similar one regarding length of time in the learning process, may be important in managing expectations or expected outcomes.
Enhancing leadership and accountability	Strategic focus	The implementation of detailed outcome metrics could improve leadership and accountability on key issues being measured.
Strengthening programming to improve achievement in FSL	Strategic focus	Ensuring stakeholders that research-based programming and teaching occurs in FSL
Implementing effective practices in planning, teaching and assessment	Strategic focus	

6.4 WRDSB's Vision Compared to Other Boards'

6.4.1 Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

Numerous sources provide visions and/or operational goals associated with the HWDSB's French immersion program specifically, and FSL in general. They are provided in the reference box below:

HWDSB French Immersion and FSL Vision
<p><u>From HWDSB Website</u></p> <p>The vision of the HWDSB French as a Second Language Programming is guided by the three core priorities set out in <i>A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 1-12</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase student confidence, proficiency and achievement in French as a Second Language; • Increase the percentage of students studying FSL until graduation; and • Increase student, educator, parent, and community engagement in FSL. <p>These core priorities are at the forefront of HWDSB's commitment to FSL that envisions:</p> <p>"All students communicating and interacting with growing confidence in French."</p> <p>HWDSB offers two FSL programs – Core French and French Immersion. Each of the programs differ in intensity but share a common purpose: To develop student's communication skills in the</p>

³⁷ Comments made here put the Ontario FSL Framework elements into some context for WRDSB. Many of the comments are addressed in a more fulsome manner throughout the report. Relevant sections are identified.

French language.

The programs teach students to listen, speak, read, and write in French through real world language opportunities. French as a Second Language also promotes the use of language learning strategies, goal setting/reflection and an appreciation of French culture in Canada and in other regions of the world ([HWDSB: French as a Second Language](#)).

From HWDSB's Brochure for its French Immersion Program

It is designed to provide English-speaking children with opportunities to become skilled speaking in French as well as English. Upon graduation from secondary school, the student is expected to be proficient in French...

The goal of French Immersion is to develop students' proficiency in French while building mastery of English...

The aim of the French Immersion program at HWDSB is to: Provide a quality educational program that meets the expectations of the Ontario Curriculum, in both elementary and secondary.

Goals:

- Use French to communicate and interact effectively in a variety of social settings;
- Learn about Canada and its two official languages and cultures;
- Appreciate and acknowledge how the global community is connected;
- Students are responsible for their own learning, as they work independently and in groups;
- Use effective language learning strategies; and
- Become lifelong language learners for personal growth and for active participation as world citizens.

By the end of the four-year program in secondary school, students will: Be able to follow their pathway (Apprenticeship, College, Community Living, University and Work) with the benefit of French as a Second Language ([HWDSB: FI in HWDSB, pp. 3-4](#)).

From the June 13, 2016 Board Meeting, HWDSB French Immersion Strategy (Elementary)

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) has been offering French immersion to non-French speaking students for many years. We recognize that French is one of Canada's two official languages and it is a language that is used widely around the world. Proficiency in French is a valuable skill and an element of student achievement. We have been, and will continue to provide quality programs which develop students' ability communicate in French.

HWDSB believes in equity of access and outcomes in terms of our program delivery. It is our belief that all students have the ability to learn French. Our French language programs include English language learners and students with special education needs and are inclusive and reflective of our diverse communities.

French Immersion in HWDSB is an optional program offered beginning in Grade one. Elementary students are taught French as a subject and French serves as the primary language of instruction for other content areas in the beginning years of the program. HWDSB exceeds the Ministry guidelines for the minimum number of hours of instruction required for French Immersion in grades one through 8, which provides a solid foundation for students who wish to pursue French Immersion in secondary school. ([HWDSB Board Meeting, 2016](#))

6.4.1.1 General Components of the Operational Goals and Vision

Within the operational goals and vision, HWDSB makes a specific mention of goals and outcomes as part of the description of the program. Also, there is a goal of increasing the number of students learning French until the last year of study in the school system. As such, this goal means that the program must be continually managed to handle growth (e.g. HWDSB's use of a centralized application system discussed below). Moreover, it addresses a small issue discovered in this review's interviews with stakeholders – that the goals of French programming can only be achieved when a student completes the program.

6.4.1.2 Emphasis on Quality and Use of a Centralized Registration System to Support Quality

The brochure for HWDSB's French programming says that its aim is to provide a quality education for students. That is, compared to the WRDSB and even the provincial goals and vision, HWDSB includes the notion of quality French education. In Malatest's interview with the HWDSB representative, they directly indicated that quality is related to the overall size of the program and that it is his job to make Trustees aware when over-expansion of the program could impact quality and delivery. That is, one of his roles is to ensure that the program does not expand to the point where quality becomes an issue ([HWDSB, 2019](#)).

Quality was also one of the main reasons why the school board went with a centralized registration system for French immersion. The centralized system, according to the interview, means that the board is not placed in the position of having to staff too many classrooms with teachers that may not be as qualified as expected by community standards. Specifically, "[staffing] is one of the reasons we went to this central model to try as much as possible to control the number of classes in the system. Although we're going to rise by about 70 students, we're only projecting to rise by 3 classrooms – actually about 2.5 because we can create some work-arounds." ([HWDSB, 2019](#))

From the minutes of the meeting that created the system, the goals of the central registration system were defined as "to ensure that all students who wish to take French immersion programming are able to do so. In addition, the Board is able to plan accommodation needs to prevent accommodation pressures within the system. It is recommended that a system-wide application process for grade one entry to French Immersion programs be established to allow for program placement of students, monitoring of accommodations, balance of enrolment, and long term stability of the French Immersion program" ([HWDSB Board Meeting, 2016, pp. 11.2-A22](#)).

6.4.1.3 Equity of Access

Within the June 13, 2016 Board Meeting Minutes, HWDSB confirms the "equity of access" concept for all students, including English language learners and students with special needs. It should be noted that the program booklet for the HWDSB's French immersion program indicates that support for French immersion students is available as follows:

SUPPORT SERVICES

Enrichment and remedial assistance may be provided in English or in French by:

- a classroom teacher;
- an English-speaking Learning Resource Teacher; and
- a bilingual Learning Resource Teacher (where available).

Students whose needs require special assistance beyond the Learning Resource Teacher have access to: The special education services of the school, as determined by the school. Psychological services, provided by the Department of Psychological Services. Special education programs, recommended

by IPRC. If the recommendation is for a self-contained class (e.g., gifted), then this class is offered in English only. ([HWDSB: FI in HWDSB](#))

Malatest's interview revealed that equitable access is also supported by a central application process for French immersion programming ([HWDSB, 2019](#)), such that HWDSB can "guarantee an offer of placement in the [French immersion] program (but not a specific school)" ([HWDSB: French as a Second Language](#)).

Equity of access is also seen in how HWDSB opens French immersion classes. According to the interview, one of the two recently opened FI schools in HWDSB was in a high priority area, and there is a strategy to put another two French immersion programs in high priority areas.

6.4.1.4 The Use of Only One Operational Vision for Core and French Immersion and Performance Measurement

According to the key informant interview for HWDSB with a board superintendent, having one set of goals allows the board to communicate with parents/caregivers that both core and French immersion offer a sufficient education and an equal path to a bilingual education. Specifically:

We want [parents] to make an informed choice. They should know that if they don't think FI is a good choice for your child, if you choose core French, that's a legitimate choice for your child. That's the language we use: you need to make an informed choice. Your child will be exposed to French but there are two programs and the goal of both is acquiring proficiency in French at a high level. ([HWDSB, 2019](#))

The board uses the DELF/DALF to measure the success of the French immersion and core French programs to deliver on providing the same or similar fluency standards. Specifically, among students who stay in the program until grade 12, HWDSB is:

- Seeing high levels of success for students at the A1, A2 (94% success) and B1 (79% success) levels for core French;
- Seeing high levels of success at B1 (100% success) B2 (79% success) for French immersion; and
- There is 100% participation in the DELF exam process.

6.4.2 Halton District School Board

HDSB is the only board examined as part of this review that offers a grade two, 100% French entry point. That aspect of the program along with an extensive review of the documents supporting it is discussed in **Section 9.2.1**. In strict relation to the vision/operational goals of the board itself, HDSB's website is the only source of information that provides any vision and/or mission for the program. According to the website:

The Halton District School Board supports the Ontario Ministry of Education's vision and goals for French as a Second Language (FSL) programs. All programs in the French as a Second Language curriculum at the elementary and secondary levels share a common vision.

Vision

Students will communicate and interact with growing confidence in French, one of Canada's official languages, while developing the knowledge, skills, and perspectives they need to participate fully as citizens in Canada and in the world.

Goals

In each French as a Second Language program (core and immersion), students realize the vision of the FSL curriculum as they strive to:

- use French to communicate and interact effectively in a variety of social settings
- learn about Canada, its two official languages, and other cultures
- appreciate how connected and interdependent the global community is
- be responsible for their own learning as they work independently and in groups
- use effective language learning strategies
- become lifelong language learners for personal growth and for active participation as world citizens.

French as a Second Language (FSL) programs offered in the Halton District School Board:

- Core French
- French Immersion

(HDSB: Vision)

Unlike the HWDSB website and various other documentation regarding goals and visions for the program, the HDSB vision is not as detailed in its approach. As such, analysis of the statement focuses more on how the statement differs from others under review and serves as a comparator to how WRDSB can implement its own vision/ operational goals. Specifically, some of the factors in the statement are detailed in **Table 6-3:**

Table 6-3: HDSB's Operational Goals and Implications for WRDSB's Operational Goals

Included in HDSB Statement	In WRDSB Statement?	Comments
Reference to Ontario Framework	No	No other board references the Ontario statement directly, but some incorporate components of it
Common vision for core and French immersion	No	Other boards under review tend to have common mission statements for all French language programming
Development of confidence in French	Yes	Used by other boards, but as interviewees in Waterloo mention, this is a challenging goal to measure
Develop knowledge, skills and perspectives to be active Canadian and world citizens	No	WRDSB indicates comfort with other French speakers for French immersion only
Inclusion of specific goals (i.e. social setting communications, learn about Canada/culture, appreciate global community, responsibility for learning is student's, use effective learning strategies, become lifelong learners)	No	Some informant interviews called on WRDSB to have goals for the programs.

6.4.3 Thames Valley District School Board

The TVDSB does not have operational goals /vision statement for its core French program available on its website. The French immersion portion has the following:

Thames Valley is proud to deliver consistent, equitable access to high-quality French Immersion programming for Grade one to Grade 12 students across the district. ([TVDSB: FSL](#))

While the statement is not as detailed as any other examined, it does mention three very important principles of French immersion education: 1) Equitable access; 2) High-Quality French immersion programming; and 3) Consistent programming.

Recently, the district moved entry from the dual entry points of senior kindergarten and grade seven to the single entry point of grade one. In its rationale for the move, TVDSB was able to cite its mission statement as a reason for making the change. Specific quotes from the announcement include the following:

"Important changes have been introduced to Elementary French Immersion programming aimed at strengthening the Board's ability to deliver consistent, high-quality French Immersion education that is equitable for all students across Thames Valley..."

A key advantage of the changes includes providing primary students with a solid foundation in English instruction in the 2-year Kindergarten program. In addition, research has found that fewer parents and guardians are registering their children for Grade seven entry and, less than half of those who start French Immersion in Grade seven continue to Secondary French Immersion.

We want to ensure that we provide consistent, high-quality French Immersion education in all areas of the Board," said Superintendent Builder. ([TVDSB: News on French Immersion, 2019](#))

The notion is that TVDSB can use its vision and operational goals to justify significant changes to the program, and help reassure stakeholder that the changes being made help advance the vision's objectives of equity, quality and consistency.

6.4.4 Limiting Enrollment/Access as a Measure to Maintain/Improve Quality

Reviewing some of the other data and the vision and/or French language reviews of other boards provides some key information for WRDSB. These issues relate to the notion of quality in general, and how accessibility impacts quality more specifically.

The HWDSB key informant interview indicated that quality in their program is driven largely by teachers and that centralized development of teaching materials and assessments has improved this. Moreover, they are encouraging all their teachers to become DELF correcteurs as a way of improving quality and engagement of the teaching staff ([HWDSB, 2019](#)).

However, perhaps the most significant impact of a focus on quality among other boards reviewed is the fact that many cite limiting enrollment to the program as a factor that impacts quality. Broadly speaking, all boards indicate that a shortage of French teachers means that they have difficulty managing both current program levels and increasing interest in them. As such, in order to maintain quality, there needs to be a limit on the number of students enrolling in the program. The following describe how quality was used as a rationale for limiting access to a program and the methods involved in limiting access.

6.4.4.1 Peel District School Board: Limiting Access to Maintain Quality

Although not one of the three boards directly under examination, PDSB conducted an extensive Elementary French immersion review. The key objectives of the review were defined as:

- to plan for the sustainability of a high quality French immersion program;
- to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery and instruction of the French immersion program;
- to ensure that students throughout the Peel board have equitable access to the French immersion program; and
- to ensure that the French immersion program is cost effective.

The sustainability of a high quality French immersion program in the Peel board was identified as the overall goal. ([Brown and Bennett: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017, p. 24](#))

In their analysis of the data, which indicates a 50% drop out rate between grade one and grade eight, the review suggests that there may be over-enrollment in the program at the start among children who may not be ready for French immersion and thus have less likelihood of success ([Brown and Bennett: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017, p. 22](#)). Their recommendation indicates “Based on the findings from the program review, the following recommendations are made in order to... sustain a high quality French immersion program in the Peel board... Maintain the 25% cap.” ([Brown and Bennett: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017, p. 24](#)). In other words, Peel is maintaining a 25% enrollment cap on its program in order to ensure the quality of the program.

Further, the report also examines the French teacher shortage in regard to quality and access. It indicates that there are continued enrollment pressures due to the popularity of the program, and growing bilingualism. There is also an indication that the 25% cap already set in Peel is being exceeded. From there the report highlights a significant French teacher shortage by citing growing retirements and lower number of French teachers entering the system. Given these issues, the report recommends keeping the 25% cap ([Brown and Bennett: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017, p. 43](#)).

6.4.4.2 Halton Catholic District School Board: Sustainability of an Early French Immersion Program is Not Feasible - Priority Should be on Equitable Access through Core and Extended French

In 2016 and 2017 the HCDSB initiated a French Program Review through an Ad Hoc Committee with the goal of making “recommendations to Trustees as to the future of French immersion with a view to moving the Early French Immersion from a pilot to a sustainable and permanent program.” Further objectives of the review included making recommendations for a French immersion program that would be sustainable. The reports further suggested that French immersion was an optional program based on local resources available for it ([HCDSB: Regular Board Meeting, Item 9.1, 2016, p. 21 & 22](#)).

After significant consultations, however, the recommendation was to eliminate the early French immersion program, which had always been operated as an optional pilot program. Some of the main justifications for this included the fact that terminating the French immersion program would require fewer teachers over time and that not operating the program would be more equitable to all students throughout the board because it allows more students to have access to French programs (i.e. extended French). The analysis showed that 356 more students in the board could access extended French if early French immersion were eliminated. ([HCDSB, Staff Report 9.1, 2017, p. 4](#)).

It should be noted, however, that the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee was soundly rejected by the education board on November 21, 2017. In fact, the board voted that all French programs (core, extended and immersion) be made permanent ([HCDSB: Minutes of Board Meeting, 2017](#)). However, in order to control enrollment given a shortage of teachers, a lottery system is used in HCDSB in order to

determine entry into the early French immersion program. A document providing qualitative feedback on some of the HCDSB's policies indicated some dissatisfaction with the lottery system. Some comments include:

- “The EFI should be offered in more schools if not all. It’s sad that we had to go through a lottery system”;
- “I would like to see more done to ensure that all kids who apply get accepted instead of leaving it to a lottery”; and
- “It was stressful not knowing at the time of lottery if my second daughter would get in. A sibling rule should be in place. If one is in then the other should be accepted as well, before the lottery” ([HCDSB: Policy II-51, 2019](#)).

The sense from HCDSB's situation is that in discarding the recommendation to focus the board's resources on increasing access for everyone, they have created a lottery system that may limit access because there are not enough French teaching resources to meet demand in the area.

6.4.4.3 Halton District School Board and Thames Valley District School Board's Shifting Entry Points to Manage Demand

The TVDSB operational goals and vision indicates that they provide high-quality French programming. While the HDSB vision does not say anything about quality, its Program Viability Study, conducted in 2016 clearly indicates that quality is an issue as it states that a “Primary issue to be resolved... high uptake into FI programs has resulted in significant growth and challenges finding qualified and high quality French teachers” ([HDSB: Program Viability Summary and Recommendations, May 2016](#)).

Both of these boards are attempting to manage demand and keep quality in the system by avoiding capping. In our key informant interview with HDSB, they indicated that in 10 years from 2005 to 2015, the percentage of senior kindergarten students seeking enrollment in French immersion from senior kindergarten to the grade one French immersion entry point has increased from 31% to 37% in 2015. It should be noted that many boards, if they use enrollment caps, typically cap their grade one enrollment at about 25%. In fact HDSB's Program Viability Study indicated that “to resolve the issue identified... uptake into FI must be curbed” and that all options to consider curbing enrollment “must consider capping IF the new model does not reduce FI uptake.” ([HDSB: Program Viability Summary and Recommendations, May 2016](#)). However, an IPSOS report of focus groups on the issue in HDSB indicated “Setting caps was the least preferred option... A cap was seen as unfair... A cap could potentially add to perceived elitism of FI in the community... a cap would potentially divide communities.” ([IPSOS and HDSB: Consultation with Parents, March 2016](#))

TVDSB is in a very similar situation. According to our key informant interview with them, they do not have enrollment caps but are at the limit of their capacity, and are considering which options to pursue. They are aware that capping is not a popular option and at the time of the interview, were considering many different choices.

Both school boards, in order to maintain quality and attempt to reduce over-subscription and deploy scarce resources carefully moved the entry point to later grades. Specifically:

- HDSB had moved their entry to grade two in the last school year. According to the interview: “It is too early to see what impact the changes will have on the dropout rate. The changes resulted in a 12% decrease in uptake (enrolment); however, this decrease will not continue past the next couple of years as the population is expected to continue growing.”
- In September 2020, TVDSB will move to a single entry point in grade one. According to their website “The changes will allow the Board to better deploy staff to address the ongoing challenges caused by the continued popularity of French Immersion education in the face of a

nationwide shortage of qualified French-language educators.” Moreover, specific mention is made that “unlike many school boards, Thames Valley will not “cap” or limit enrolment into Elementary French Immersion programs.” ([TVDSB: News on French Immersion, 2019](#))

The sense is that a focus on quality and equity leads to a change in entry points. A focus just on quality alone, such as what was done in PDSB and HCDSB may lead to enrollment caps and/or lotteries, which do not prove popular options for many parents/caregivers in the affected communities.

6.5 Other Issues with WRDSB’s Operational Goals and Vision

The qualitative research captured some other important aspects of the WRDSB operational goals:

- While many participants provided comments about the statement as outlined in the previous sections, an equal number, when presented with the operational goals found it acceptable, and did not provide opinion or thought about the statement, other than to say that they felt the vision met their needs and those of the community;
- Students intrinsically have different levels of confidence and comfort in themselves in speaking/social settings in which they may use French. As such, it is important that an evaluation process of comfort and confidence in French be student lead, and that students be allowed to use and adapt the CEFR standards to situations and scenarios that are acceptable to them so that confidence and comfort can be measured in a way that takes these into account with the student; and
- One teacher simply suggested that the primary goal of French immersion should be to offer “meaningful experiences in French language and culture”.

6.6 Possible Key Performance Indicators

Based on the discussion in the previous sections, as well as the literature review and comments from key informants, the **Table 6-4** shows the main areas of operational goals, suggested key performance indicators and sources of those key performance indicators.

Table 6-4: Potential Changes to WRDSB's Operational Goals and Suggested KPI's

Area of Operational Goals	Key Performance Indicator	Source
Confidence/ Comfort	What percentage of students participate in French extra-curriculars?	Ministry FSL Guidelines
	What opportunities are there to increase exposure to French language or culture	Ministry FSL Guidelines
Cultural Competency	Survey students directly on comfort/confidence	Ministry FSL Guidelines
	How many students participate in French exchange programs?	
Lifelong Learning	How many students plan on continuing in French (studies/employment) after they leave WRDSB?	
	How many students participate in the DELF	HWDSB
Fluency and Effective Communication	What are DEFL results for core, extended and immersion	HWDSB
	If WRDSB feels it is beneficial to match its outcomes to CEFR guidelines, how are CEFR results being achieved and monitored	HWDSB
Stability of Program³⁸	What is the attrition rate after the first year of FI?	Ministry FSL Guidelines
	What is the attrition rate at each grade level?	Ministry FSL Guidelines
	What proportion of students are enrolled in French immersion?	Ministry FSL Guidelines
	Are secondary French immersion classes cancelled, and if so, what are the reasons?	Ministry FSL Guidelines
	How many French immersion courses are offered in secondary school?	Ministry FSL Guidelines
	What factors contribute to enrollment and attrition?	Ministry FSL Guidelines
	Stable and long-term boundaries for schools	HDSB KPI
	Minimal use of portables	HDSB KPI
	Minimal use of triple graded classes	HDSB KPI
	Equitable distribution of enrollment across schools to maximize quality programming	HDSB KPI
	Are enrollment caps being considered to maintain the quality of the program?	
Equity of Access and Support for Students	Are FSL educators supported by central staff who have expertise in French?	Ministry FSL Guidelines
	What percentage of French immersion teachers seek to transfer out or leave teaching?	Ministry FSL Guidelines
	What percentage of teachers have qualifications above the minimum?	Ministry FSL Guidelines and HDSB KPI
	What percentage of teachers have special education qualifications?	Ministry FSL Guidelines and HDSB KPI
	Minimal travel distance for all students	HDSB KPI
	What is the proportion of special needs student segments in French immersion compared to English classes?	
Overall Community Support³⁸	Does the community support French immersion overall?	
	Does the community feel that French immersion is equitable in terms of access, and creating a proper learning and social environment for students?	

³⁸ It should be noted that WRDSB tracks these statistics and many are included in this report.

SECTION 7: SATISFACTION, SUPPORT AND REASONS FOR ENROLLMENT IN FRENCH IMMERSION

7.1 Key Findings Discussed in this Section

Satisfaction with a child's French programming tends to be higher among parents/caregivers whose children are in French immersion. Specifically, 75% of those with children in French immersion are satisfied with their child's French program, compared with 58% of those whose children are not in French immersion programming. Parents/caregivers who enroll their children in French immersion feel that French immersion improves employment prospects (69% of parents/caregivers with children in French immersion) and enriches the student's educational experience (68% of those whose children are in French immersion). The focus groups indicated that parents/caregivers who are satisfied with the program feel that it delivers on these aspects. Enrichment of a child's educational experience includes not only properly learning the French language itself, to a specific degree of fluency, but other factors including the learning environment itself and being exposed to a broader cultural base within the program. **Figure 7-6** shows that if a child was removed from French immersion, the reasons tended to be because parents/caregivers felt: 1) French immersion was not the best learning environment (50%); 2) There are better supports in non-French immersion (44%); 3) Children should attend the same school (38%); and 4) Transportation (33%).

Those parents/caregivers who do not have children in French immersion were further asked to indicate their support for WRDSB's French immersion programming overall. A slim majority either completely favour (32%) or somewhat favour (22%) French immersion programming. Among parents/caregivers whose children are both not enrolled in French immersion, and who do not favour the program, well over eight in ten (86%) completely agree that their lack of support comes from streaming/separating students. This compares with only about half (49%) who completely agree that their lack of support for French immersion stems from concerns over the quality of French instruction itself.

Staff are quite divided in their support for the French immersion program. Only 28% of those whose language of instruction is English completely favour French immersion. This rises to 71% among those whose language of instruction is French only and support is at 67% among those whose instruction is English or French. Reasons for not supporting French immersion³⁹ include issues related to streaming (91% completely agree this is a reason for not supporting the program) and equity of learning for students (85%). A fairly high proportion of staff (regardless of language taught), say a frequent reason for transfers out of the French immersion program is because of learning challenges in it (65%). Over four in ten (41%) say that transfers out occur frequently because student supports are not available in French immersion, and 35% say transfers out occur frequently because of behavioral challenges.

Finally, the focus groups with parents/caregivers revealed strong opinions about equity or the enrichment nature of the French immersion program. These factors were cited as reasons for enrolling children in the program, and to a more significant degree, they were cited as reasons for not supporting the program, despite the program's intentions and structure to promote equal access for children and not an enrichment path. Some parents/caregivers commented on children with special needs being excluded from French immersion, or had suspicions that their family backgrounds played a role in which programs were recommended to children.

7.2 Satisfaction with French Programming among Parents/Caregivers

On the survey, parents/caregivers were asked about the type of French programming their child currently receives based on the grade in which the child is enrolled. From here, parents/caregivers were

³⁹ NB – the question is largely biased towards teachers whose language of instruction is English only.

asked about satisfaction with the French programming received by the child. Note that if a parent/caregiver had a child in more than one grade category of junior/senior kindergarten, grade one to five or grade six to 12, the question was asked for each child in each grade grouping. However, if two or more children were in the same grade category, one child was randomly selected. As such, this question could have been asked a maximum of three times.

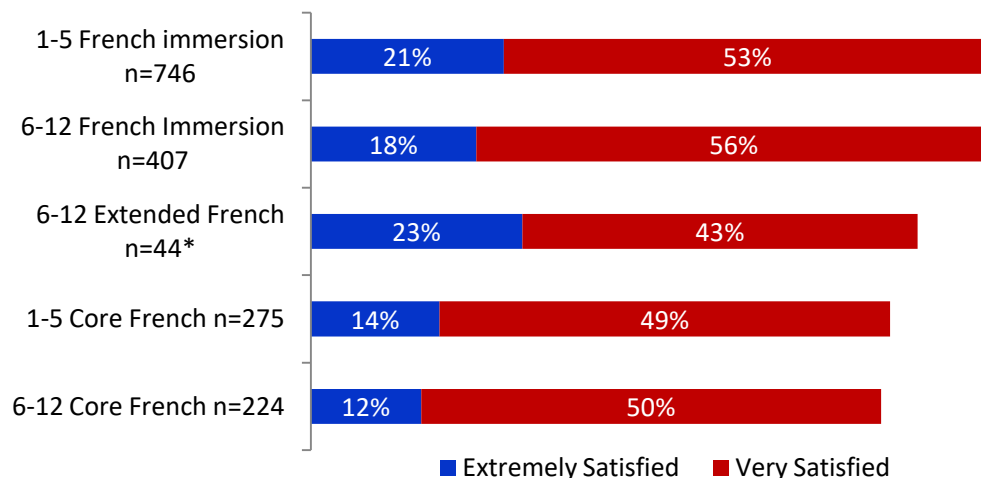
On the whole, when all the multiple answers to the question were considered, the data show that there is higher proportion who are satisfied with French programming, if their children are in French immersion. Specifically, 20% indicate that they are extremely satisfied with the French programming if their child is in French immersion. This is compared to 12% of those who are extremely satisfied among parents/caregivers whose children are not receiving French immersion programming. Total satisfaction (i.e. extremely satisfied plus very satisfied) is quite high for those with children in French immersion, with about three quarters (75%) of parents/caregivers with a child in French immersion being satisfied, compared to only about six in ten (58%) who are satisfied if their child is not in French immersion. In fact, 29% of those parents/caregivers whose children are not in French immersion indicate that they are not satisfied with the French programming received by their child. **Table 7-1** below shows these percentages.

Table 7-1: Satisfaction with French Programming Received by Child

Percent (%)	Parents/caregivers with French Immersion Children	Parents/caregivers without French Immersion Children
Extremely satisfied	20	12
Very satisfied	55	46
Not very satisfied	20	29
Not satisfied at all	4	11
<i>Base (Answers)</i>	<i>n=1,126</i>	<i>n=162</i>

Figure 7-1 shows that differences tend to exist by the type of French programming received by the child, and not so much by the grade in which the child is enrolled. That is core French has the same proportion of parents/caregivers satisfied with it regardless of enrolled grade for the child, and French Immersion has the same proportion of parents/caregivers satisfied with it, regardless of grade.

Figure 7-1: Parents' Satisfaction with French Programming



Parent/Caregiver Survey Q6 How satisfied are you with the _____ programming your child who is in _____ currently receives? Note that this question could be asked up to three times based on the ages/grades of the parent's children.

*Note: Percentages should be interpreted with caution given the small base size of 44 individuals on which it is based.

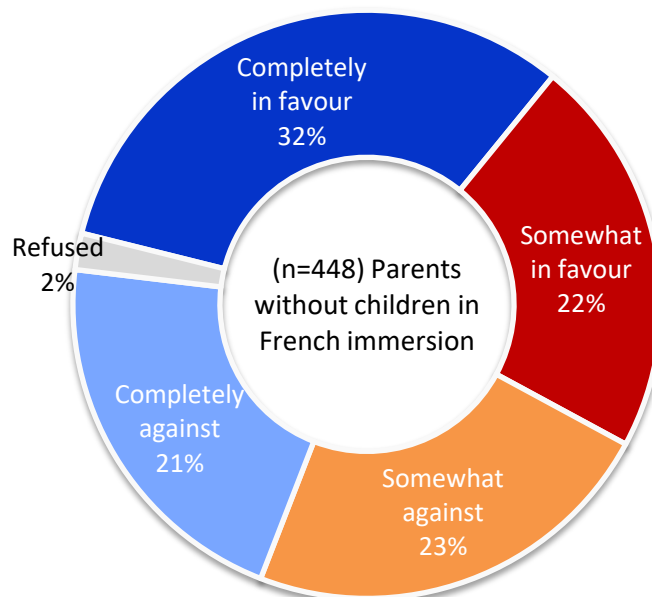
7.3 Level of Support for French Immersion

The survey asked about the level of support for French immersion programming among parents/caregivers who do not have children in the French immersion program.

7.3.1 Support for French Immersion among Those without Children in French Immersion

Parents/caregivers who do not have children in French immersion programming were asked to indicate their overall support for it. As seen in **Figure 7-2**, among those parents/caregivers without children in French immersion programming about a third (32%) are completely in favour of French immersion programming, with 22% somewhat in favor – meaning a slim majority of 54% of those with children not in French immersion are in favour of the program.

Figure 7-2: Support for French Immersion Programming among Parents/Caregivers without Children in the Program



Parent/Caregiver Survey Q11 "In general, how would you characterize your opinion of French immersion programming?" (Base: Those who do not have child(ren) enrolled in French immersion)

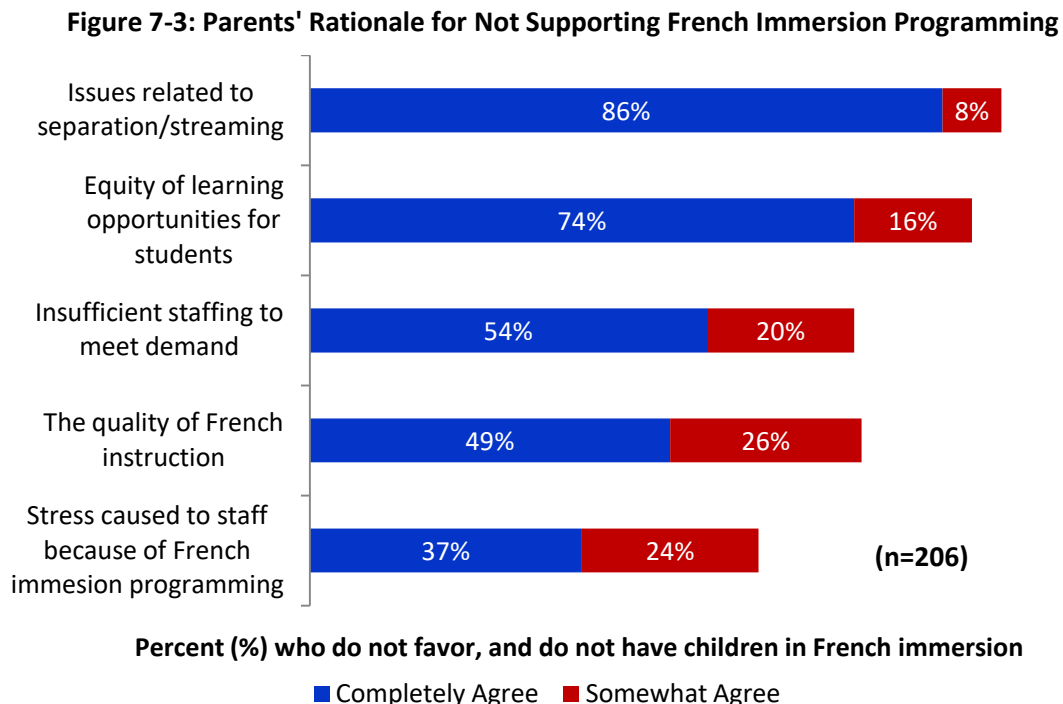
There are some fairly significant differences in terms of parents/caregivers without children in French immersion who are completely in favour of the program:

- Those with children in extended French (71%) are much more likely to completely favour French immersion than those with children in core French (27%); and
- Those parents/caregivers who have not achieved BAs (46%) are more likely to favour French immersion programming compared to those who have a BA (30%) and those with more than a BA (25%).

7.3.2 Reasons for Not Supporting French Immersion among Parents/Caregivers whose Children are Not in the Program

Parents/caregivers who were not supportive of French immersion programming were asked to indicate their concerns. The chart below shows the proportion of non-supportive parents/caregivers agreeing each issue is a concern. What can be clearly seen as a very significant issue to nearly nine in ten (86% completely agree) are issues relating to streaming and separation of students. About three quarters

(74%) also completely agree that equity of learning opportunities is a rationale for not supporting French immersion programming in WRDSB (**Figure 7-3**).



Parent/Caregiver Survey Q12 "You indicated that you oppose French immersion programming. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding French immersion programming?" (Base: Those who do not have child(ren) enrolled in French immersion)

Figure 7-3 mirrors opinion from the focus groups, in which participants were very direct on the subject of separating students. There were some strong opinions among many parents/caregivers in the groups that indicated concern that the French immersion program has become an "elitist" program due to streaming in dual track schools. While many participating parents/caregivers indicated that the reasons for placing their children in French immersion were related to the potential for promoting cognitive development and learning capacity through learning another language, some admitted that having their child in a smaller class with fewer challenging students was also a benefit of French immersion.

Although many participating parents/caregivers are appreciative of their children's opportunity to learn French, they do question the extent to which their child will be fluent in French when they complete the program.

The issue of outcomes of French immersion programming is discussed in **Section 6** on the WRDSB's operational goals for French immersion. However, the fact that parents/caregivers and students question whether fluency is an outcome of the program suggests that clarifying the operational goals of the program is important.

Besides outcomes as they relate to opinion of French immersion, nearly all participants, regardless of stakeholder group (i.e. parents, staff, students, administrators), acknowledged that some degree of divisiveness exists between the French immersion and English stream students. While some parents/caregivers felt that it created an unhealthy "we" vs. "them" attitude, even resulting in bullying, others reported that they did not experience a sense of divide between students in the English and

French immersion programs at their child's school and that their children had friends in both English and French immersion streams.

From the focus groups, some parents felt that a difference in academic performance contributed to divides between students, though students generally themselves did not see divisiveness as a result of academic performance differences. Parents were inclined to indicate that French immersion programs that grow within schools also create divisiveness. Students, however, attributed divisiveness more towards general socialization, and the fact that they just socialize with children in their classes, and on occasion speak French during non-class activities while in school⁴⁰.

Some principals/vice-principals indicated that they take small, but concerted steps to manage the two streams of programs in their schools. This includes scheduling common educational activities together with both sets of students, and encouraging play and other social interaction between the two streams of students. A few parents in the qualitative sessions noted that their schools make this effort, with generally positive results. It may be worthwhile to directly promote these activities to parents and suggest them at other schools.

Further, many parents/caregivers with children in core French provided feedback on their perceptions of how French immersion programming impacted their child's learning experience in class. Some parents/caregivers expressed concern over their beliefs concerning large sizes (30 or more students) and that the class contained a large proportion of children with behaviour issues and special needs. Several parents/caregivers with children in the English stream believed their children were not progressing as anticipated because much of the teacher's time was spent managing behaviours and with more students in the class, the teacher had less available time for each student. The quotes below are a sampling of those received from the focus groups and interviews, suggesting that larger class sizes appear to be occurring within the schools themselves, such that many stakeholders – parents, teachers, principals and vice-principals – are having to manage the issue. **Table 5-12** (based on the staff survey), also indicated that larger class sizes were slightly more frequent among core French (90%) compared to immersion (74%), and immersion had more classrooms with less than 20 students (22%) compared to core French (6%).

"As it stands, my son is consistently in larger classes where approximately 25% of students are high needs and behavioural issues and distraction rule the day. Just as bad however is the fact that Immersion students are denied the critical life lesson of learning to live and work with all kinds of people. If you talk with my son, core and immersion students develop an unhealthy "we"/ "they" mentality towards one another." Parent of one child in grade seven core French

"Sometimes the immersion class sizes have an impact on the rest of the building so if FI class sizes are low and I'm running those classes with 22 or 23 students, the regular core program classes will be over 30 to balance things out." Principal at a FI school

"If French Immersion stays as is, the current belief by parents that "If your child is not going to be in French Immersion, go to a school where French Immersion is not offered" should be allowed and promoted. If I feel my non French Immersion student is disadvantaged by large class sizes and having students with more struggles in their classes, then they should be allowed to choose a school out of

⁴⁰ There is no quantitative result that provides further insight into these findings. However, about nine in ten parents/caregivers and educators who oppose French immersion indicate that the reason for doing so is because of issues of separation/streaming.

boundary just as a student who wants to take French Immersion at a school out of boundary is allowed.” *Parent feedback*

“Anyone in Immersion is going to say “of course we should expand the program...” but immersion should not be expanded until we figure out how to effectively support students and larger class sizes and those with high needs in the Core program. Public education should be of the same quality for everyone.” *Parent feedback*

“There’s a lot of research on the impact of class size and it isn’t conclusive. Some says it does have an impact while other research says it’s more about the specific teacher. Possibly class size has an impact on student achievement though. Certainly smaller class sizes give the teacher more time to address individual needs.” *VP at a FI school*

“French immersion has divided the school; students in French immersion have means, core French students are mainly from lower socio-economic families. The FI classes seem to function very well and the English classes are very full with a mix of students having various needs. The FI classes are full in the early grades but each grade has fewer and fewer students.” *Focus groups with staff*

“I think one thing we could do more of is try to find planned, formal structures to mingle the kids more. It depends on the age of the kids, but... school [redacted] had the core stream and FI kids blended for classes that weren’t in French. It broke down some of the boundaries and there wasn’t such a divide. Some schools have school-wide teams, multi-age, multi-stream kids. It builds those relationships.” *Focus groups with staff*

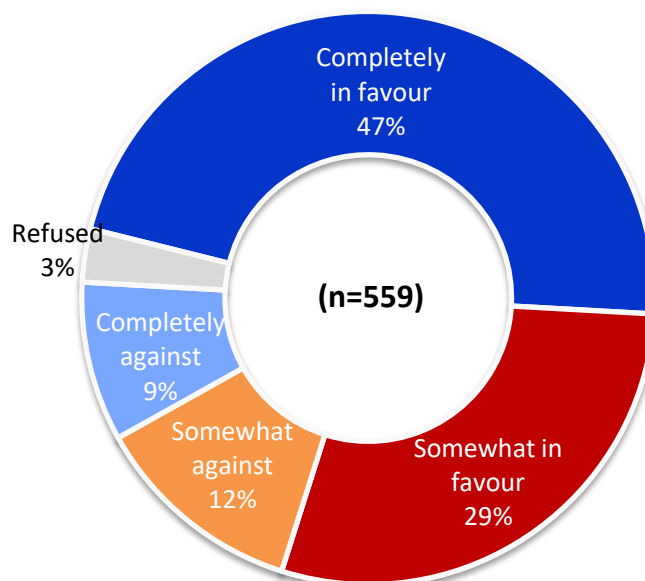
“If continued to be offered, I think class size averages should be equalized between streams, and efforts made to share the population of students that have learning and/or behavioural issues.” *Parent feedback*

“I have significant reservations about dual track schools because: I have taught in ... [redacted] that have offered French Immersion. In both locations the French Immersion program segregated the school. The students did not interact at recess time. The students who would have made great role models in a class and had supportive families chose the French Immersion track, while students who struggle (i.e., academically, socially, lacking family support) made up the English classes. By the junior grades the class sizes were not equal, due to attrition of those who couldn’t make it in the French Immersion classes. The demands on teachers were not equal either, as the number of students and number of IEPs tended to be significantly higher in the English classes.” *Staff feedback*

As will be discussed in **Section 12**, core French teachers indicate that they do struggle with student relationships because they only work with children 40 minutes a day and cannot build relationships with students that foster effective learning.

7.3.3 Overall Support for French Immersion among Staff

Staff were asked the degree to which they favour French immersion. **Figure 7-4** shows the proportion that completely favours it is 47%, with 29% saying they are somewhat in favour.

Figure 7-4: Staff Support for French Immersion Programming

Staff Survey Q12 “In general, how would you characterize your opinion of French immersion programming?”

The data, however, varies significantly based on a teacher’s language of instruction. That is to say just 28% of English-only teachers completely favour French immersion programming, compared to 71% of those who only teach French and 67% of those who teach both English and French. There is little difference based on the type of French taught (i.e. Core, extended or immersion), where all have about two thirds completely favouring French immersion. The results are shown in **Table 7-2**.

Table 7-2: Opinion of French Immersion among Staff Based on Language and Courses Taught

Percent (%)	Total	Language of Instruction			Type of French Taught		
		English	French	Both	Core	Extended	Immersion
Completely Favour	47%	28%	71%	67%	64%	94%	69%
Somewhat Favour	29%	30%	24%	28%	28%	6%	28%
Somewhat Against	12%	20%	2%	2%	4%	-	-
Completely Against	9%	18%	-	-	-	-	-
Base	n=559	n=256	n=84	n=172	n=120	n=17*	n=166

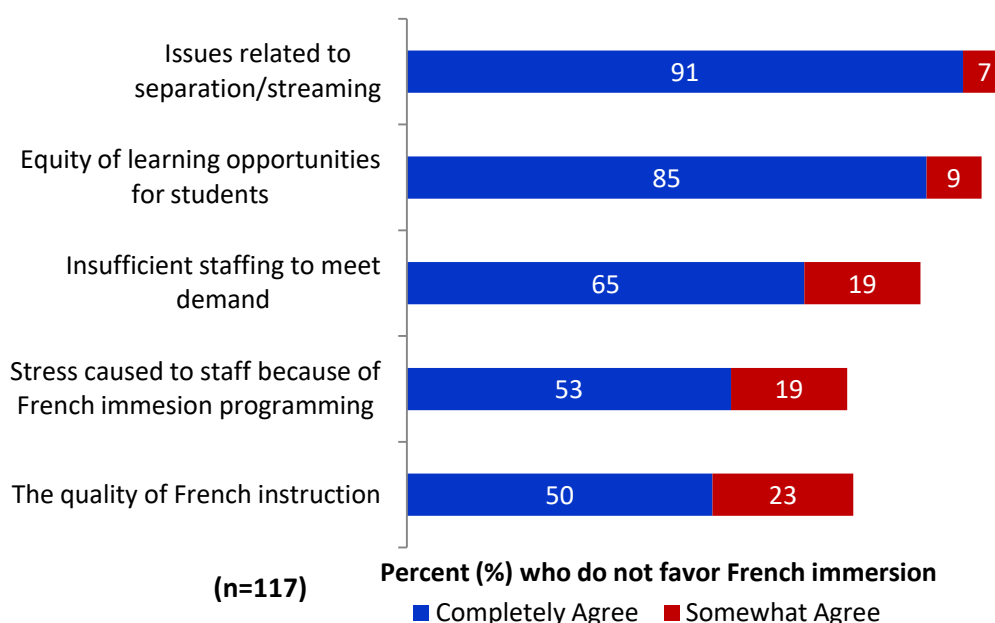
Staff Survey Q12 “In general, how would you characterize your opinion of French immersion programming?”

*Note: Percentages should be interpreted with caution given the small base size of 17 individuals on which it is based.

7.3.4 Reasons for Not Supporting French Immersion among Staff who do Not Favour French Immersion

Those staff who did not favour French immersion were asked to indicate their concerns – though a cautionary note should be included before understanding the data. Since virtually all those who oppose French immersion only teach English, these responses are weighted almost exclusively towards opinions of English language teachers.

Given this, **Figure 7-5** shows almost universal agreement with concerns over streaming, such that 91% completely agree this is an issue. A very high proportion completely agrees that equality of learning opportunities (85% completely agree) are an issue and 65% completely agree that there are insufficient staffing resources to meet the demands of French immersion programming.

Figure 7-5: Staff Rationale for Not Supporting French Immersion Programming

Staff Survey Q13 “You indicated that you oppose French immersion programming. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding French immersion programming?” (Base: Staff somewhat or completely against French immersion programming). **Caution: Since this question was only asked of those who oppose French immersion programming, and most of those who oppose it are English-language staff, out of 117 answering this question, 108 are English language teachers.**

School principals/vice-principals who participated in qualitative interviews acknowledged that some parents/caregivers do consider French immersion as an enrichment program and that for some parents, social segregation has become a motivator for choosing French immersion. Such participants often referred to this more as a “perception” or “opinion of the issue” held by parents/caregivers and some teachers, as opposed to actually being factual.

7.4 Perceived Benefits and Reasons for French Immersion Enrollment

7.4.1 Quantitative Findings

Parents/caregivers were asked some of the perceived benefits of a French immersion education for their children. **Table 7-3** compares the results of some of the perceived benefits of a French immersion education and possible reasons for enrollment in the program. In general, employment prospects tend to drive support and possible enrollment into French immersion programming, especially among those with children in the program, and the extended French program as well. Nearly seven in ten who have children in French immersion (69%) and extended French (75%) feel that a second language benefits employment prospects. Just under seven in ten with children in each program feel it enriches a student’s education (68% French immersion and 64% extended French).

Lower proportions indicate that a benefit, and possible reason for enrollment, is for academic outcomes. Specifically, about a third (36% French immersion and 32% extended French) completely agree with this, and lower proportions (31% French immersion and 25% extended French) completely agree that a second language increases the likelihood of their child getting in to a first-choice post-secondary institution. Given the difference between the top two and bottom two attributes, it is likely that

language benefits and educational enrichment are strong reasons parents/caregivers of children in French immersion choose the program.

Table 7-3: Agreement with Perceived French Immersion Benefits among Parents/Caregivers

Percent (%) of parents/caregivers who completely agree	Total	Child's Area of French Study		
		Core	Extended	Immersion
Second language improves employment prospects	61%	45%	75%	69%
Immersion enriches student experience	58%	33%	64%	68%
Academic outcomes are better for immersion students	33%	26%	32%	36%
Second language study increases likelihood of first-choice post-secondary admission	28%	19%	25%	31%
<i>Base</i>	<i>n=1,530</i>	<i>n=393</i>	<i>n=44*</i>	<i>n=1,082</i>

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q10 Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

*Note: Percentages should be interpreted with caution given the small base size of 17 individuals on which it is based.

Staff were asked the same set of questions regarding the potential benefits of French immersion. **Table 7-4** shows the results. In comparison to parents/caregivers, staff are somewhat less likely to completely agree about the benefits of French immersion among students. For example, while a majority (52%) of staff completely agree that a second language improves employment prospects, the proportion is higher among parents/caregivers (61%). The attribute with the most difference is on agreement with immersion enriching the educational experience. Four in ten teachers (40%) agree with this compared to 58% of parents/caregivers.

Table 7-4: Agreement with Perceived French Immersion Benefits among Staff and Parents

Percent (%) who completely agree	Group	
	Staff	Parents
Second language improves employment prospects	52%	61%
Immersion enriches student experience	40%	58%
Academic outcomes are better for immersion students	19%	33%
Second language study increases likelihood of first-choice post-secondary admission	18%	28%
<i>Base</i>	<i>n=559</i>	<i>n=1,530</i>

Staff Survey Q11 Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

7.4.2 Qualitative Findings Provide Further Insight into Motivations for Enrollment in French Immersion, Including Perception as an Enrichment Program

Qualitative sessions with staff, administrators, students and parents/caregivers provide additional depth into the motivations for enrolling in the French immersion program. One of the findings that consistently was mentioned across all qualitative sessions is the notion that French immersion is indeed

an “elitist” and/or “enrichment program”⁴¹. Participants, especially parents, felt that students in French immersion had better academic performance than their core French counterparts. Participants speculated on the reasons for this. Some thought stronger academic performance was due to just the fact that French was being taught to students and the benefits that accrue from learning a second language among younger children. However, there was significant speculation that the learning environment in which French immersion was taught was more conducive to supporting academic achievement. That is, French immersion class sizes were perceived by parents/caregivers to be smaller, particularly in later grades, thus allowing for more individualized instruction time. In addition, parents/caregivers feel that there are fewer students with learning and/or behavioural challenges in French immersion classes as compared to core French and/or regular English classes. According to participants, French immersion teachers spent less time at class management and more time teaching content.

In fact, in one focus group with parents/caregivers, participants were asked if one of the motivations for wanting their children to be in French immersion was because the behaviour of the students is better, through a show of hands, eight of 14 indicated “yes”.

“Parents/caregivers – if they speak candidly – do not put their children into the program for the sake of learning French. All parents/caregivers view the program as an opportunity for streaming; a chance to avoid behavioural issues that are now relegated to the core program; and to be in smaller classrooms, with younger more motivated teachers. If immersion had been the right thing for our son, we would have put him in the program for those same cynical reasons as well.” *Parent of one child in grade seven core French.*

Another quote comes from teacher, indicating:

“The differences between the French and English classes were very different in terms of behaviour mainly. I’m now at a different school where there’s not such an extreme in difference. I’m in grade one and a lot of parents/caregivers view the French immersion program as a better “program” and many kids who come in to the program and their parents/caregivers aren’t necessarily interested in the French education, they’re choosing the FI simply as an option for better behaviour because they know the differences in the classes.” *French immersion teacher.*

Participating school principal/vice-principals acknowledged that some parents/caregivers do consider French immersion as an enrichment program and that for some parents/caregivers’ social segregation has become a motivator for choosing French immersion.

“The French immersion program is often seen by families as an enrichment program and not an opportunity to learn another language. It can be seen as an elitist program; parents/caregivers and students can have a negative view of English language programs. French is not a part of this community like it is in some Northern or Eastern Ontario communities. Students don’t respect French that much because they only hear it in their classroom. They don’t have much opportunity to hear or speak French outside of their classroom, so they are not applying what they learn in daily situations. This also reinforces the idea that it is more of an enrichment or privilege program rather than the opportunity to learn a language. Some students ask why they are not learning other languages that they hear in their communities such as Arabic or Punjabi.” Vice-principal, *French Immersion Public School*

⁴¹ Both the terms “elitist” and “enrichment” were used by participants regularly throughout the discussions

However, **Table 7-4** shows that only 19% of staff completely agree that academic outcomes are better for French immersion students. Staff agreed with parents/caregivers that the situations in which French immersion is taught are more likely to be better learning environments, in terms of number of students, and behavioural issues. However, staff also felt that cognitive/social development through immersion in a second language is improved as well. Parents/caregivers, too, are likely to feel that cognitive/social development is a benefit of learning a second language. Specifically, some said:

“Benefits of having a second language, research shows it’s beneficial for all areas of learning. My son isn’t in FI because the school discouraged it, but we do have him on Saturdays taking German.” *Focus group with parents/caregivers*

And,

“I think language, like music, is so fundamental in development and sets up those building blocks that more pathways are developed. There are lots of studies that kids who studied a second language are more empathetic and have more of an appreciation to see what is different. I think creating empathy and expanding your world is something that could be really empowering. I went through the FI system and I am biased that it was positive, it created opportunities for me.” *Focus group with parents/caregivers*

Parents/caregivers feel that learning a second language improves employment prospects, and were one reason for enrollment. Some specific comments include:

“Future career prospects was a consideration, she’s been diagnosed ADHD and I feel like having a second language will be a benefit. I didn’t do FI, I did core French into university and I can still read and understand, I work in an environment where we interact with bilingual customers and I find it useful to be able to understand another language.” *Focus group with parents/caregivers*

And,

“I worked for government and its limiting to not have French, I did it on my own, so I wanted my kids to be more integrated. When we lived in Ottawa it was much more integrated.” *Focus group with parents/caregivers*

It is worthwhile to note that students in the focus groups clarified the issue of having French providing better employment prospects. While students tended to agree that a second language, or French specifically, can assist them in finding a job, some were not so sure whether certain fields, such as computer science or technology, would value their French or second language any higher than other factors, or gives them any advantage in these areas.

Some parents/caregivers, and school staff also noted that French is a part of the Canadian context and as such, a part of the national identity. Several students in the focus groups commented that they appreciated learning the French language and culture and that it was helpful to them when they had the opportunity to visit Quebec or travel to France/other countries. Some also commented that their teachers had a very strong passion for the French language and culture and those attitudes improved their multicultural outlook and understanding overall. One student indicated:

“I think also when learning a new language, I speak five languages, I think it helps me change my perspective and how I perceive things and think about the world. I

don't think it's just about job opportunities. I'm thinking globally." *Student focus group participant*

Finally, some students, when discussing why they stay in French immersion in the later grades indicate that one of the main reasons is because "I've come this far, why should I leave now?" Other students indicated that there was not even a discussion about staying in French immersion with parents/caregivers because there was an assumption that the student was to stay in the program to completion. That is, even if there are some difficulties or challenges, or even if the student wants to leave, there appears to be an expectation that the student stays or that it is worthwhile to see the program through until completion.

7.5 Reasons Children are not in French Immersion

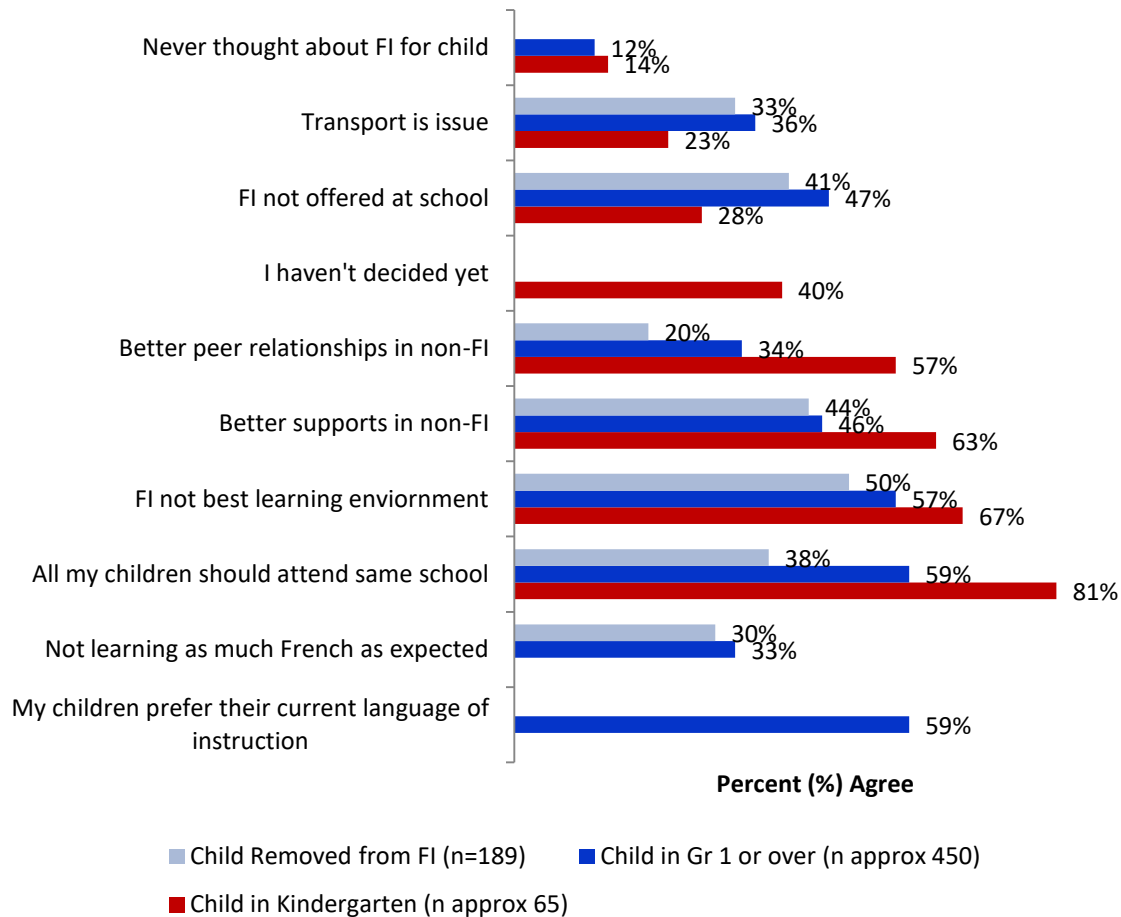
7.5.1 Parents/Caregivers' Reasons for Not Enrolling and/or Withdrawing Children from the French Immersion Program

Parents/caregivers responding to the survey who did not have children in French immersion were asked about their reasons for not having children in the program.

The results show reasons for not enrolling children in French immersion are:

- Those with children in grade one and higher are more likely to agree that transportation (36%) and lack of French immersion at the child's school (47%) are issues compared with parents/caregivers of children in kindergarten who are less likely to agree transportation (23%) and lack of French immersion at the child's school (28%) are issues. The majority of parents/caregivers with children in grade one and over who are not enrolled in French immersion agree that French immersion is not the best learning environment (57%), that all children in the family should attend the same school (59%) and that their children prefer their current language of instruction (59%).
- There are some significant differences between parents/caregivers with children in kindergarten and those with children in grade one and over who are not enrolled in French immersion. Those with children in kindergarten are more likely to agree that there are better peer relationships in non-French immersion classes (57% versus 34%), better supports in non-French immersion classes (63% versus 46%), French immersion is not the best learning environment (67% versus 57%) and that all children in the family should attend the same school (81% versus 59%).

Also, results are included for those whose children are no longer enrolled in French immersion, and as can be seen a majority of those whose children are no longer in French immersion indicate that immersion is not the best learning environment (50%). Others whose child have been removed from French immersion indicate that the program is not offered at their school (41%), and that all children should attend the same school (38%).

Figure 7-6: Reasons for Not Enrolling/Removing Child in French Immersion

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q15 "Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree that each of the following explains why?" (Among those who indicated child is no longer enrolled in French immersion) (Base: those who do not have child(ren) enrolled in French immersion)

Just under two hundred (189) parents/caregivers wrote-in responses to why their child is not enrolled in the French immersion program. The following show the percent of write-in responses:

- 10%: Program is not offered at the school/Changed Schools/Moved to a different program;
- 5%: Missed the deadline, and should have multiple entry-points;
- 4%: There are better supports in English programs for students with special needs;
- 4%: French immersion is considered an elitist program;
- 3%: Concerned about math being taught in French immersion; and
- 3%: Transportation.

Some of these sentiments were reflected in written comments received from feedback after focus groups as well. Specifically:

- Parents/caregivers of children entering high school noted that reasons for their child not continuing with French immersion included interest in learning other subjects and programs offered at non-French immersion schools, proximity to home, and no desire to continue in French immersion program;

- Some parent comments included the fact that their children were really struggling, indicating that the lack of support for their child in the French immersion program further influenced their decision to remove their child. A few parents/caregivers noted that the child was struggling with their English comprehension; while others noted that their child was struggling with learning in French.

Comments around elitism and equity, as a reason for not enrolling, were further expanded-on in focus groups and include the fact that there is a higher proportion of girls in French immersion and that French immersion classes are not as diverse as others (these comments are not reflective of the objectives of the FI program and are not supported by the board leadership). Several participants commented that the lack of support for their child was a factor in their decision to remove their child from French immersion. Across the focus groups, three participants indicated that they removed their child from the French immersion program, noting that the reason for doing so was because their child was struggling with English. One participant reported that the teacher and principal encouraged them to keep their child in French immersion, offering additional support for the child. However, the parent ultimately decided to pull their child from the program, feeling that the child would progress better in an English class. Two participants noted that they had been recommended by the classroom teacher to switch their child to a non-French immersion class, stating that there were no supports available for the child to access. They were told that if their child was to remain in French immersion, they should consider hiring an out-of-school private tutor to help their child⁴². **Section 8.5** further elaborates on the challenges faced by French Immersion students that may require additional support. One of the feedbacks received during this research is provided below, this input was received during an interview with a school board representative which indicated the following about special education:

“It’s something we work against [in response to the initial question which asked if children are encouraged to leave if French Immersion if they have learning difficulties]. French is for everyone and if you need supported learning in French, you should get the same support as in English. What you’ve described [leaving the program when learning difficulties are encountered] might be happening on the ground in schools but we’re actively working against it by having a conversation with the principal and making sure principals know that they shouldn’t be counseled out of French immersion just because they learn differently. We have a system – we have French as a Second Language Advisory Committee and it’s a tribunal – parent advisory to the trustees and they meet four times a year. One of the parents/caregivers has a son in French Immersion [redacted the specific grade and the specific learning challenge], so to me that speaks to the program being inclusive for all. What likely happens on the ground that parents/caregivers are concerned even in kindergarten that their child isn’t doing well or has learning needs and they choose English right away because they think there’s more support or a greater chance of success. Our staffing challenge limits the number of French speaking resource teachers that we have so the support comes in English. So, parents/caregivers make those decisions themselves as much as they’re prodded by school staff. I’m sure it happens but it isn’t our official position.”

Further, the focus groups expanded on issues of equality of access for all students as a reason for not enrolling children in the French immersion program. Some specific comments include:

⁴² It should be noted that such actions are not supported by WRDSB programming guidelines and leadership. Moreover, it should further be noted that all research responses are confidential and not tied-back to an identified individual or institution.

“Age of entry makes it inequitable. We moved here from the US when my son was in grade five and my daughter grade one, we did not have an address until June 16 so our daughter could not be on the list and she was on the waiting list and never got in. My son never got in. I got a number of voicemails from the principal of our school where she kept saying ‘given your situation, I’d like to reconsider sending your daughter out of our system so she can have a better peer group.’ I didn’t understand them at the time. She said ‘you’ll have to provide transportation.’ We had brand new full time jobs, we cannot do that. She was strongly telling me not to have my kids in core French because both my husband and I have PhDs, we work at the university, that’s all she knew about us. She was telling me that my kid would not fit-in in the core French program. It makes me feel really sick and sad. It is not equitable and administrators know that and teachers know that. There are subtle biases throughout the system that make me sick.” *Focus group with parents/caregivers*

And,

“If you’re in French immersion and you don’t have French immersion at your home school and you have to get your kid there, they tell you they don’t want you to drive your kid to school every day because it’s dangerous to have all the traffic around the school and they want you to arrange other ways of having your kids get there, they won’t give you a bus. So I sent my daughter on the city school bus. She started in grade seven on the city bus, but it was two buses, she had to transfer. And then I had to buy her a bus pass of \$85 per month so there was an extra cost. So if you can’t afford to send your kid to French immersion and it’s not your home school you’re out of luck.” *Focus group with parents/caregivers*

And,

“I noticed that you had to know that you wanted to be in French immersion. If you arrive when your child is 3 years old, but I know parents who didn’t really know what it was about and knowing you may want it, it may limit people.” *Focus group with parents/caregivers*

And,

“I have a daughter with a significant disability, French immersion isn’t even an option for her, it’s not on the table. It’s an equity piece from a different perspective that we have to acknowledge because her rights are protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code. There are other programs in the board that are centralized that people are driving to. Gifted program, special education programming even in the high school system that is becoming more and more centralized. The access issues isn’t with French immersion, there’s a massive access issue everywhere anytime we’re offering programming that’s different from the mainstream.” *Focus group with parents/caregivers*

And,

“My daughter doesn’t use typical verbal language, they probably would have thought I was losing my mind if I did try to register her. But she uses symbolic language to communicate, learning another language...that’s what she does. Those symbols transfer to English, German, Latin, it doesn’t matter, it’s important for that access to be available.” *Focus group with parents/caregivers*

And,

“Some kids do arrive here in grade one, my kid started in JK but was not preselected for French immersion and now in grade one he’s doing really well in core French. And his French teacher said he would have done really well in French. In SK they said it wasn’t a good fit, the teachers and principals said because of his learning style he would struggle. But we can’t put him in it now, it’s too late. Another reason is they would have not been able to provide him the supports he needed to begin with (special needs support).” *Focus group with parents/caregivers*

And,

“In some schools there’s a lottery, you have to get on at 8:01 and yet some people don’t get in. You have to get in grade one.” *Focus group with parents/caregivers*

And,

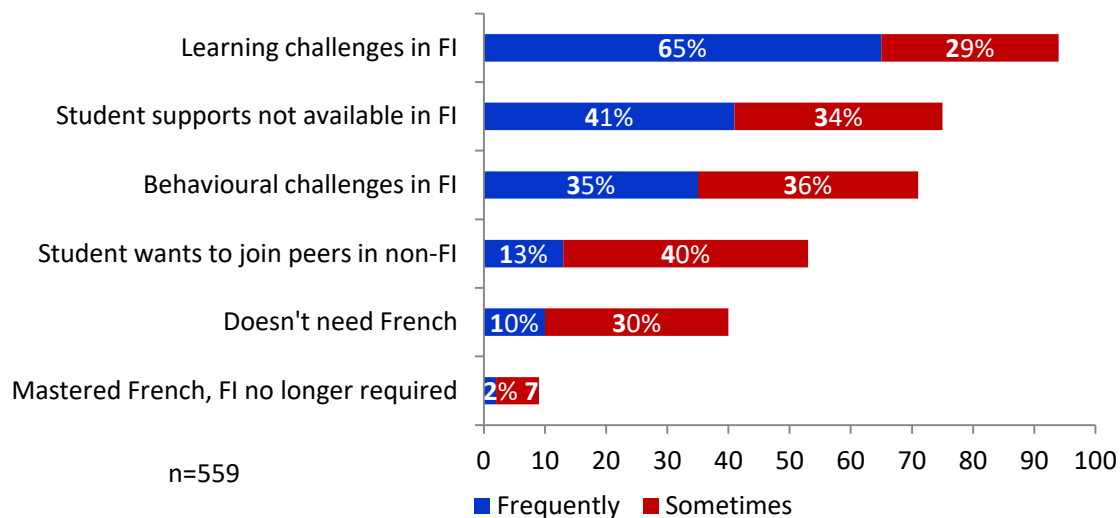
“We moved here in 2005. We were never told there is a FI program when we enrolled our kids. And once we missed it, we missed it. I can guess that my kids would have been on a waitlist so they didn’t bother telling me. I don’t know if my newcomer status had anything to do with it.” *Focus group with parents/caregivers*

Students at the high school level in the focus groups generally did not feel at that time that equity, and/or learning issues were significant factors for them. They did indicate, however, that there were more struggles with learning in the past. Some French immersion focus group students affirmed that they had experienced poor French teachers at some point during their education. They acknowledged that their performance in French and in some cases other subjects such as math and English grammar suffered as a result of the quality of teaching they had received in a particular grade. A few students who had dropped out of French immersion because they were struggling in retrospect wondered if they had a different teacher or be given more support when struggling that they may have continued with the program.

These results suggest the fact that students, parents and teachers may be reacting to beliefs or concerns that are not a part of the board’s vision for French immersion in WRDSB. **Section 6.4.1.3** provided an example of how HWDSB communicates equity of access issues for their French immersion program.

7.5.2 Reasons Students are Not in French Immersion: Staff

Staff were asked about factors that influence decisions regarding a student transferring out of a French immersion program. As shown in **Figure 7-7** a fairly strong majority of staff (65%) felt that students transfer out frequently because of learning challenges in French immersion, and 29% felt this sometimes occurs. Four in ten (41%) indicate that it is a frequent occurrence for student supports not to be available in French immersion, and 35% say behavioural challenges frequently influence a transfer out of French immersion. It should be noted that there are little differences by opinion based on whether a teacher teaches core, extended or immersion, or teaches in English, French or both languages.

Figure 7-7: Factors Influencing Transfer Out of French Immersion Programming among Staff

Staff Survey Q20 How often do you feel the following factors influence decisions regarding a student transferring out of a French immersion program?

There does appear to be some variation by the grade taught. Specifically, those teaching lower grades one to five are more likely to say that transfers out frequently/sometimes occur because of student challenges in the classroom (74% kindergarten, 72% grades one to five, 61% grades six to 12); supports are not available in immersion (53% kindergarten, 49% grades one to five and 37% grades six to 12); and student exhibits behavioural challenges in immersion (53% kindergarten, 40% grades one to five, 31% grades six to 12). It would appear that focusing efforts on supporting lower grades are needed more than those teaching older grades.

Principals and vice-principals participating in the qualitative research acknowledged that the reason children drop out of French immersion prior to grade five is usually because they are struggling in the program. While many principals and vice-principals indicated that children in French immersion who have special needs or behavioural challenges are no longer encouraged switching to the English stream, parents/caregivers say they often decide to switch their child believing that their child will have better access to English supports. A few principals and vice-principals acknowledged that while they do offer supports for children in French immersion who have special needs the resource person providing the support only speaks English.

Also, participating principals and vice-principals acknowledged that many students entering high school must choose between a school with a French immersion program and schools with other programs such as arts, or another specific stream of education/programming. This was also indicated by parents/caregivers in **Section 7.5.1**, where 10% wrote-in that there was misalignment in schools and the program their child wanted to pursue. In addition, because French immersion is only offered in a few high schools, students sometimes prefer to not to travel to the French immersion school but to attend high school closer to home.

Additionally, during a focus group with parents several participants commented that the lack of support for their child was a factor in their decision to remove their child from French immersion. Three participants indicated that they removed their child from the French immersion program, noting that the reason for doing so was because their child was struggling with English. While one participant reported that the teacher and principal encourage them to keep their child in French immersion,

offering additional support for the child. However, the parent ultimately decided to pull their child from the program, feeling that the child would progress better in an English class. Two participants noted that they had been recommended by the classroom teacher to switch their child to a non-French immersion class, stating that there were no supports available for the child to access. They were told that if their child was to remain in French immersion, they should consider hiring an out-of-school private tutor to help their child.

The comments below provide further detail from parents, principals and vice principals, regarding their views and experiences with French immersion:

"Absolutely a concern and consideration. Hitting Gr 3 and up, there are students who do withdraw for a variety of factors. It was not unheard of for schools to "suggest" to parents that FI is not right for the student because of academic or behavioural issues... contributes to elitism perception. Sometimes families move and there is no transportation provided, so they drop-out because of location and lack of bussing. If you want to get child away from some students in FI, it may require a student to drop-out, as there is usually only one FI class. The opposite is also true – if a student is doing somewhat poorly, the decision is to keep the student in FI so that they can stay with their peers." *KII_with vice principal*

"They need the equivalent of 1.5 staff to cover the French language classes so that means finding someone who can also teach subjects in English. It is difficult to find staff that can teach French well, especially applied French, and are good at teaching other subjects in English. Those who are excellent at a particular subject in English but could teach high school core French are often reluctant to do so; preferring to stay in their area of expertise." *KII_with principal*

"A lot of the FI kids will stay together over and over, there's no mixing of students. To add to that, I got a note from the teacher 3 weeks ago that my daughter was at a level 5 pronunciation and to graduate from grade two to three is a level 10. But the blame was put on me, that I didn't do enough of the readings with her. It was quite a nasty letter. They also did a French speaking play for the parents two weeks ago and it was noticed by many parents that the kids that didn't have the best pronunciation weren't picked to be in the play, they were in the back without a verbal part. One of which was my daughter. I've experienced both bullying and not meeting the teacher's standards and that segregation." *Focus Group with parents*

SECTION 8: FRENCH IMMERSION TEACHERS

8.1 Key Findings Discussed in the Section

There is a shortage of qualified French immersion teachers that is province-wide. It has been created by a confluence of many disparate factors, like changes to the length of time required to educate French teachers, the growing popularity of French immersion programs province-wide and union hiring regulations. The literature itself as well as reviews of other boards' French immersion programs show that the French teacher shortage is cited as one of the main reasons why boards are having to find ways to reduce enrollment in them.

It is equally important to note that the shortage is not just one of quantity, but of quality. Specifically, the minimum requirement for French immersion teaching is an FSL-1 certificate (French as a Second Language - Part 1), which many participants indicate is not qualified enough to teach French immersion. It was common to hear from principals and vice-principals that some teachers obtain this certification so that they have an easier time obtaining full-time employment at a board, as opposed to wanting to teach French (whether core, extended or French immersion). Some parents/caregivers knew these dynamics and expressed them in the qualitative interviews. In fact, only 75% of WRDSB's French immersion teachers describe themselves as fully fluent in French.

A review of statistics, qualitative interviews and quantitative survey results show that while WRDSB does not have a French immersion teaching crisis at present, it is quite apparent that gaps are starting to show:

- Parents/caregivers and students are certainly noticing the quality issues among French immersion and French language teachers overall. For example, 50% of parents/caregivers say one reason they do not favour French immersion programming is because of teacher quality. Among staff, especially principals and vice-principals, and as shown in a review of other literature, there is recognition that the FSL-1 qualification is not sufficient to teach French immersion classes;
- It is difficult to find French supply teachers that match the quality of the regular teacher, and overall staffing of French immersion classes remains a challenge for principals and vice-principals;
- The WRDSB human resources department describes hiring French teachers, especially once the school year has started, as problematic ([Inquiry & WRDSB, 2019](#)); and
- The research for this review in WRDSB as well as research in other boards shows, qualitatively, that there are issues with teaching math and science in French.

However, despite these challenges, the findings also indicate WRDSB appears to be managing French teaching resources somewhat adequately. Specifically:

- At the elementary level, WRDSB does have French teachers in the board, in relation to the full-time equivalency hours needed and staff available for them. It should be noted, however, that this does not speak to the quality of the teachers, but the quantity of those teachers with the minimum qualification to teach French;
- Keeping qualified teachers in positions is not described as a significant issue among staff who participated in interviews. Some are implementing school policies that attempt to keep French teachers in positions, or within the school, as long as possible; and
- At the start of the 2019/20 school year, the board was able to successfully fully staff its French immersion needs ([Inquiry & WRDSB, 2019](#)).

The need for French teachers with special education qualifications, and/or more support for students in the French language program is significant. As mentioned in **Section 7.5.2** 65% of teachers say it is frequent that students are transferred out of French immersion because of learning challenges, and that the average number of special education students is higher among teachers who teach in English (4.52 per class) compared to French immersion teachers (3.00), as mentioned in **Section 5.8.2**. The WRDSB reports that 254 out of 513 (or about 50%) of its elementary French qualified teachers are also qualified for special education. Staff are working hard to try to accommodate everyone in French immersion, and they do admit – at the least – to there being a perception of French immersion as an enrichment program. All the three other boards that were reviewed provide the same level of special education service for students in French immersion as they do with English students. However, they indicate that special education is provided in English, if a French special education resource is not available. Some boards have implemented training in math and others have parent advisory committees that specifically include parents/caregivers with special needs children. Some say fostering special education teacher interaction (or encouraging teachers to interact to assist with the STEM subjects) is one argument for dual track schools. Also, both HWDSB and HDSB describe directly in their French language procedures and policies the type of support that will be available for French immersion students.

Finally, the literature provides some suggestions about potential in-class implementation of educational strategies for students requiring special education. It is possible that the WRDSB could survey French immersion teachers to determine which strategies are needed and create board-specific training for those issues. Funding may be able to be procured from Base Amount for Collaboration and Integration within the Special Education Grant, and could be implemented in classrooms using educational assistants.

8.2 FSL Teacher Shortages Province Wide

One of the clearest, but perhaps most already-suspected findings of this review, is that a significant shortage of qualified – and quality – French language teachers impacts the implementation of French immersion programs throughout the province, WRDSB and the boards examined in this study. On a very broad level, with a severe shortage of French language teachers, boards are having to consider reducing uptake of their programs by: 1) Placing caps on French immersion enrollment in grade one ([Brown, Kim: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017](#)) ([IPSOS and HDSB: Consultation with Parents, March 2016](#)); 2) Shifting programming to either single or dual track schools ([HDSB: Program Viability Summary and Recommendations, May 2016](#)); 3) Shifting program intensity and entry point ([HDSB: Program Viability Summary and Recommendations, May 2016](#)); and 4) Shifting boundaries ([HDSB: Program Viability Summary and Recommendations, May 2016](#)).

In our interview with HWDSB, for example, the shortage of quality French language teachers in the board was directly cited as one of the reasons the board has moved towards a centralized system of registration for French immersion (i.e. applicants register into a central system on the board's website, and are then assigned schools). According to the HWDSB website, the centralized grade one system of registration for French immersion helps “for program placement of students, monitoring of accommodations, balance of enrolment, and long-term stability of the French Immersion program.” The website also indicates “this allows HWDSB to plan accommodation and staffing needs.” ([HWDSB: French as a Second Language](#))

The literature has significant mention of shortages throughout the entire Ontario French language system. Some mentions include WRDSB's own French immersion review, which states “the WRDSB is experiencing difficulties in retaining qualified French educators” ([WRDSB: French Immersion Review Committee, 2018](#)). HDSB indicates that the “pool of candidates is low... exacerbated by the impact of transition from one to two years teacher training in Ontario.” ([HDSB: Program Viability, Agenda](#)). PDSB in its review focused broadly and indicated that the shortage is Canada-wide, that rural areas are having

more difficulty and that Peel suffers from a “lack of French qualified occasional teachers... some administrators have reported having classes going for extended periods of time without a qualified French teacher.” ([Brown and Bennett: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017](#)). While individual boards and their French immersion reviews show a lack of available teachers, the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) conducts an “Transition to Teaching” survey every year, and provides specific analysis of employment outcomes and dynamics for teachers who are FSL qualified, and who are qualified for full French language teaching ([OCT: Transition to Teaching, 2018](#)). Some specific points and quotes from the 2018 study include the following:

- “For graduates of Ontario’s French-language teacher education programs, as well as graduates of English-language programs with French as a second language (FSL) qualifications, the surplus [is] clearly over and a new teacher shortage era appeared to be under way”;
- Only 7% of English-language graduates receive full-time employment in their first year, compared to 31% of FSL teachers;
- After five years, 30% of non-FSL teachers in English markets have permanent positions, compared to 83% of FSL teachers;
- First-year unemployment rates of new FSL teachers fell to 0.4% in 2018, compared to 4% in 2017; and
- “FSL-qualified teachers in English district school boards present career patterns that one expects in a labour market experiencing staffing shortages. The majority of these new teachers quickly progress from precarious to permanent appointments. English-language board FSL teachers almost reach this threshold [full-employment] by year five. Even ten years into their careers in 2018, mid-career English-language non-FSL teachers who entered the profession in the height of the teacher surplus years are still lagging behind their French-language colleagues on the road to secure permanent employment.”

French teacher shortages are further compounded by a number of factors identified in the PDSB’s French Immersion review ([Brown and Bennett: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017](#)):

- In 2015 there was a move to two-year faculty of education programs, so there is a bit of a lag in graduates, such that in 2015-16 only three faculties had graduates. Also, applications to faculties of education dropped by 54%; and
- Regulation 274 requires job postings must be out for longer, that those within the board with the most seniority must be considered first, such that this may constrain applicants to be considered for positions, thus possibly impacting quality of teachers selected.

The research did uncover a few strategies for boards to help recruit new French teachers to them. They include the fact that some school boards are engaging in recruiting in provinces outside of Ontario, particularly the Atlantic provinces, and even overseas. Some of the WRDSB interviews for this study indicate recruitment at local universities. It should be noted, however, that some participants in the qualitative interviews indicated that quality may be an issue among teachers that do not understand the Ontario curriculum very well.

8.3 Opinion of Teacher Quality

8.3.1 Opinion of FSL-1 Qualifications

Along with having to reduce uptake in French immersion programs, many French language reviews in similar boards, and participants across all areas of the research conducted in WRDSB (i.e. parents/caregivers, students, staff) indicate that teacher quality is a significant issue that compounds the issue of a general shortage of teachers able to teach FSL. It was common to hear in interviews

among WRDSB staff that some teaching applicants obtain the lowest form of FSL certification (FSL-1) because they know it will lead to better employment outcomes, as opposed to obtaining the certificate because of a passion for French, and/or their actual French language ability. Staff report that some of these teachers often try to leave teaching French as soon as possible after they are hired. Some other boards conduct interviews in French in order to assess French language proficiency and passion among applicants.

Some of the qualitative interviews with WRDSB educators indicated that the minimum requirement to teach French immersion in the elementary grades in Ontario is FSL Part 1 training⁴³. WRDSB educators mentioned that the quality among those minimally qualified to teach FSL is a fairly significant issue for them when hiring. Some participants indicated that teachers with just the minimum qualification in FSL are not only lacking in French language skill, they are lacking in enthusiasm for the program.

Other boards under review for this evaluation indicated that French language teacher quality has some fairly significant impacts on programming. In 2017 HCDSB actually suggested entirely eliminating its French immersion program in large part because they felt it could not be sustainable over the long term. The French language review indicated “although theoretically, FSL Part 1 is the *minimum* [sic] requirement to qualify as a teacher for FSL programs, Immersion and Extended call for a particular level of fluency and proficiency... it has become increasingly challenging to staff our programs... this compromises the quality of the programming, and in extreme cases, French minutes, as per the Ministry definition.” ([HCDSB: Regular Board Meeting, Item 9.1, 2016](#)). HDSB summarized its findings of research and literature on the issue of structure of French immersion programming by saying “The most important factor in a student’s development in French language is the instructional program i.e.: the teacher factor. This far outweighs: 1) Entry Point; 2) Intensity; 3) Number of hours of French instruction; and 4) School configuration (single versus dual track”); ([HDSB: Program Viability Summary and Recommendations, May 2016](#)).

PDSB’s review implies that minimum qualifications (i.e. FSL Part 1) are not sufficient for teaching elementary French immersion by quoting an Ottawa-Carleton District School Board study that indicated parents/caregivers “raised concerns that there was a ‘lack of fluently bilingual teachers... that often results in French not being taught or spoken consistently in the classroom’... Although there are minimum requirements for FSL teachers, it does not seem that the level of proficiency is consistent among them” ([Brown and Bennett: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017](#)).

In our interview with one of the three school boards in the study, it was indicated that “Complaints I hear from our Parent Advisory Group and parents/caregivers in general is the lack of qualified staff who speak French and have a strong and accurate grasp of French. There are grammar errors, etc., at times. This is driven by the fact that it’s very hard to find French first language or French as a second language teachers with 1st language skill sets. That’s probably our biggest challenge right now; the staffing.”

8.3.2 Opinions of Teacher Quality among Staff, Parents/Caregivers and Students

The qualitative research specifically among WRDSB parents/caregivers, students and staff also suggest they think there are a fair degree of quality issues with French immersion and French language programming within the system. The parent/caregiver focus groups echo many of the comments observed about the instability of French immersion teachers, and perceptions of a lack of training. The focus groups show that parents/caregivers are quite aware that there is a severe shortage of French teachers, and they feel that this is causing the WRDSB to make some compromises in hiring and retaining teachers.

⁴³ This is also confirmed by (Brown, Kim: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017) in the Peel Region Elementary French Immersion Program Review

Parents/caregivers are also seeing that there is trouble keeping French teachers in the school system overall. Parents/caregivers, as well as school principals and vice-principals notice that among some French immersion teachers there is generally a trade-off between proficiency in French and another aspect of teaching. Examples given include observations that a French teacher may be exceptionally proficient in French, but may lack good classroom management skills and/or subject knowledge, and vice versa. This was particularly noticed around teaching math and other technical subjects in French. Some parents/caregivers think that teachers are not well-certified (i.e. that the minimum required training to teach French immersion is not sufficient for the task) and that parents/caregivers are very aware that some French teachers use their French training to secure employment, as otherwise they may not have jobs.

Principals and vice-principals echo the views of parents. Some were concerned that they were hiring teachers that did not have strong pedagogical skills in order to fill positions. Some principals and vice-principal indicate that they have to put non-qualified or very minimally qualified teachers in classes as they search for ones that are more fluent in French. There is an observation among some staff that special education training and training in the STEM subjects is lacking among French Immersion teachers. The following paragraph regarding French Immersion comes from a 2018 report from Toronto District School Board:

“Despite the relatively high results of the French Immersion students in mathematics, French immersion students and parents found learning math and other STEM classes solely in French difficult because of the large amount of specialized vocabulary. Some teachers echoed this sentiment and felt that teaching math in French was particularly challenging. Some students had difficulty with subjects such as math when they had to switch to English after being taught in French when they were younger. Some parents also noted delays in their child’s English understanding of math and subsequently difficulty learning mathematics.” (Sinay et al, TDSB, 2018)

There is a movement among principals and vice-principals towards ensuring those who are hired to teach French remain French teachers over the long-term, for example by instituting a policy that says if there is a French-qualified teacher in a school, an external posting cannot occur for any French positions in the school. Some indicate that this causes some resentment among such teachers who feel that they are stuck teaching French when they do not want to. Another way of keeping teachers who are well-qualified to teach French and enjoy engaging in the culture is to have them interact with higher grades, where the teacher has more fluid interactions with students.

Overall, students seem to have positive opinions of their teachers and experience in the French immersion program. There were certainly some students who reported that there is inconsistent quality among their French immersion teachers throughout the time in the program, both in terms of French skill and enthusiasm displayed towards students and a passion for teaching and educating. Some feel that teachers who do not understand the French culture (i.e. those who are minimally qualified, or just qualify in teacher’s college) cannot impart the same educational experience and foundation of French conversation that either a true Francophone or someone who is passionate about French can. Similarly, there were a few comments made about teaching science and math in English. As previously mentioned, a few students who had dropped out of French immersion because they were struggling in retrospect wondered if they had a different teacher or be given more support when struggling that they may have continued with the program.

However, even though some students indicate that there may be inconsistent quality among teachers, many overall appear to have a generally positive outlook and/or regard for their teachers and time in the program. Many say that when they needed help, especially in the higher grades, teachers were there to help them, and that teachers who can engage culturally and enthusiastically in French have

been very positive experiences for students. Also, some principals and vice-principals say that the issues with French teachers only apply to a small minority of teachers, such that it is the exception rather than the rule.

Finally, qualitatively, the somewhat differing levels of French language proficiency among French teachers are seen as a reason for supporting dual track schools among parents and principals and vice-principals. If French immersion teachers are placed in schools without French immersion, then they feel it will be more difficult for the more experienced/fluent immersion teachers to interact and work with teachers who do not have the same degree of fluency and may only be teaching core French. Some principals and vice-principals indicated that they tried to encourage this type of interaction in order to support both types of programs in their schools.

8.4 Quantitative Understanding of Teaching Resources for French Immersion in WRDSB

The previous sections discussed teacher shortages and opinions of quality as they relate to the overall experience of French immersion programming for students and specifically, how teacher shortages have the potential to impact French immersion programming. The quantitative survey implemented by Malatest, particularly among staff, assessed many of the dynamics discussed above.

Specifically, teachers were asked about their fluency level in French. **Table 8-1** shows that 82% of those who teach French consider themselves fully fluent in French, while 14% consider themselves somewhat fluent. Of those who teach both English and French, 70% consider themselves fully fluent, while 21% consider themselves somewhat fluent in French. What is perhaps interesting is that fact that 30% of those who only teach English consider themselves somewhat fluent in French.

The table also shows the French proficiency of teachers based on the level of French taught. In total, 71% of core French teachers consider themselves fully fluent in French and 75% who teach French immersion consider themselves fully fluent in French.

Table 8-1: French Fluency of WRDSB Teachers

Percent (%) Fluent in French	Language of Instruction			Type of French Taught		
	English Only	French Only	Both	Core	Extended	Immersion
Fully fluent	2	82	70	71	82	75
Somewhat fluent	30	14	21	22	12	17
Other fluency	4	1	3	2	-	2
Not very fluent	39	-	1	1	-	-
Not fluent at all	21	-		-	-	-
<i>Base Size</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>172</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>17*</i>	<i>166</i>

Staff Survey Q26 How would you describe your level of fluency in French?

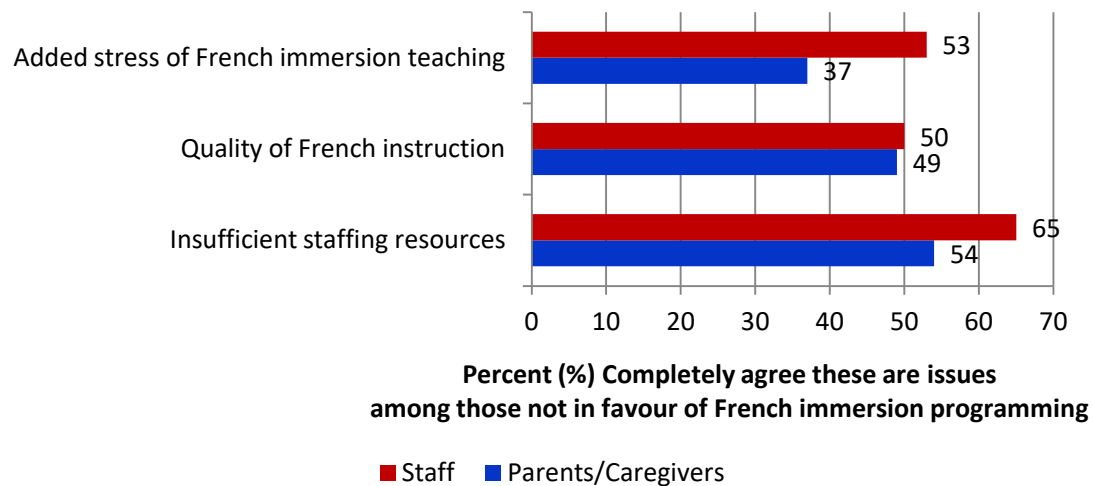
*Note: Percentages should be interpreted with caution given the small base size of 17 individuals on which it is based.

A number of specific questions were only asked of principals and vice-principals about some of the staffing issues faced by schools in the WRDSB. It should be noted that only 22 respondents answered the questions, and as such, there is not a large enough base on which to provide valid statistics. As such, the results are presented in generalities below to give insight into how the questions were answered:

- A fair majority of respondents indicated that it is extremely difficult for them to find qualified substitute teachers who are fully fluent in French to take the place of a fully fluent full-time teacher;
- Also, a fair majority say that an English-only teacher substituting for a French language teacher happens all the time;

- To the above two points, teachers on the survey who indicated they taught English only and were occasional educators, were asked if and how often they may have to teach French. A majority of occasional teachers who only speak English say they have taught in a French immersion classroom. However, response tends to be fairly dispersed in regard to how often this has occurred throughout the school year from some saying all the time to an equal amount saying it has not happened this year. Note that the base size of occasional teacher who only teach English is 24, and the base size of those in this group who have taught students in a French immersion class this year is 16. As such, caution should be used when interpreting these findings because of low base sizes given the potential for a sample bias among participants;
- When a French teacher leaves a position, a majority of principals and vice-principals indicate that it is only sometimes that the teacher leaves for an English assignment. Few indicate that French teachers frequently leave for English programs. It seems that teachers leaving French positions tend to go to French programs in other schools, and most say that it is very rare that French teachers leave the WRDSB for a Francophone school;
- Most principals and vice-principals completely or somewhat agree that it is difficult to find teachers who are fully fluent in French;
- However, a slightly lesser amount feel that it is difficult to find fluent French teachers qualified to teach other subjects;
- Reflecting the shortage of teachers, virtually all principals and vice-principals feel that they are in competition with other boards for hiring French teachers; and
- Principals and vice-principals are split on whether the type of contract (occasional/part-time vs. full-time) affects whether French teachers will work in the WRDSB.

Finally, there were some questions asked of both parents/caregivers and all staff about their views of French immersion instruction. **Figure 8-1** below shows that a majority of parents/caregivers and staff show a fair degree of concern about the quality and availability of French immersion teaching resources available in WRDSB. Note, Figure 8-1 is based on a sample of parents/caregivers (206) and staff (117) who are against French Immersion programming.

Figure 8-1: Parent/Caregiver & Staff Against FI - Concerns over FI Teaching Resources

Based on those who are against French immersion programming. Selected items from Parent/Caregiver Q12. Base=206; Educator Q13. Base=117

8.5 Special Education Training

8.5.1 Indications of the Need for More Special Education Training in this Review

There are numerous indicators from the research conducted with all stakeholder groups that indirectly indicate that special education training among teachers is one of the most important factors facing WRDSB in regard to its French immersion programming. Some of the previous statistics discussed include:

- **Figure 7-7 in Section 7.5.2** indicates that 65% of teachers say that it is frequent that students are transferred out of French immersion because there are learning challenges in French immersion. The same table shows that 41% of teachers say that it is frequent that student supports are not available in French immersion;
- **Table 5-12 in Section 5.8.2** shows that according to the survey of teachers, those who teach English only have an average of 4.52 special needs students in their classes, compared to 3.00 among those who teach French immersion. Similarly, those who teach English only have an average of 4.35 students in their classes with learning disabilities, compared to only 2.60 among those who teach French immersion. Note, these numbers are self-reported numbers by survey participants and do not represent statistical counts of all classes in the WRDSB;
- **Section 7.5.1** indicated qualitatively that one of the main issues among parents/caregivers in the community is the sense that the French immersion program is elitist and an enrichment program; and
- **Section 5.7** showed data directly from the WRDSB indicating EQAO scores that are higher on many measures for those in grade three and grade six French immersion compared to their English counterparts.

Also, as quoted from the “WRDSB French Immersion Review Committee Report”

“As schools are struggling to find qualified French teachers, the system is challenged to find teachers with special education qualifications that are also qualified in

French. While classroom accommodations still occur to support students with special education needs, access to special education expertise in French beyond the classroom can be a challenge.” ([WRDSB: French Immersion Review Committee, 2018](#)).

8.5.2 Current Availability of Special Education Teachers Who Speak French

WRDSB provided statistics to Malatest that indicate 254 out of 513 elementary teachers who speak French within the board have special education qualifications, while 31 out of 40 secondary teachers who speak French have special education qualifications (WRDSB, H. I. (2019, December)). This does not necessarily indicate the amount of French immersion teachers with special education qualifications, as some French teachers may be in the core and extended programs as well.

8.5.3 Other Boards’ Implementation of Special Education within French Immersion

According to the HWDSB website and as indicated in **Section 6.4.1.3**, HWDSB’s website indicates the following for support services in French immersion:

Enrichment and remedial assistance may be provided in English or in French by:

- A classroom teacher;
- An English-speaking Learning Resource Teacher; and
- A bilingual Learning Resource Teacher (where available).

Students whose needs require special assistance beyond the Learning Resource Teacher have access to: The special education services of the school, as determined by the school. Psychological services, provided by the Department of Psychological Services. Special education programs, recommended by IPRC. If the recommendation is for a self-contained class (e.g., gifted), then this class is offered in English only. ([HWDSB: FI in HWDSB](#))

It should be noted that not only does this appear on HWDSB’s website, but it also appears in their “French Immersion Procedures” and is the only comparator board reviewed of the three under specific study that actually lists the supports available in its procedure and policy document. ([HWDSB: Procedure for Policy No. 6.8](#)) (See Section 8.0).

In HDSB, they acknowledge that there is some truth to the inequity of learning opportunities for students in the English stream. However, they do not exclude students from French immersion due to behavioural or learning issues; they provide supports equally to all students who need them. According to the interview:

“FI students receive the same supports as our English track students, access to a special education teacher (albeit that support might be in English if the SERT (*Special Education Resource Teacher*) is not French speaking) and access to other supports like EA (*Educational Assistant*) support if warranted or professional services support like CYC (Child and Youth Care), Psychologist or Social Worker. No additional supports are provided for FI students vs. their English program peers.”

Also mentioned by HDSB in regard to special education and the broader concept of support is the fact that they have had to reduce their central staffing a bit. Specifically, in the past there were two or three central staffs, or instructional program leaders, who had responsibilities for French programming including FI. With recent reductions, HDSB eliminated subject-specific central staff so French programs and French teachers will get support, from a curriculum perspective or from a teaching, learning, and assessment perspective just like any other teacher. On the one hand, this may actually increase immersion teachers’ collaboration with proficient subject matter experts (e.g. math and science), thus possibly addressing some gaps in knowledge. However, as a WRDSB interview indicated, sometimes

French teachers need to spend an inordinate amount of time translating materials back into French, when they come from a central source.

Perhaps more interesting from HDSB is the impact of implementing grade two entry on special education. Given that grade two entry comes with 100% French instruction, staff needed to be better versed in math education and special education. According to a November 2019 implementation report from HDSB for grade two French immersion:

Most French immersion teachers are new to teaching math in French; at the beginning of implementation, only 25% of the staff felt comfortable or very comfortable teaching math; however, by the end of the year and after completing development, 81.8% of staff reported feeling comfortable or very comfortable teaching math. ([HDSB Minutes, December 2019](#))

Moreover, in relation to special education for the grade two entry point, the report on implementation said “French immersion teachers have identified an area of continued growth is supporting students with special needs in the grade two program.” ([HDSB Minutes, December 2019](#))

Finally, in HDSB, their French language policy document indicates “remediation in the French language part of the Halton Immersion programs will be offered within the existing resources allocated to the school.” ([HDSB: Policy Statement French as a Second Language](#))

In TVDSB, as mentioned, French immersion students receive the same supports as the English track students in regard to access to special education teachers, even if that support might be in English if the SERT is not French speaking, and access to other supports like EA support if warranted or professional services support like CYC, a psychologist or Social Worker. No additional supports are provided for FI students compared to their English program peers.

Finally, in the qualitative interviews principals and vice-principals in WRDSB indicated opinions about special education and support in the French immersion program. The overall theme is that they, and teachers, are attempting to do their best to dispel what is described as a preconception about French immersion programs being enrichment programs and not being classes that can properly handle students with special needs. They report that support is available in English, but that same support – whether it be specific to the student, or whether it be in a specific subject like math and science – cannot always be offered in French. Some specific comments include:

“I think historically those kids would have come out [of French immersion]. So it’s more of a “this is the way it’s always been”. We can put kids in FI on an IEP (Individual Education Planning) and we can support them....I think it depends on the situation. There’s a certain point that a special education teacher or Educational Assistant would have to be fluent in French to provide accommodations, and we don’t have the staff for that. But if you have single track schools you may have (special ed.) teachers who would go into the school with French.”

And,

“If a student in FI needs special education support – it used to be that parents viewed French immersion as an enrichment program – wrongly so – so we’d have a culture where people thought that no one in FI needs Spec Ed support. After all, it’s an enrichment program – which it’s not. Nowadays the message from the board is that students in French immersion can get special education the same as anyone else. Unfortunately, that would be in English because we aren’t likely to have a special education teacher who speaks French.”

And,

“... [It is] hard to say if they struggle more in the French immersion class than the other students because they’re all quite different – all the students who need special education support are different from one another. However, I can imagine that if I’m struggling in class and on top of that I need to use this language that I don’t really understand, that would be detrimental to me. But parents – even this week it happened a couple times – where parents are resistant to the idea of moving their kids to the English program even though they’re having struggles with French immersion because they figure that eventually they’ll grow out of it.”

And,

“We have changed our policy with respect to supports for students; we now have a different understanding of human rights and the various supports we provide to students. For example, previously we would insist that all instruction be in French but now if a French immersion student is struggling we can accommodate them by instructing in English when needed. There is still a heavier need on the English side...We do have a challenge with supporting students in French immersion, especially with math. Research shows that students often resort to their mother tongue when struggling with a concept. It is a bit contradictory to have to teach math in French when it is evaluated in English...Many French teachers have to spend considerable time sourcing suitable resources in French. There is not always the equivalent resource in French as can be found in English.”

And,

“Supports for students who are struggling in French immersion, we have Special Ed. teachers, but most of these teachers are working with kids in the regular core French. Far fewer kids in French immersion are on an IEP. Most of the French immersion kids, if they’re struggling, this is picked up by their classroom teacher. By the time students get to our school and are in French immersion, if they’re struggling academically, there’s a perception that they should switch into the core stream. By the time they get to this age in the program there are very few kids who are not working at this level. In terms of who holds the perception that they should switch to the core stream, it starts with parents/guardians who notice that their child is struggling, in math for example, so it’s harder to learn math in French. A lot of these parents don’t have enough understanding of math themselves to help their child. Teachers, too, would say to a parent or to colleagues, if a kid is struggling in French immersion they should probably switch to the other stream – and we’re trying to change this perception but it’s out there. And this has an impact on the other stream because that’s why the core stream collects kids with an IEP, kids working at another grade level, kids with various special education needs.”

8.5.4 Suggestions from Literature on Implementing Special Education in French Immersion Classes

The Ontario government has published “Including Students with Special Education Needs in French as Second Language Programs”. Within the guide numerous in-class suggestions are provided to help students with special education needs. A partial list of research-based ideas includes:

- Providing a supportive environment to students by reminding students of the time to complete assignments, minimizing distractions and providing positive reinforcement;

- Engaging in academic coaching including the use of positive questioning and active listening;
- Improved use of technology for special education students;
- Promoting peer tutoring in-class;
- Development of phonological and metacognitive awareness;
- Explicitly teaching reading strategies;
- Assisting the development and application of reading skills;
- Engaging in team teaching;
- Provision of social support; and
- Incorporating assistive technologies.

Also of importance in the report, it recommends the concentration of special education activities and/or identification should occur in the early grades. It states “early identification enhances the effectiveness of remedial instruction for at-risk students.”

The provincial report also indicates that professional development opportunities are critical for classroom teachers to

enhance the awareness of resource teachers and FSL teachers of the practical applications of research findings related to supporting all students in FSL programs. Moreover, classroom FSL teachers benefit from support and professional development focused on meeting the diverse needs of their students and providing appropriate accommodations for students with special needs. (Ministry of Education, Ontario, 2015)

The issue for WRDSB is in recruiting, training, implementing and funding initiatives that can create these special education opportunities within the classroom. The Report from the Ontario Government on Special Education does not directly provide implementation suggestions. Similar sources, including interviews with similar boards to WRDSB throughout Ontario, also do not provide implementation suggestions, even though many boards and their literature state that students in French immersion receive the same supports as special needs students in English-language classes.

One potential recommendation may be for the board to systematically ask French immersion teachers the supports that they need, either from the list above, and/or include other ideas as well. Teachers may also be asked about the problems that they most encounter with students in the classrooms. Such a task may form the basis for professional learning opportunities that could be implemented within WRDSB.

The funding for special education initiatives within the French immersion program appears to be complex. A 2011 academic article by Nancy Wise in the Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics states that FSL funding is provided on a per-student basis. The Ontario Chapter of the Canadian Parents for French indicates that the fixed amount of money provided per elementary pupil in 2020-21 is \$392.45 (Canadian Parents for French Ontario Chapter, 2020). However, Wise’s paper indicates that funding for students with special needs is provided based on all students enrolled in a board⁴⁴, and not just the

⁴⁴ Specifically, the “Special Education Per Pupil Amount” or SEPPA, is provided on a board-wide level based on all students, and not just on those identified with exceptionalities. There are, however, at least five other components of the Special Education Grant in Ontario (Ministry of Education, Ontario, 2018).

number needing special education. According to the article this creates “a flawed foundation upon which provincial SEPPA funding is based.”⁴⁵ (Wise, 2011)

Based on this, and the fact that interviews with administrators and some principals and vice principals in WRDSB indicated that funding for special education in French immersion may be an issue, other sources of funding could be considered. For example, within the Special Education Grant, there is the Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount which does provide an allotment of funds based on statistical models of special education needs in a particular board. Within this amount there is the Base Amount for Collaboration and Integration which “provides each school board with base funding of approximately \$456,017. Its purpose is to explore collaborative and integrated approaches to serving students with special education needs.” (Ministry of Education, Ontario, 2018). It may be possible that this funding could be used for implementation of programs within the French immersion program.

Bringing these results together, it may be possible for WRDSB to:

- Survey teachers to determine which of the supports listed are needed in their classrooms;
- Create specific training within the board directed at these needs; and
- Enlist the help of educational assistants to take the training, along with teachers and implement the programs within the classroom, especially in the early grades to help younger students address their enrichment needs in French.

Using educational assistants may allow for programs to be implemented using individuals that are in the process of acquiring their own education in a specific field, and can use the training provided by the board and the in-class experience in order to advance their studies or careers in education.

8.6 WRDSB Current Staffing Levels

The previous sections have indicated that there is a fair degree of concern about staffing resources for French immersion programming. Malatest obtained WRDSB’s current (as of late 2018) staffing compliment. The data in **Table 8-2** show in general that at the elementary level the total number of teachers in the board that have French qualifications exceeds the number of FTEs needed. However, the following must be noted:

- The table does not take into account teacher fluency. As **Table 8-1** shows, about 25% to 30% of French language teachers do not describe themselves as fully fluent, thus maybe making them not a good fit for teaching French immersion;
- The table does not take into account leaves of absence, or contracts that are less than full-time, or time table and prep time; and
- The secondary level shows a much tighter resource picture.

⁴⁵ It should be noted that Wise’s article concludes and states that SEPPA funding may not be directed fully at students with exceptionalities in French immersion programs because of decisions made at a board level (Wise, 2011). It must be noted that the article does not provide strong evidence for this assertion, and this assertion was not tested and/or researched for this assignment in WRDSB. Two conclusions that could be drawn are: 1) WRDSB may need to investigate how SEPPA funding is applied and whether it is possible to use it for French immersion special education; and/or 2) Investigate other sources of funding that may be more reliable and/or accessible.

Table 8-2: French Teaching Resources Available in WRDSB

	Elementary	Secondary
Core FTE	135.33	N/A
French immersion FTE (In-class and prep)	208.85	N/A
Total French FTE	344.18	48
Available French qualified full-time	513	40
Available French qualified LTO	30	11
Total French availability	543	51
Excess French availability	198.82	3

Reference: ([Inquiry & WRDSB, 2019](#))

According to the board, at and before the start of the school year, the board was able to have an excess of elementary applicants for the number of positions available due to increased recruiting efforts at local teachers colleges. However, as vacancies occur, regulations require that teachers within the board receive a first chance at the open position. If outside hiring has to occur during the school year for both elementary and secondary French teachers, the process is described as problematic, with the likelihood that candidates may not meet quality requirements ([Inquiry & WRDSB, 2019](#)). To help ensure a successful hire, the board conducts 50% of the interview in English and 50% of the interview in French, in order to assess the potential candidate's fluency. This is identified in other boards as a best practice.

All taken together, while **Table 8-2** may show what appears to be an excess, other human resources factors significantly impact the supply of available French teachers. As such resources may be available within the board, but overall, finding teachers to take-on full-time French immersion remains a fair challenge.

In order to manage some of these issues, the qualitative interviews show that WRDSB principals and vice-principals:

- Try to foster an attitude of cooperation among French teachers, by sharing workloads as much as possible among qualified French staff. This could also include French/English splits where for one class a French teacher instructs 50% of the day, and a separate English teacher instructs for the remaining 50% of the day;
- Ensure that someone hired for French language teaching stays teaching the subject long-term. It may be easier to get LTO employees to stay longer because of their seniority;
- Implement rules that try to keep French staff in the school, even if they are not the most qualified French instructors. For example, one participant indicated that they have instituted a policy that says they cannot post for a French teaching position if there is someone in the school that has their French qualifications. Such teachers have to teach the French whether it be core or immersion. So now they may be in a position where people teaching French may have only the minimum qualification and/or are resentful that they have to teach French.

To the last point though, one board requires new hires to sign a five-year commitment to teaching French, as indicated in the union's collective bargaining agreement. Another possibility would be for individuals making such a transfer to lose their seniority. However, the qualitative research with core French teachers, in particular, indicated that they often transferred due to low job satisfaction, where they feel under-valued by colleagues, students and parents. As such, a recommendation that would compel such teachers into long-term commitments would require very careful thought.

SECTION 9: FRENCH IMMERSION ENTRY POINT

9.1 Key Findings Discussed in this Section

Halton District School Board (HDSB) implemented a grade two entry point, with 100% immersion, and is able to serve as a brief case study into moving an entry point. An extensive document review showed that HDSB had significant enrollment pressures, including a 37% uptake from senior kindergarten to French immersion. Moreover, half of all elementary students in the board were enrolled in the French immersion program. **Section 5.5** of the report indicates that Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) is not in the same position as HDSB on these factors. Of six options available to HDSB, this one was chosen to reduce enrollment pressure as it had the least amount of impact on boundaries and other key areas of the French immersion program.

The results are seen as positive after two years of implementation. Uptake dropped to 25% in 2018/2019 and 28% in 2019/2020. Our interview with HDSB indicated that they would expect the total number of the students in the program to continue to increase though as the population in the area continues to increase. English language primary cohorts that have been under-enrolled as a result of high French immersion uptake have seen significant enrollment increases as a result of the change. Among eight low-enrollment primary cohorts, average class size jumped from eight prior to the change to 18 in the first year of implementation and 16 in the second year. Finally, HDSB implemented significant training for teachers to prepare for 100% immersion, including training in math. At the beginning of implementation of grade two entry, only 25% of French teachers felt comfortable teaching math. This increased to 81.8% by the end of additional training.

Peel District School Board (PDSB) conducted a literature review on entry point, and generally found no conclusive findings one way or another in the literature, and also mentioned that the literature was somewhat dated on the subject. They conclude something HDSB did as well in their review, that “the teacher factor” and availability of quality teaching resources was perhaps the most important factor in a student’s success overall ([Brown and Bennett: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017](#)).

The results of the research with stakeholders in WRDSB show that grade one should remain an entry point (72% of parents/caregivers selected it, and 59% of staff indicated it as an entry point). Staff tend to favour entry points at higher grades, while parents/caregivers favour them at lower grades. The qualitative research among staff shows a leaning more towards a later entry point, where children may have more direct say in the decision, and that children will have more academic experience in general, and specific experience with core French in the early grades, in order to make a more informed decision. Parents, however, are more split qualitatively. Parents/caregivers agree with staff about the reasons for later enrollment, but also proffered earlier entry points, in general and in specific in kindergarten, would better ground their children in the French language.

Even though there is a preference for grade one as an entry point, about half (58% of parents/caregivers and 47% of staff) indicate that there should be more than one entry point. Looking at the number of entry points, and specific grade at which entry should occur, only about two in ten (19% parents/caregivers and 21% staff) indicate that grade one should be the only entry point, which is the current structure to the WRDSB program. The option with the highest proportion of respondents selecting it was entry in grade one, with many other entry points (48% of parents/caregivers and 35% of staff).

9.2 Literature Review Results

9.2.1 HDSB Implementation of a Grade Two Entry Point

Perhaps one of the most significant changes to occur to a French immersion program in Southern Ontario is HDSB's recent change of implementing a grade two entry point with 100% French immersion on grade two entry, tapering it to 80% in grade three and 50% in grade four and beyond. They have operated this model for two years. Some enrollment statistics for HDSB in comparison to WRDSB, as discussed in **Section 5.5**, indicate that HDSB had a higher degree of enrollment pressures than WRDSB does at the moment. As such, the board had a fair degree of incentive to examine their model. This section outlines some of the results found in the literature review and discussion with HDSB staff of that decision.

9.2.1.1 Factors Involved in the Decision

Prior to changing the entry point, it is worthwhile to note that the board examined six options in total, including the following:

- Status quo at the time which was grade one entry in dual track schools;
- Single track, grade one entry;
- Dual track, mid entry⁴⁶;
- Single track, mid entry;
- Status quo, but 100% intensity at the grade one entry point; and
- Grade two entry, 100% intensity and a mix of single and dual track. ([HDSB: Program Viability Summary and Recommendations, May 2016](#))

Analysis of other documentation said that HDSB considered the following factors in their choice of options ([HDSB: Program Viability Summary and Recommendations, May 2016](#)):

- The board's planning department did a detailed review of the potential for boundary review in each of the six options, and it concluded that a grade two entry point with 100% intensity would be one of the options that minimized boundary reviews. It should be noted that most options, with the exception of a single track grade one entry, minimized potential for boundary disruption ([HDSB: Program Viability Summary and Recommendations, May 2016](#));
- Family home purchase considerations because of existing configurations;
- Continued support for HDSB's move to primary core French, which provides 40-minutes of French language instruction per week at the grade one level ([HDSB: Core French](#));
- Concerns for families already enrolled in French immersion and siblings;
- Staff and teacher qualifications; and
- Potential options should involve "natural capping" based on school capacities.

Finally, HDSB summarized its review of existing research and literature on the configuration of all six options by saying "research is mixed on most aspects of FI (sic). There is little clarity in the literature on what constitutes the best model of delivery for FI (sic). Many other factors are at play in boards that

⁴⁶ The term "mid entry" was not defined specifically within the HDSB documents.

influence delivery models (rural vs. urban, location in Canada, demographics, history, transportation, etc...)” HDSB indicated that their take from the research was “the most important factor in a student’s development in French language is the instructional program i.e.: the teacher factor. This far outweighs: entry point, intensity, number of hours of French instruction and school configuration” ([HDSB: Program Viability Summary and Recommendations, May 2016](#)).

9.2.1.2 Implementation of Grade Two Entry

HDSB began its grade two entry in September 2017, with a 100% immersion in grade two, 80% in grade three and 50% in grade four and onward. A memo addressed some of the implementation factors involved, including ([HDSB Minutes, December 2019](#)):

- *Communications*: One of the main messages communicated is that an extra year to make a decision about entering French immersion for those parents/caregivers with children in senior kindergarten. Webinar resources on the change were developed for parents/caregivers to ensure consistent messaging about the change;
- *Human Resources*: Consideration was given to the fact that excess French teaching resources would result from the grade two entry point, and that there would need to be extra English resources required. There was recognition that there would be added pressure on French resources once there is an increase of 100% intensity for grade two and 80% intensity for grade three. However, the report indicates that such pressure could be reduced because of less uptake of French immersion. HDSB is also looking to other boards to understand how to implement combined grade classes where proportion of French spoken is different by grade;
- *Curriculum, Instruction, Training and Resources*: The board recognizes the challenges in teaching math to students among French teachers, as math is generally taught in English. It is encouraging extra training among French immersion teachers in math. (NB – Results of this training are discussed in **Section 9.2.1.3**); and
- *Accommodation and Planning*: The board anticipates a drop at sites with French immersion and an increase in enrollment in English classes throughout the board.

9.2.1.3 Results after Two Years

The board, in a report on November 28, 2019 provided two years worth of impact data ([HDSB, 2019](#)). In summary, HDSB has seen a fairly significant decrease in French immersion uptake and increases in the flow of students to English classes that have had low enrollment as a result of more interest in the French immersion program at grade one.

The table below shows the results of uptake for the first French immersion entry point. The table shows the percentage of students who have enrolled in the first year of French immersion from the last year’s English-only class.

Table 9-1: HDSB French Immersion Uptake

FI	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	17-18	18-19
Uptake	27%	28%	29%	31%	33%	36%	37%	36%	37%	37%	25%	28%

As can be seen the uptake has dropped significantly in the two years since the grade two entry point has been implemented. The board notes that the increase from 25% to 28% from last year to the current year has not resulted in resource pressures.

Moreover, besides reducing uptake in grade two French immersion, the change has had an impact on small English cohorts in dual track schools. Specifically, there were eight dual track schools that had small numbers in the primary English programs due to French immersion uptake. In those small-enrollment schools, prior to the change to grade two enrollment, the average grade one cohort size was eight. Under the new French immersion model, the average class size went to 18 in the first year of implementation and 16 in the second year.

Finally, HDSB gathered the following, fairly positive results of the 100% French instruction implementation, along with some additional results from teachers:

- 61.4% of grade two students were reading at level;
- 38.6% were reading above level;
- Most student's comfort and proficiency levels had increased significantly over the year;
- Teachers have engaged in numerous upgrades and online communities to prepare for 100% French language instruction; and
- The board allowed teachers to take upgrading skills in math and at the beginning of implementation of grade two entry, only 25% of French teachers felt comfortable teaching math. This increased to 81.8% by the end of additional training.

9.2.2 Peel Review of Literature on Entry Point

PDSB conducted a review of its French immersion program in late 2017, and it contained a fairly exhaustive literature review of optimal entry points and proportion of French language instruction for students. The review indicates that much of the literature on the subject is dated, and references HDSB's decision to start entry at grade two as a board to watch in terms of overall results of implementation. In fact, PDSB's review of the literature echoes one of HDSB's primary conclusions when it engaged in its own French language review, which is mentioned in **Section 9.2.1** above – that entry point and other programmatic factors are not possible tailor to ultimate learning outcomes. PDSB's review indicates “an optimal entry point which could apply to all children is not possible to determine” ([PDSB cited a 2001 study](#)) and that “the bulk of empirical evidence does not support the hypothesis that an earlier starting time correlates with a higher level of proficiency than a later starting time.” ([PDSB cited a 1983 study](#)).

A few other pieces of research and literature were cited as well, but are also somewhat dated:

- A 1998 study indicates that the primary benefit of early French immersion entry is improved speaking skills, with no statistical differences in listening, written or reading test scores.
- PDSB cites studies in 1991 and 1996 that indicate that pedagogical approaches and/or teaching styles have more influence on learning a second language than entry point.
- Studies from 1981 and 1974 indicate that late French immersion students were generally at equal levels with students who began immersion at five years old. Other studies from 1981, 1999 and 1978 indicate that language acquisition and proficiency may reach a plateau and eventually decrease over time, but according to the authors of the PDSB review “there is no clear conclusion that there is a linear relationship between the amount of cumulative time and the level of French language proficiency... the debate still continues regarding optimal level of intensity.” ([Brown and Bennett: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017](#))

The PDSB review did find some literature that showed there are benefits to early French immersion (NB – the literature did not define a specific grade range for a definition of early French immersion). They include development of French language skills that can be transferred to English, stronger long-term oral fluency and easier language acquisition. However, one of the noted problems with early French immersion is that it can be challenging to identify learning difficulties in students.

The PDSB literature review found research that showed balanced positives and negatives with middle and late entry to French immersion. Specifically:

- For middle entry, English skills have been established, but oral French skills may be delayed by later entry than in the earlier grades;
- For late entry, students are self-directed, motivated learners and are able to handle learning a second language, but on the negative side, learning a second language and the curriculum can be challenging.

Finally, PDSB did some focused discussions with administrators to determine their perceptions of the optimal grade entry combination and proportion of French instruction on the first few years of the program. The review concluded that comments from administrators mirrored the results of PDSB's literature review, that there is:

No consensus as to what grade on which to begin French immersion and as to what is the optimal percentage of French instruction...there are benefits and challenges to starting from grade one to grade four... there are other factors that can influence the decision. For example, the number of qualified staff able to teach French immersion is a key consideration ([Brown and Bennett: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017](#)).

9.3 Results from Research Conducted for the Review

9.3.1 Opinions on Entry Point

Respondents to both the parent/caregiver survey⁴⁷ and the staff survey were asked what they felt the ideal entry point would be for French immersion. Specifically, the quantitative survey asked respondents to indicate as many grades as they wished as their preferred entry point into the WRDSB French immersion program. Similarly, the qualitative research asked all participants about this issue as well.

From the quantitative research, summarized in **Table 9-2**:

- Higher proportions of parents/caregivers indicate that the lower grades/levels should be entry points, compared to staff;
- Over seven in ten parents/caregivers (72%) indicate that grade one should be an entry point. This is slightly lower among staff, but even still, a majority (59%) indicate that grade one should be an entry point. Grade one was selected by the highest proportion of all respondents (both among parents/caregivers and staff) as an entry point; and
- Generally speaking, at least over three in ten parents/caregivers say that junior kindergarten (28%), senior kindergarten (41%), grade one (72%) and grade two (32%) should be an entry point. Much lower proportions of staff indicate that these lower grades should be entry points (See **Table 9.2** for year over year uptake %).

⁴⁷ Only parents/caregivers with children in French immersion and parents/caregivers who support French immersion were asked these questions.

There is one key difference that stands-out among the staff interviews in particular. Specifically, more teachers (60%) feel grade one should be the entry point, compared to only 48% of principals and vice principals), but given that there were only 22 principals and vice-principals answering the survey, it is difficult to draw a statistical conclusion about whether they are less likely to indicate that grade one should be an entry point. However, the qualitative interviews with principals and vice-principals show a very strong leaning towards later entry points. Some specific comments from the principals' and vice-principals' qualitative responses include:

- A few mentions that if a single track system/school is implemented, then access should start as early as junior kindergarten;
- In a dual track system, moving entry to later with a higher intensity requires parents/caregivers and students to make more of a commitment to French immersion and think more carefully about enrollment;
- Moving entry points to later grades, even grade two, allows the child more of a say. This may reduce the possibility of parents/caregivers solely making decisions about French immersion based on the perception of it providing an enriched education;
- Having access points at higher grades would help give access to ESL students;
- Later entry with a 100% French intensity for the first year would allow a foundation to be built in English;
- Later entry would allow all stakeholders to determine if French immersion is the best pathway for a child to follow. Specifically, there is a sense that grade one involves more academic learning for children than kindergarten. As such, everyone would have a more fulsome picture of whether or not the child would perform well in French immersion; and
- Later entry would allow the board to address the shortage of French teachers by allowing everyone to understand the skills of the student, thus reducing the number of teachers needed to work with students who may not be the right fit for the program.

The qualitative research, conducted with parents/caregivers in WRDSB indicates, just as PDSB and HDSB reviews uncovered, that there are differing views on the issue of access points, with little consensus. Some parents/caregivers felt that French immersion should be offered later starting in grade two, three or even as late as grade four. Several reasons were offered for starting French immersion in later grades; these included:

- Providing children with a solid foundation in math and English literacy skills before introducing another language;
- Parents/caregivers would have more time to make a decision and have a better understanding of their child as a learner to know whether the child is capable of handling the challenge;
- Additionally, by introducing core French in the early grades, the child may have a better a sense of whether they are interested in focusing on the French language; and
- Having a later entry point might alleviate some of the pressure from the high demand for classroom spaces in the early grades, and can balance attrition in later grades.

One interesting finding from the PDSB study is that they had a 50% attrition from the program between grade one and grade eight, and the conclusion they drew from that is "Due to the popularity and perceived positive reputation of the French immersion program, parents/guardians may be enrolling their children in a program that they may not be potentially ready for, and therefore may not succeed. This may be possibly limiting availability for students who may be successful." ([Brown and Bennett: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017](#)). This speaks to the fact that a later enrollment may be beneficial

so that more informed enrollment decisions can be made. In the 'Instructional Programs/Curriculum Committee' Agenda Report from PDSB (2017) it is said that an optimal entry point which could apply to all children is not possible to determine. It is essentially more so when both the parent and child are ready to try French Immersion, within the report it is also mentioned that the overall empirical evidence does not support the concept that an earlier starting time correlates with a higher level of proficiency than a later starting time (PDSB, 2017). It should be noted that WRDSB does not appear to have such low ratios between grade eight and grade one cohorts or panels. **Table 5-4**, the cohort analysis, has four years worth of data that show the WRDSB program retains well over six in ten students between grade one and grade eight⁴⁸. Also, if just looking at the straight proportion of grade eight to grade one students every year of the program, regardless of cohort, **Table 5-5** shows that the proportion of the grade eight class is consistently increasing, to the point where the grade eight class is above 50% of the total of the grade one class for the last three years.

Table 9-2: Preferred Grade Entry Point

Note: Multiple response	Parents/caregivers who support French immersion ⁴⁹ (n=1,335)	Staff (n=559)
Junior Kindergarten	38%	29%
Senior Kindergarten	41%	33%
Grade 1	72%	59%
Grade 2	32%	25%
Grade 3	25%	24%
Grade 4	16%	19%
Grade 5	13%	8%
DK/refused	5%	8%

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q14 What do you think the entry point or points should be? If you think there should be more than one entry point, please select more than one from the list below.

Staff Survey Q15 What do you think the entry point or points should be? If you think there should be more than one entry point, please select more than one from the list below.

9.3.2 Number of Access Points

Respondents were also asked how many access points there should be. This is shown in **Table 9-3**. Just below four in ten parents/caregivers (37%) and just above four in ten staff (45%) feel that there should be only one access point. High proportions of each (58% of parents/caregivers and 47% of staff) think that there should be more than one access point into the French immersion program. As such, grade one should not be the only access point, but it should be considered in combination with multiple access points. The qualitative research may provide some insight as to why a majority would want more than one entry point. Though it was not measured on the quantitative survey directly, there is qualitative evidence to suggest that some parents/caregivers are concerned that they miss the only entry point, regardless of grade. Some parents/caregivers said they moved, changed schools or experienced other issues that circumstantially – more than anything else – prevented their child from enrolling in grade one. In fact, as discussed in **Section 7.5.1**, 5% of parents/caregivers wrote-in on the quantitative survey that the reason their child is not enrolled in French immersion is because they missed the deadline. In the qualitative data, a few participants indicated that there was no clear and/or transparent process on how to enroll a child after grade one, and that decisions on admission after the point seemed arbitrary.

⁴⁸ As noted in discussing **Table 5-4**, not all students were actually tracked, but the cohorts were. There may have been some extra entry into the program at various grades besides grade one. This is not accounted for in the analysis.

⁴⁹ Only parents/caregivers with children in French immersion and parents/caregivers who support French immersion were asked this question

WRDSB may need to provide communications around how it can manage, or whether it is possible for late entry students to not be able to attain the Ministry's required 3,800 hours of instruction in French by grade eight.

Table 9-3: Preference for Multiple Access points

	Parents/caregivers who support French Immersion ⁵⁰ (n=1,335)		Staff (n=559)	
One grade entry point only	37%		45%	
Two grades selected	17%	58% More than one grade	18%	47% More than one grade
Three grades selected	20%		16%	
Four grades selected	8%		4%	
Five grades selected	6%		5%	
Six grades selected	2%		1%	
Seven grades selected	5%		3%	
DK/Prefer not to answer	5%		8%	

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q14 What do you think the entry point or points should be? If you think there should be more than one entry point, please select more than one from the list below.

Staff Survey Q15 What do you think the entry point or points should be? If you think there should be more than one entry point, please select more than one from the list below.

Also, given that grade one has such a high proportion selecting it as an access point, it is worthwhile to examine the proportion of the total sample of each segment who include it as an option at all in their entry point selection. The data for both segments shows fairly similar responses. About two in ten (19% parents/caregivers, 21% of staff) would choose grade one as the sole entry point. A near majority (48%) of parents/caregivers and 35% of teachers would choose grade one in combination with any other grades as an entry points.

The proportion of parents/caregivers that would choose any grade combination that excludes grade one is 33%, which breaks out as the sum of 18% that would choose any single grade, except grade one as an entry point, and 15% that would choose any grade combination excluding grade one. A slightly higher proportion of staff (44%) would choose any other combination of entry points that excludes grade one as seen in **Table 9-4**.

⁵⁰ Only parents/caregivers with children in French immersion and parents/caregivers who support French immersion were asked this question

Table 9-4: Grade One as an Access Point vs. Other Grades

Those who have selected...	Parents/caregivers who support French immersion ⁵¹ (n=1,335)	Staff (n=559)
Grade one as the only access point	19%	21%
Grade one in combination with many other grades as access points	48%	35%
Any other single access point, excluding grade one	18%	24%
Any other grade combination that excludes grade one	15%	20%

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q14 What do you think the entry point or points should be? If you think there should be more than one entry point, please select more than one from the list below.

Staff Survey Q15 What do you think the entry point or points should be? If you think there should be more than one entry point, please select more than one from the list below.

Qualitatively, parents/caregivers were divided in their opinions as to whether there should be more than one access point for French immersion. Some parents/caregivers felt that with having only one access point all children would be starting at roughly the same learning level for French; whereas, with multiple access points, children that start later would struggle more to catch up with those who started the program at an earlier grade. Alternatively, parents/caregivers who supported multiple access points felt that this would make learning French more accessible to more children, allowing late bloomers and/or newcomers to the district the opportunity to consider French immersion as an option for their child.

As with parents, staff participating in focus groups and/or providing additional feedback were divided in their opinion as to what grade French immersion should be offered and whether there should be multiple entry points. Many staff felt that having only one access point did exclude many, especially those who move into the area after kindergarten and those for which English is a second language. Some felt that two access points were acceptable providing that there were some resources available to help the later starters catch up.

⁵¹ Only parents/caregivers with children in French immersion and parents/caregivers who support French immersion were asked this question

SECTION 10: SINGLE AND DUAL TRACK IMPLEMENTATION

10.1 Key Findings Discussed in This Section

Both the literature review and qualitative comments from all stakeholders indicate that there is a significantly split opinion on the benefits and disadvantages of both single and dual track schools. **Table 10-1** summarizes myriad benefits and disadvantages associated with each model based on a review of PDSB's examination of single versus dual track schools. **Table 10-4** shows an equally split opinion between staff in WRDSB about single and dual track schools. The quantitative results show that 51% of parents/caregivers feel that the program should be offered in both settings in order to give maximum choice to students. The quantitative results among staff are more divided. Over six in ten (62%) principals and vice-principals⁵² prefer French immersion be offered in single track schools only, compared to 30% of teachers (**Table 10-3**). This is likely because the principals and vice-principals recognize the challenges involved in managing two tracks in a single school.

While there is such divided opinion and while there are so many arguments for and against single and dual track schools across all groups, there are some very important logistical considerations that are extremely important to the issue. Specifically:

- **Section 10.4.4** indicates that HDSB operates three single track schools and plans to open a fourth. However, our interview indicates that HDSB has existing dual track schools where enrollment in French immersion is surpassing 70% of the school population, thus putting the English program in jeopardy. As such, it is important for WRDSB to examine whether it has similar enrollment patterns, and some schools have enrollment that is strongly geared towards French immersion.
- **Section 10.4.4** also indicates that many WRDSB schools are at capacity, meaning that choosing one to be a single track school may involve displacing a large number of students, so a newly built school may be a better option.
- **Section 10.2.1** describes how PDSB chose criteria to open a single track school. As with HDBS's experience, it indicated that a school, or a few schools, should have a 70/30 ratio one way or another to cause a tipping point in the quality of the program. Other factors included having schools within 1,000 meters close by, constructing new walking paths between schools, and whether there are instances of triple-graded classrooms in affected schools.

Finally, **Section 10.2.2** describes the results of a wider literature review, which suggests that results and outcomes may be better among single track students⁵³. However, the article leaves open the fact that there is "political difficulty of devoting an entire neighbourhood school to French instruction" and that everyone must ask themselves how important it is to provide a setting where the optimal environment can be created for the study of French immersion given all the other factors involved in creating a single track school in community that has historically operated in a dual track model.

10.2 Literature Review Results

10.2.1 Other School Boards

In 2017, PDSB reviewed the literature on the implementation of single and dual track school implementation. While the literature was considered more recent than the literature reviewed regarding entry point (see **Section 9.2.2**), it was inconclusive in providing a clear advantage to PDSB in

⁵² Quantitative results for principals and vice-principals have small base sizes.

⁵³ Note the quality and amount of literature is not significant.

regard to implementation. **Table 10-1** summarizes the results of the literature review done in PDSB showing numerous advantages and disadvantages for both single and dual track configurations. ([Brown and Bennett: PDSB French Immersion Review, 2017](#))

Table 10-1: Advantages and Disadvantages of Single and Dual Track Schools from PDSB

Issue	Advantages	
	Single Track	Dual Track
Multiculturalism	More opportunities for French culture at the school, including extra-curricular and assemblies in French	More exposure to Canadian identity and multiculturalism
Language	Full immersion and all electives taught in French	Exposure to both languages improves competencies in both and non-immersion students have more exposure to French
Community	Fostering of one singular environment	Students attend local/neighbourhood school, and benefits smaller schools that have increased enrollment because of immersion enrollment
Classes	Less combined grades	All students take electives together
Resources	Easier to manage budgets	More accessibility to resources in both languages
Students	Less peer pressure	Both streams interact together promoting understanding
Demission		Students are able to stay in the same school if they withdraw from immersion
Staff	Increased use of French outside the classroom, increased likelihood of special education staff available in French and teacher satisfaction reported to be higher	All teachers benefit from the other's experience, more opportunities for collaboration, easier coverage for core and immersion
Parent/Caregiver Involvement	Driving to school makes more of a commitment to the program and potential higher involvement	Local schools generate more interest and involvement
Issues	Disadvantages	
	Single Track	Dual Track
Multiculturalism	Less exposure to official languages, Canadian identity and multiculturalism	Less opportunities for French language/culture
Language	Possible delays in English skills	Less likely to speak French outside class
Program Perception	Immersion may be less likely to be comprised of diverse students	English program is perceived as second-class
Community	English students displaced by the immersion school travel/bussed farther	Disappearance of the English program at a school
Classes		More combined/triple grade classes
Resources	Less English resources	Less French resources and harder for administration to manage

Students	May consider themselves in a better program	Division created between immersion and non-immersion students
Demission	Disruptive for students to attend a new school upon withdrawal from immersion	Negative perception of students not continuing in the immersion program
Staff	Difficult to find fully bilingual staff	Less likely to have support staff in French, and support staff are divided among programs. Also, there may be two primary teachers teaching a class. There may be less collaboration between teachers
Parent/Caregiver involvement	Less involvement if a school is out of area	Divisions created between two sets of parents

PDSB also interviewed their administration, and some of the key points involving single and dual track schools include the following, largely relating to metrics and numbers that can be used to determine if a single track school should be opened:

- In a dual track school, the ratio of students in one program to the other should not exceed 60:40 for both programs to functionally work well together ensure maximization of benefits outlined in **Table 10-1**;
- Triple grade classes impact the quality of education and programming and should be one of the stronger factors considered in what kind of school configuration is implemented, and the optimal threshold is when triple grade classes have less than 20 students;
- New schools are better for single track schools, and a twin school nearby would be ideal;
- Single track schools should be considered if there is high enrollment overall in the immersion program and a long wait list. Another consideration would be when there is only a single English class in a dual track school, or if more than 65% of the classes at a dual track school are immersion. The issue with higher and higher proportions of French classes is that the English classes begin to suffer. For example, there is one school in PDSB that has a combined grade 1/2/3 class with one teacher; and
- There should be a school very close by in case a school becomes an immersion school.

Interestingly, PDSB has one single track school, with a twin close by. The decision to make the single track school was based on:

- The school's relative size, with the ability to accommodate over 1,000 students;
- The school had a 30:70 English:French ratio, meaning that the school was at a fairly strong tipping-point towards French;
- The school to which English students would be directed was only 750m away from the school targeted for French immersion;
- Bussing to new schools was not provided for any students beyond PDSB's standard policy, so new walking paths and supports were provided; and
- One of the main success factors was that there was a "triangle" of schools in the area of the single track French immersion school, such that all three are within walking distance of each other. Another factor was clearly community support for the idea among the three schools.

HDSB as part of its French Immersion Program Viability study conducted some focus groups with parents. One of the main topics was delivery of programs in single versus dual track schools. In the focus groups, parents/caregivers focused more on community factors/issues than anything else. Specifically, they felt that single track schools create a very cohesive intra-school community. Alternately, dual track schools created a more encompassing community around the schools. Specifically:

- Single track schools created a more cohesive intra-school community because: 1) There is a more immersive environment in French; 2) No need to divide resources throughout the school; 3) One language focus unifies the staff; and 4) Parents/caregivers willing to transport their children to a single track school have very strongly held views on their child studying French; and
- Dual track schools create a broader community environment because children can walk to school; 2) Keeps families and friends in the same neighbourhood; and 3) It retains the concept of a community school ([IPSOS and HDSB: Consultation with Parents, March 2016](#)).

10.2.2 Other Literature

Canadian Parents for French published a review of single and dual track implementation ([Canadian Parents for French: Immersion Centres and Dual Track Schools](#)). The articles cited in it tend to lean towards better academic outcomes and experiences for those in single track schools but are also supportive of the dual track environment. Leslie Doell's ([Doell, 2011](#)) work was also cited in the article and has numerous pieces of research in the Canadian context. Doell compiled research on single and dual track studies in order to assist a school board in deciding whether to implement a single track model. Doell starts with two studies by Lapkin. The first one mentioned that single track schools tended to lead "to superior achievement in French and some aspects of English skills....students were possibly using more French in out-of-classroom contexts than dual track students and they had more exposure to written and spoken French in the school environment than their dual track counterparts". The study also suggested that "teachers in centres appeared better satisfied with resources available in their schools and with their overall teaching situations."

However, the document went on to quote Lapkin in a second study, where Lapkin was very cautious about generalizing her study results into concluding that single track schools were better learning environments. Lapkin indicated "the recipe for successful implementation includes not only actively encouraging the use of French outside of the classroom but also within the school 'so that the language is perceived as an authentic means of communication for a social purpose that goes beyond academic learning within the class and pervades the life of the school'". The implication is that any school can offer this kind of environment.

Other indications from Doell, however, that single-track schools provide a more immersive environment and support for French learning include the following studies cited in her article:

- A survey conducted in Manitoba of French immersion graduates in 1998 and 1999 revealed that the respondents viewed immersion centres more favourably with regards to resource materials and academic support services;
- Kissau (2003) did a study assessing the relationship between the school environment and program effectiveness. Two settings were investigated: an immersion centre and a dual-track school. The study consisted of questionnaires completed by grade 7 students and teachers in both settings. Results indicated that centre students were perceived, by both teachers and students, to be exposed to more French and less peer pressure than their dual-track counterparts;
- Gaumont conducted a study that concluded "immersion centres function like francophone (French first language) schools" and that in single track schools "common goals and resources directed at one program are best. In regard to resources, respondents felt that the

establishment of common goals and allocation of resources was a key factor to the success of students in immersion centres”; and

- Gaumont also indicated “immersion centres often have administrative advantages because they devote all their staff, programs and resources to immersion, making the budget more manageable. He also explained how centres often have specialists for remedial services, which may in part account for the lower attrition rate in centres. In contrast, unilingual administrators in dual-track schools often lack pedagogical knowledge of second language learning, and have problems communicating about educational issues with, supervising, and evaluating French immersion teachers”.

Doell indicated that the compilation was used by a board to move to a single track model of implementation in 2007. Doell followed-up with the administrators who managed the single track school. According to them:

After two years of the centre immersion model, they both felt strongly that the centre model was more beneficial for a number of reasons.

One benefit is the development of a common vision and school mission since it is substantially more difficult to lead a team whose goals represent two different populations. In addition, managing a dual-track school is significantly more complex because the needs of the two tracks are different. Politically, it is also more sensitive as one program cannot spend more than the other. Prior to changing to a single-track immersion centre, they had felt their French Immersion program was lagging. For example, they were unable to provide the same quality of services to students in French as in English, nor were funds available to do so.

However, the compilation article by Doell article leaves-open a very important consideration, in that even though she concludes that single track schools may provide a better learning environment, she quotes a study conducted by Cummins that indicated “Expressive skills tend to develop better in schools where the entire school is a French immersion centre rather than in schools where just one stream is taught through French; however, the latter organizational structure far outnumber the former as a result of the political difficulty of devoting an entire neighbourhood school to French instruction”. Similarly, she quotes Gaumont as well. Even though Gaumont supports single track schools, his quote indicates “In light of the results, school authorities must ask themselves how important it is to provide the best setting for their immersion students to achieve optimal results and to allow them to develop the best French language skills possible.”

In other words, there are realities within boards that may make operating a single track school very difficult. Specifically, **Section 10.2.1** discussed how PDSB created a set of criteria used to open a single track school. Similarly, **Section 10.4.4** indicates that many schools in WRDSB are at capacity, and choosing a school to house a single track French immersion program may involve displacing a number of students, as such, it may be worthwhile to consider a single track school in a new build only.

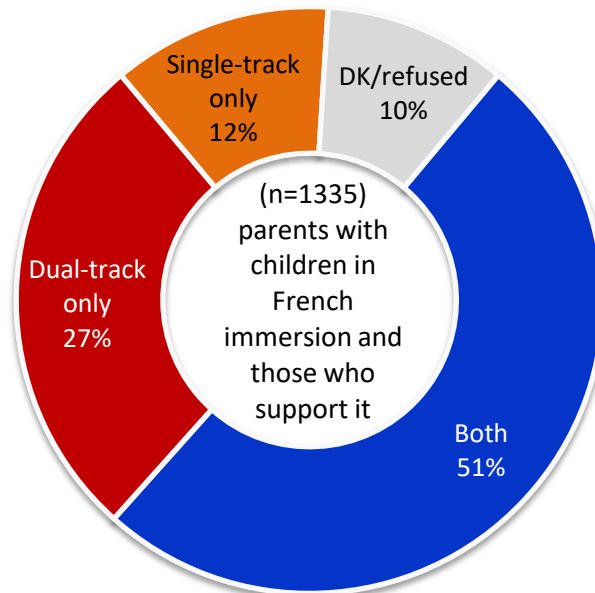
10.3 Quantitative Research Results

Both parents/caregivers⁵⁴ and staff were asked to indicate their preference for delivery of French immersion programming in either: 1) Single track schools only; 2) Dual track schools only; 3) Both single track and dual track schools; 4) Don’t know; or 5) Prefer not to answer.

⁵⁴ Only parents/caregivers with children in French immersion and parents/caregivers who support French immersion were asked this question

It appears as if offering French immersion in both single and dual track schools is the preferred option for parents. Specifically, about half the parents/caregivers surveyed (51%) say French immersion programming should be offered in both single and dual track schools as shown in **Figure 10-1** below.

Figure 10-1: Support for Single or Dual Track Schools: PARENTS



Parent/Caregiver Survey Q13 In your opinion, should French Immersion programming in the Waterloo Region District School Board be delivered in...

Though the qualitative research results are discussed fully in **Section 10.4** that research indicated that the preference for both single track and dual track offerings is largely one of increased choice in WRDSB. Parents/caregivers indicated that offering French immersion programming in both settings would give them the most flexibility when it comes to choosing a school that is best for their child.

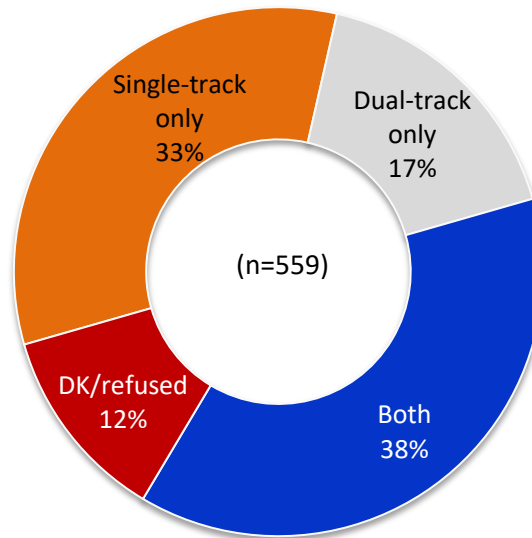
Table 10-2: Parents⁵⁵ – French Immersion Programming Delivery Preference

Programming delivered at school	Total (n=1335)	Under \$60k (n=81)	\$60k-\$90k (n=141)	\$90k + (n=862)	No BA (n=321)	BA (n=475)	>BA (n=507)	BA+ (n=982)
Single-track only	12%	11%	11%	14%	9%	13%	14%	14%
Dual-track only	27%	20%	23%	30%	25%	30%	27%	28%
Both single-track and dual-track	51%	62%	58%	46%	59%	48%	46%	47%
Don't know/Refused	10%	7%	8%	11%	7%	8%	13%	11%

⁵⁵ Only parents/caregivers with children in French immersion and parents/caregivers who support French immersion were asked this question

About four in ten staff (38%) prefers both single-track and dual-track options for French immersion programming (**Table 10-3**). However, staff differs from parents/caregivers in that a third of staff (33%) would prefer French immersion in single-track schools (**Table 10-3**), compared to only 12% of parents (**Table 10-2**). Dual track is selected by only 17% of staff.

Figure 10-2: Support for Single or Dual Track Schools: STAFF



Staff Survey Q14 In your opinion, should French immersion programming in the Waterloo Region District School Board be delivered in...

There are some fairly sharp differences between principals and vice-principals and teachers as shown in **Table 10-3**. Though there is a low sample of principals and vice-principals, 62% indicate that French immersion should be offered in single track only, compared to 30% of teachers. Survey results suggest higher proportions of teachers (40%) support offering French Immersion in both single and dual track schools. Both teachers (17%) and principals and vice-principals (7%) have fairly low proportions supporting French Immersion in dual track only. The difference in support for a higher proportion of principals and vice-principals supporting single track only is because of easier administration involved in a single track model.

The school setting for French immersion also differs by support for the program itself (Table 10-3). Generally, it appears as if non-supporters are very likely to feel that French immersion should not be offered alongside English. Specifically, non-supporters are much more likely (70%) to support a single track option, compared to only 22% of French Immersion supporters. Only 5% of non-supporters say both setting are preferred, and only 7% of non-supporters prefer a dual-track setting.

Table 10-3: Staff – French Immersion Programming Delivery Preference

Programming delivered at school	Total (n=559)	P/VP (n=42)	Teacher (n=517)	FI Supporter (n=424)	Non-FI Supporter (n=117)
Single-track only	33%	62%	30%	22%	70%
Dual-track only	17%	7%	17%	20%	7%
Both single-track and dual-track	38%	19%	40%	49%	5%

Don't know/Refused	12%	12%	12%	9%	18%
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10.4 Qualitative Research Results

The qualitative interviews also provided a rich amount of data on opinions regarding single and dual track offerings in the WRDSB. Nearly all participants, regardless of stakeholder group (i.e. parents/caregivers, staff, students, principals/vice-principals and a WRDSB superintendent), acknowledged that some degree of divisiveness exists between the French immersion and English stream students.

10.4.1 Parents/Caregivers

While some parents/caregivers felt that dual track schools created an unhealthy “we” vs. “them” attitude, even resulting in bullying, other parents/caregivers reported that they did not experience a sense of divide between students in the English and French immersion programs at their child’s school and that their children had friends in both English and French immersion streams. Some parents/caregivers noted that the increased demand for French immersion along with class size limits and wait listing has further exasperated the divisiveness between the French immersion and English streams in some schools. For example, parents/caregivers whose children do not get into the French immersion program in their area school can enrol their child in an out of area school providing there is space available and the parent is responsible for transporting their child to the school. A few parents/caregivers and staff at French immersion schools located in economically poorer neighbourhoods noted that they see a trend of more affluent families enrolling their children in the French immersion program at their school. While these parents/caregivers are often very supportive of the school by way of fundraising and being involved in parent council, their efforts are perceived by some to be focused solely on the French immersion stream in which their children are enrolled and not necessarily for the betterment of the school as a whole.

“I’m the only chair on school council ever that had their kid in English. My son doesn’t get to go on field trips because the families can’t afford to go on field trips and if the school population was spread out and there wasn’t FI, there would be more resources. There’s tension on school council [about] where the funding goes because they want to fund FI and not English. And they don’t want to fund food, but we have kids that don’t have food. It creates this toxic environment.” *Focus Group Parent*

Some other quotes that illustrate these points include the following:

Supporting Dual Track Schools

“If done as blended classes or another way dual-track programs can work. If we go to a single track system I think those schools will become elitist and have parents/caregivers fundraising so those school have more money and even more divisions along socio economic lines.” *Parent of 3 children, one in Grade seven taking Core French, one currently in university and one university graduate; does not work for WRDSB*

“I like the option of the dual track schools, as I think it gives the option to have FI in more regions. If it was not at [redacted school], I wouldn’t have transported my children into Waterloo or elsewhere for FI.” *Parent of two children; grades one and three; both take French immersion; do not work for WRDSB.*

“I think one of the benefits of FI is social. If my son lost all of his peers in FI, I’d pull him from French. Our school is dual track, so if he isn’t cutting it or if all his friends start to disappear out

of the program, then I'm fine to put him in English because then he doesn't have to get pulled out of his school." *Focus groups with parents/caregivers*

"In the more rural areas, you're probably going to have dual track because there are less schools but I also think it's important because it is a smaller community that your kids are going to end up in after school programs with all the same kids anyways, whether they're English or French." *Focus groups with parents/caregivers*

"My experience is that dual track is extremely divided and it's made it more difficult for us to integrate into the community. We are totally isolated, not only in the school but in the community. It's harder for us to make friends because our kids don't have the same classes. There are only a few families in French." *Focus groups with parents/caregivers*

"I love the idea of dual track but the core French classes are a behavioural nightmare. The reality is that not all families are lifted up and supported by their families, the mainstream classes are hard to navigate." *Focus groups with parents/caregivers*

Supporting Single Track Schools

"Having some single track schools can show a larger population of French students at one school. Adding some of these into the mix with single track schools would give students more options." *Parent of 2 children; one in preschool and one in grade one; grade one child takes FI and child in preschool will take FI; do not work for WRDSB*

"At our school, there's English at one end and French at the other. It's segregated and it's becoming bullying. It's the 'Frenchies' against the English. It's become a war zone. It's the elitist vs. the poor, the stupid." *Focus groups with parents/caregivers*

"A single track school in terms of inclusivity is a program for all." *Focus groups with parents/caregivers*

"For French immersion, the whole point is to be immersed. The classes, announcements, assemblies, activities etc. are in French. The culture is there." *Focus groups with parents/caregivers*

"The challenge with the dual stream is that the English vs. French comes from the parents, the community and the school administrators. There has to be a concerted effort to have everyone together in some classes like gym class." *Focus groups with parents/caregivers*

10.4.2 Students

Most participating high school focus group students admitted that during elementary school there was a discernible divisiveness between the French Immersion students and other students; often referring to each other as "French fries" and "English muffins". Students who took elementary French immersion confirmed that their friends were also in French immersion and that they were mostly the same group of students in their class since grade one. The sense is that though it was discernible, it was not destructive to the kids. Kids just got over it, but that is more of a sense from the groups than anything else. Note the next paragraph, that they seem to age out of this. At the time this occurred, it may have been more of an issue to both the youth and the parents, but we are asking them as teens to recall their early childhood, and they may not see it as much of an issue as teens recalling it.

Many students also noted that once they entered high school there was less a feeling of "us" and "them" mainly due to the fact that many of their classes contained a different mix of peers depending on the subject. A few students noted that they still remain connected to friends who were in French immersion in elementary school but were now in core French, and vice versa (students who had switched to core French in high school had friends in French immersion).

"I feel like the separation was really big in elementary school, we literally called each other the English muffins or French fries or French toast, we never associated with each other, ever. But now we have, I personally have classes with people I was never friends within elementary school because they're [the classes] are mixed."

Student focus group participants

10.4.3 Principals and Vice-Principals

Participating principals and vice-principals acknowledged that there is a divisiveness between French immersion and core French students in some elementary dual track schools. Some principals indicated that they have begun to make changes to encourage a more cohesive school culture. For example: where subjects are taught in English, creating classes with a mix of French immersion and core French students; physically mixing the location of French immersion and English stream classrooms so they are not segregated within the school; when possible, co-ordinating field trips with French immersion and core French classes; and promoting whole school activities that involve all staff and students.

"There are perceptions within the community that French immersion is an elitist or privileged program. As a school board, we are trying to change this attitude."

Principal, French immersion public school

Some parents/caregivers in the focus groups indicated that they have noticed such efforts and offer praise for administrators who are able to manage school situations such as this in a positive manner.

There are a number of quotes from both teachers and Principals and vice-principals about single and dual track schools that support the quantitative findings and those from the literature review. Among staff:

Table 10-4: WRDSB Staff Opinions Regarding Single and Dual Track Schools

Position	Summary	Comment
Teacher	Single track helps with resource efficiency but creates other problems.	A single track school may help alleviate some of the stresses of too few resources and support as this would be delivered in a more equitable manner. However, this may force students into a French stream that otherwise have no interest and the parents send them to that school (and do not support the French program) simply because it is the closest school. I imagine this would also require fewer locations with French Immersion and require more students to be bussed. I am not sure this would solve many of the problems currently existing.
Teacher	Dual track schools split students, and streams students based on ability	I have taught in two other schools in our Board that have offered French Immersion. In both locations the French Immersion program segregated the school. The students did not interact at recess time. The students who would have made great role models in a class and had supportive families chose the French Immersion track, while students who struggle (i.e., academically, socially, lacking family support) made up the English classes. By the junior grades the class sizes were not equal, due to attrition of those who couldn't make it in the French Immersion classes. The demands on teachers were not equal either, as the number of students and number of IEPs tended to be significantly higher in the English

		classes.
Teacher	Lower French immersion uptake, but less equitable access in single track schools	I agree, if you created a single track school for French you would a lot fewer students in FI but the families for whom the French education is important would make the commitment. But then you do exclude more of your lower income areas where people can't necessarily drive their kids around.
P/VP	Dual track makes program switches easy	With a dual track system, it does make it easier for students to switch programs if they are unhappy or struggling
P/VP	Dual track makes a heterogeneous community	We bring kids from a variety of feeder schools which creates a heterogeneous blend of kids – promotes idea that we're all a big community. FI kids blend well with FI kids from other schools. We sometimes break up the kids coming from the same school so they can make new friends within the immersion program. There's also more opportunity for them to interact with kids in the core French program through intramural activities, athletics, arts, extracurricular activities. We have 2 nutrition breaks and kids tend to hang out with other kids in their class but if there's a bunch of kids playing soccer or basketball, it doesn't matter if you're in the English or French stream; if you want to play, you just play
P/VP	Administration of single track schools is easier	I strongly believe that we should have a single track system only with French speaking teachers and administrator; this would include elementary schools and a secondary school so that students could continue with French immersion. This would encourage better collaboration among all teachers and administrators as well as ensure that French is spoken consistently throughout the school day. Supports would be in French to help those with learning and behavior challenges. You would not need as many teachers in a single track school vs. a dual track because there would only be one stream, not two, and all resources would be shared, not doubled. I also do not believe that we should provide transportation for these single track schools. This ensures that parents and students are invested in and committed to French immersion.
P/VP	Dual track causes equity concerns, and single track is more efficient	The dual track system means that you have two schools within one building. Many parents and even some teachers feel that the French immersion stream is only for higher achievers. As a result, parents will put their children in French immersion, not because they value the opportunity for their child to learn French but because they want their child to be a part of the upper echelons of the school. There does not seem to be the same

		commitment to French immersion in the dual track schools as compared to the single track school I taught at previously in [redacted]. We do see that parents of children with special needs are more likely to choose an English program for their children think that we should have single track schools with French speaking administrators. The focus would be on the same resources, better support for students and staff, and we could deliver PD in French. A single track would encourage a stronger pool of qualified teachers. To make accessible for all students, the Board needs to provide transportation.
P/VP	Dual track can be effective if there is intentional mixing of students	Next year we will be moving into a new addition so we will have French immersion classes mixed in with their grade counterparts. Student achievement and outcomes are tied to a communal vision and while there are 2 distinct staff (i.e. French and English), they collaborate. We have staff here that do student based enquiries which serves to further enrich their approach. The principal and vice-principal work together on shaping the culture within the school. They work at connecting student ambassadors that speak different languages. Both the French immersion teachers and the ESL teacher will use a student's mother tongue to amplify the learning and support the student. They really try to develop cultural awareness among the staff and students, and many staff speak more than one language.
P/VP	Single track schools promote more French language speaking	A single track school would concentrate – my vision of that would be bringing in kids from a variety of neighbourhoods and it'd be up to the board to decide if they're going to provide transportation. This would give kids the opportunity to mix and mingle with other kids and then French would be the focus for that building. In a world where we're struggling for French teachers if one or two buildings offered FI then you could channel your FI teachers into those one or two buildings. I think there'd be more opportunity for French to be spoken and heard. You could have French speaking administrators, the whole nine yards. The resources for the building when it comes to buying resources, either paper or online, you'd get more from your FI budget if you concentrated it all in one building.
P/VP	Single track is attractive, but without full collaboration with knowledgeable teachers, some courses may not be taught as well	I wonder if we could try single-track schools in our board. It's been done in other places, and then we'd have to provide transportation to those sites – which is another kettle of fish, but yes, perhaps. It's hard to run a FI program because of resources and staffing becomes an issue because you need all these French speaking

		<p>teachers. In a larger FI program – in our school it’s quite large – but there are more resources then, and teachers can work together – plan together – which is very beneficial. So, you’d get that at the school if the program is large enough. I’ve seen good collaboration between FI staff and English programming staff but there are more resources available for staff in the English streams. One example is a website for math called “MathUP” which hasn’t been available in French so the FI teachers take those resources and collaborate with the English speaking teachers, but they have to take the extra step of translating those resources into French.</p>
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10.4.4 Interview with WRDSB Administration

There was one interview conducted with a superintendent on the board, and some comments were made about single versus dual track schools from a managerial and broader perspective. Specifically:

- There is a sense that other boards can more easily designate under-utilized schools as single track institutions, as it reduces disruption and more efficiently uses resources. However, WRDSB schools have very high utilization rates, such that it would be difficult to use a particular school as a single track institution.
- Boundary studies that would be necessary may eliminate any gains in the process and take a long time to institute.
- A new-build school may be best for a single track institution so that there is less disruption to existing schools.
- There is a sense that converting an existing school to single track is very disruptive to the existing school and community and is considered a drastic step. PDSB conducted its own research into changing schools towards single track, and one of their findings was that such changes can be very disruptive to the community and students. As such, they set specific criteria to ensure such changes have minimal impact. Further details are discussed in **Table 10-1**.

To the last point, an interview conducted with HDSB, which has three single track schools, and has a fourth planned ([HDSB: List of FI Schools](#)) indicated that in some dual track schools, ratios were approaching 70% French and 30% English enrollment, thus putting the English language programs in jeopardy. With the single track schools, they have dropped this to about 60/40 and the hope of the new school is to drop this to 50/50. Opening a single track school in HDSB was in part a result of some ratios of French programs being very high compared to English programs in dual track schools.

Conversion of existing schools from a dual track into either a single track French Immersion or English school, and the impact on students, it is evident that the student transition must be considered. The literature review showed that movement of students from one school to another can have adverse effects on achievement and/or personal well being. It would be something for the board to keep in consideration and try to minimize the number of transition students need to make.⁵⁶

A HDSB report from 2016 shared that participants who took part in research regarding French schooling expressed anxiety about their children who were currently enrolled in a program, assuming that any future changes would impact students currently enrolled in programs as they exist.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Information retrieved from: <https://www.hdsb.ca/schools/Documents/16096-complete.pdf>

SECTION 11: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE DESIRE FOR MORE FRENCH IMMERSION

11.1 Key Findings Discussed in This Section

Parents/caregivers (73%) are more likely than staff (53%) to completely agree that all students should have access to French immersion. Also, there is a difference in parent opinion based on the type of programming received by the children. However, even still a majority of parents/caregivers with children in core French (59%) completely agree that all children should access French immersion. This rises to 80% who completely agree among those with children in the French immersion program. The results indicate that no matter which group is examined, there are majorities that support liberal access for all children to French immersion throughout Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB). Of particular note, those with lower incomes and educations, appear more likely to support access to French immersion across all students in the board.

Respondents were also asked if there is a need for more French immersion programming at their school or in the area. About half of parents/caregivers with children in kindergarten (48%) completely agree with this, and it drops to just over three in ten among those with children in any elementary grade. Staff are less likely to be supportive of French immersion being deployed in their schools, with only 26% completely agreeing with this. Also, those staff who did not have French immersion in their schools were asked if they would support French immersion in their schools if the resources and demand were there. Four in ten (40%) completely agree they would support this.

Staff responses were expanded upon in the qualitative research. In general, within the qualitative responses, staff are quite concerned about numerous issues in relation to expansion of the program in general, and in specific to their school. They are concerned about: 1) Dividing a school; 2) Stretching resources too thinly across schools; and 3) Parents/caregivers enroll children in the program because it is perceived as an enrichment program.

To further examine the issue of accessibility and desire for more French immersion, WRDSB's new class policy along with the other boards under examination were also reviewed. WRDSB's is generally the only policy that can be described as somewhat demand-driven, whereby WRDSB will strongly consider opening a grade one class in any school where 20 senior kindergarten parents/caregivers express an interest in the program, or 18 express interest if there is a class there previously. The benefit of this approach is that parents/caregivers appreciate having an opportunity to place their children in their local school. Also, smaller class sizes can be more easily combined if there is attrition. However, there were numerous disadvantages associated with this. **Figure 5-4** shows that the current concentration of dual track schools tends to be in higher income areas. Also, with smaller class sizes, triple grading becomes a higher possibility and teaching resources are spread more thinly across many schools.

Upon review of other boards' procedures, it was found that Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) and Halton District School Board (HDSB) directly indicate how grade one classes will be formed in their French immersion policies. HWDSB serves as an example of a centralized system of registration, where the policy actually says, "A Grade one system-wide application process for entry to French immersion with a guarantee of an offer of placement in the program (not at a specific school)." While HWDSB does not provide bussing outside a catchment area, and while it is still up to a parent/caregiver to accept or reject the offer, the centralized registration system allows for the board to allocate classes based on myriad factors as listed in their policy, including: 1) Availability, vacant, leased or under-used sites; 2) Community support; 3) Program accommodation costs; 4) Grouping; 5) Equitable distribution

and 6) Nearness to next school. The key informant for HWDSB summed-up the board's stance by saying "parents/caregivers are demanding additional programs, so that they don't have to leave their home community... I work with [Trustees] to make them aware that program quality may be impacted by over-expansion." However, HWDSB uses a centralized bussing system for its French immersion program, and this suggests that transportation and bussing will need to be considered carefully under this system should WRDSB wish to adopt it.

11.2 Parents' Opinions about Accessibility and Desire for More French Immersion

Parents/caregivers were asked two questions about French immersion accessibility and support for more French immersion programming in their area for their child in a specific grade. The results, overall, show very strong support for wide access to French immersion programming.

Table 11-1 shows that 87% overall agree that all students should have access to French immersion. One of the most notable results is that 59% of those who have children in core French also completely agree that all children should have access to French immersion, suggesting equity of access is a sentiment that is held throughout virtually all stakeholders in the board, regardless of whether a child actually participate in the French immersion program themselves. Moreover, opinion towards accessibility seems to vary by income and education, such that those with lower income and education are more likely to agree that there should be access to French immersion for all students in the board. Also, those in Cambridge and Kitchener are more likely to say all children should have access to French immersion.

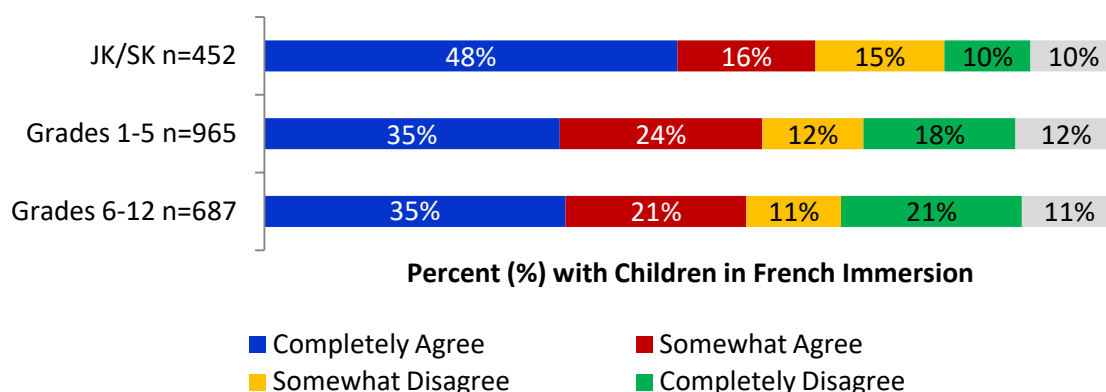
**Table 11-1: Parent Agreement with the Statement
"All Students Should Have Access to French Immersion"**

Percent (%)	Tot	Program			Region				FI School		Income			Education		
		CF	EF	FI	Cam	Kit	Wat	Twn	Yes	No	<60	60-90	90+	No BA	BA	BA+
Completely	73	59	68	80	76	77	68	69	75	62	84	82	71	82	74	70
Somewhat	14	18	20	13	12	14	17	13	14	17	11	13	15	12	15	15
Total	87	77	88	93	88	91	85	82	89	79	95	95	86	94	89	85

Note regarding acronyms: CF: Core French; EF: Extended French; FI: French Immersion; Cam: Cambridge; Kit: Kitchener; Wat: Waterloo; Twn: Townships of Waterloo Region; BA: Bachelor Degree level (~4 years of post secondary).

Another way of looking at the data is whether a parent/caregiver feels that more French immersion is required for their child's school or their neighbourhood. **Figure 11-1** shows that for the most part, those with children in kindergarten (48%) completely agree with this, compared to those with children in grade school. However, there is split opinion, with an equal proportion that do not completely agree. They are somewhat satisfied with the availability of spaces.

Figure 11-1: Agreement with the Statement: “There is a Need for More French Immersion Programming in My Child’s School or in My Neighbourhood”



Parent/Caregiver Survey Q9 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “There is a need for more French immersion programming in my school or in my neighbourhood.” (asked of all)

11.3 Staff Opinions about Accessibility and Desire to Increase French Immersion Programming Throughout WRDSB and in their School

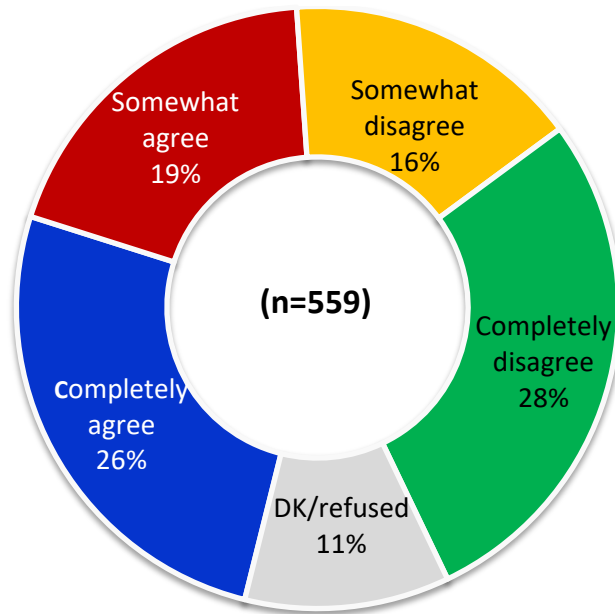
11.3.1 Quantitative

Just like parents/caregivers, staff were asked the extent to which they agree that all children should have access to French immersion programming in WRDSB. While **Section 11.1.1** indicated that 73% of parents/caregivers completely agreed with this, only 53% of staff completely agree with this. Much like results about the benefits of French immersion, as discussed in **Section 7.4.1**, parents/caregivers are more likely to agree than staff are with key aspects of the French immersion program. However, as **Table 11-2** shows, there is much less variation among the views of staff by particular segment, with two exceptions. Only 32% of kindergarten teachers completely agree all students should access French immersion, compared to over half of teachers of all other grades. The finding is somewhat interesting, given that these are the teachers who are the ones that will work with students just prior to their potential entry into the program. Also, about six in ten French only and English and French speaking teachers agree with this, compared to only 44% of English teachers.

**Table 11-2: Teacher Agreement with the Statement
“All Students Should Have Access to French Immersion”**

Percent (%)	Title			Grade Taught				Language of Instruction		
	Tot	Principal VP	Teacher	JK/SK	1 to 5	6 to 12	6 to 9	English Only	French Only	Both Eng & French
Completely	53	52	53	32	52	58	57	44	62	64
Somewhat	26	19	26	39	27	27	28	37	25	24
Total	79	71	79	71	79	85	85	81	87	88

Figure 11-2 shows that staff are equally split on whether there is a need for more French immersion in the WRDSB. Just over four in ten (45%) agree (26% completely agree and 19% somewhat agree) there should be more French programming, and an equal proportion (44%) disagree (16% somewhat disagree and 28% strongly disagree) there should be more French programming.

Figure 11-2: Staff Agreement: “There should be More French Programming in WRDSB”

Staff Survey Q9 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “There is a need for more French immersion programming in my school or in my neighbourhood.” (asked of all)

In general, there is higher proportion in agreement with increased French programming in WRDSB among:

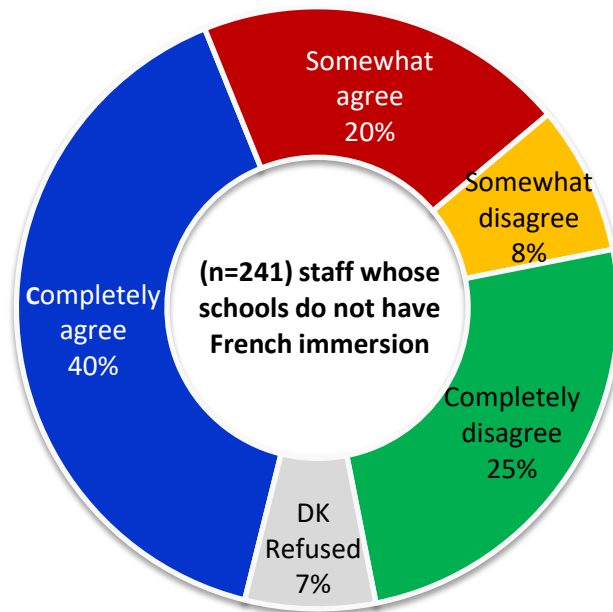
- Staff who work in Waterloo (32% agree strongly) versus Cambridge (22%), Kitchener (24%) and the Townships (19%).
- About a quarter (27%) of teachers agree strongly while only 12% of principals and vice-principals agree that there is a need for more French immersion programming in their school or neighbourhood. The difference is likely because of challenges hiring qualified/fully fluent French teachers discussed by VPs and Principals during their qualitative interviews during the consultation process.
- There is a difference by language taught. Only 14% of those who teach English only completely agree that more French immersion should be brought to their school or area, compared to 45% of those who teach French only, and 38% who teach in both languages.

If a staff member did not have French immersion in their school, they were asked directly if they would want French immersion in their school if the demand and resources were sufficient. **Figure 11-3** shows that 40% would completely agree, 20% would somewhat agree, 8% would somewhat disagree and 25% would completely disagree to have French immersion in their school if the demand and resources were there. Like opinions regarding overall support for increased French immersion throughout WRDSB:

- Staff in Cambridge and Waterloo (both 47%) completely agree they would want to add French immersion to their school compared to 29% of those in Kitchener.

- Only 20% of principals and vice-principals, compared to 42% of teachers completely agree to adding French immersion to their schools, if not there already;
- In terms of language taught, only 27% of those who teach English only would completely agree with the addition of French immersion programming in their school. This increases to 60% of those who teach in both English and French, and 69% of those who teach French only would completely agree to the addition of French immersion to their school.

Figure 11-3: I Would Support the Addition of French Immersion Programming in My School



Staff Survey Q10 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "If demand and resources are sufficient, I would support the addition of French immersion to my school." (asked of those who do not have French immersion in their schools)

11.3.2 Qualitative Results among Staff

Key informant interviews and focus groups with staff generally provided more detail on the reasons for the quantitative split opinion. Overall, the qualitative research indicated that participants opposed the expansion of French immersion programs on a few grounds. First, if French immersion was not in their school, staff were concerned about streaming, segregation and division of the school. Second, they felt that putting the program in too many schools stretches resources too thinly, and third, they indicate that parents/caregivers think it is an enrichment program. Staff feel that expanding the program to more schools only furthers that perception. Some particular quotes include the following:

"No [it is not a good idea to add French immersion to my school], a significant amount of the population at my school is learning English, then to place another language on the families at home would be stressful for both the students, parents/caregivers and staff involved. There are also too many behavioural cases and not enough support. To then distribute student into more classes and stretch the support thinner would not be wise." *Staff – Parent email feedback*

And,

"I strongly feel that French Immersion would not be a good addition to [Redacted]. I have taught in [number redacted] other schools in our Board that have offered French Immersion. In both locations the French Immersion program segregated the school. The students who would have made great role models in a class and had supportive families chose the French immersion track, while students who struggle (i.e., academically, socially, lacking family support) made up the English classes. By the junior grades the class sizes were not equal, due to attrition of those who couldn't make it in the French immersion classes. The demands on teachers were not equal either, as the number of students and number of IEPs tended to be significantly higher in the English classes. In [school redacted]... we work hard to get [other cultures within the school identified that are redacted] be willing to integrate with the rest of the school population...To divide our school even further would make it even more difficult to foster inclusiveness." *Staff - email feedback*

And,

"I don't think it should be offered at more schools, but I have no concerns with it continuing in schools that currently offer it. I think that many people who choose French Immersion as an option do so thinking they are enrolling their child in a more elite program. I think this is a false assumption." *Staff - email feedback*

And,

"I see a trend to add FI to more schools – or more FI classes in schools – and I find that frustrating given that we can't staff them properly. So, if I were in charge, I'd pare it down a bit. I'd have some dedicated sites... with all the communication that would need to go with that in terms of parents/caregivers." *Principal/Vice Principal K/Is*

And,

"We should only have magnet (single-track) schools that offer only French. This would encourage fewer drop-outs as students usually want to stay with their peers as opposed to transferring to another school." *Principal/Vice Principal K/Is*

And,

"I think there's more demand than supply; however, some of the demand is misguided. Too many parents/caregivers view French as 'higher up' program so they want to get their kids in the program.

In fact, even staff that support French immersion and want the program to expand are concerned about sustainability and stretching of resources.

There should be a consistent development of French immersion into more schools. This development must be sustainable with sufficient enrollment and qualified teachers." *Principal/Vice Principal K/Is*

And,

"I see the value in it. So I love FI myself and I speak French. I value the language, the culture – I just don't think we can staff it." *Principal/Vice Principal K/Is*

11.4 Analysis of Class Formation Procedures

In order to understand equitable access issues, and to help meet wishes of the 73% (**Table 11-1**) of parents/caregivers who completely agree that French immersion should be available to all students and the majority of staff (53%, **Table 11-2**) who feel the same way it is worthwhile to examine how grade one (or the first initial cohort) of classes are created.

11.4.1 Provincial Requirements

According to Ontario Regulation 132 – Class Size, all grade one, two and three classrooms must have 23 students or less, and 90% of all class sizes must have 20 students or fewer. The 10% of classes that can have more than this is determined at the board level, and “in Grade one, we use FI as our 10% in order to allow more students access to the program either at their home school or out-of-boundary.” ([WRDSB: OSL Framework](#)).

11.4.2 Waterloo Region District School Board Grade One Class Formation

WRDSB is the only board under study (i.e. compared to HDSB, HWDSB and TVDSB) to say that “a school must have at least 20 Senior Kindergarten students wishing to take the program before it can be considered offering a Grade one class of the French Immersion Program.” Similarly, in WRDSB if “a non-immersion site generates a minimum of twenty home-school applicants for Grade one of the French Immersion Program, the school will be considered for opening a Grade one class...A class may be generated with home school registrants if space permits and after other pertinent factors have been considered.” ([WRDSB: Administrative Procedure 1000, 2018](#)). The impact of this system is that it is largely demand-driven and that parents/caregivers can work together to create French immersion classes in schools that do not have French immersion programs, or continue classes in schools that do have them. ([WRDSB: French Immersion Review Committee, 2018](#)) In the case where a school has a previous French immersion class, a minimum of 18 students may register in order to run the class. ([WRDSB: FI 2018-2019 Enrollment Report, 2019](#)).

For the 2019-2020 year, according to the *French Immersion Elementary and Secondary Enrollment for 2018-2019 and Projected Grade 1 Enrollment for 2019-2020*, the system was able to accommodate and place 1,275 students for enrollment out of 1,357 requests. That left students on waiting lists, but if all designated sites open with full grade one classes, there would be exactly 82 spaces available across the district to accommodate additional students. ([WRDSB: FI 2018-2019 Enrollment Report, 2019](#)).

While the numbers for the 2019-2020 year work-out well, there are perceived positives and negatives about the system that were found in a few places. First, given that the system is demand-based, Malatest’s analysis of school areas by income shows that a disproportionate amount of dual track schools are located in areas of relatively higher income, according to **Figure 5-4**, where about 37 of 49 French immersion schools are located in higher income areas and only 11 of 49 French immersion schools are located in lower income areas. According to key informant interviews with WRDSB principals/vice-principals and other key stakeholders, other disadvantages include the issue of fairly small class sizes as students leave the program, and/or the possibility of triple grading classes, and/or the possibility of classes not easily being combined if there are not other French immersion classes in the school. Also, according to some interviews, 20 remains a somewhat low threshold, so there may be demands on scarce French teaching resources.

As for benefits, according to key informant interviews, since the system is demand-driven, parents/caregivers are in favour of it. Also, smaller classes are more easily combined, should attrition force it.

Some principals and vice-principals commented on class size formation in their interviews. Some quotes that summarize these views include the following:

“French immersion [should not be added] to more schools unless there is adequate and sustainable demand for it. [The board] should [not] run French immersion classes with only 17 students in it when the English classes have 30 or more students.” *Principal/Vice Principal Klls*

And,

“If we offer more French immersion in more buildings we don’t have staff to staff them. If we don’t have qualified teachers, we shouldn’t expand it into more sites. The model the board has now is that if there are enough parents/caregivers in a neighbourhood to request a grade one class then we add it but the problem is that we can’t necessarily adequately staff those classes. When those kids move through the system and start to drop out then the numbers become very low and that has an impact on staffing as well... I don’t think we can expand the number but we should be more selective about where we offer the program. There are some communities that are underserved. We have the SEI (social economic indicator) that ranks schools according to different criteria from least needy to neediest from a community point of view. Those needy schools typically don’t have French immersion classes. When we look at the program, maybe we should put French immersion classes into these buildings knowing that people at the other end of the SEI, if they value the program will be able to provide transportation to get their kids there.... I think French immersion isn’t in those needier schools in part because the demand isn’t as high because parents/caregivers don’t have the information about it. If there were 25 parents/caregivers who wanted French immersion in those needier neighbourhoods they’d create a class. There probably isn’t 25 parents/caregivers interested so the parents/caregivers who do want their kid in French immersion would be put on a waitlist or be assigned a school outside the neighbourhood they’d then have to get their child to which is tough depending on your means. It’s tough because we don’t have enough to start a class but if we arbitrarily said there will be a class and we’ll draw x number of kids from this neighbourhood and also have other kids come in from a more well off neighbourhood to supplement the class and make the numbers work maybe that’s a way to deliver the program in needier neighbourhoods.” *Principal/Vice Principal Klls*

11.4.3 Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Class Formation

According to their policy document (as well as their website), HWDSB’s policy specifically indicates ([HWDSB: Procedure for Policy No. 6.8](#)) “A Grade one system-wide application process for entry to French Immersion, with a guarantee of an offer of placement in the program (not at a specific school).” This process has been in place for the last three or four years, according to the key informant. The selection process involves trying to place students in their home school, and if applications exceed the number of spaces, a random selection process is held. According to the policy, selection is also based on:

- Grade one siblings entering French immersion may attend the same school as their older sibling, space permitting;

- Balance of English and French enrollment in dual track schools (50-60 percent English or French); and
- Year over year impact as students' progress through grades one through eight.

The policy document also provides criteria for determining site locations, which include some of the following:

- Availability: vacant, leased or under-used sites – where space is available and where space is projected to remain available;
- Community support: demonstrated interest in enrolling;
- Program accommodation costs;
- Grouping: locating junior/middle/secondary sites within short distances of one another;
- Distribution: Equitable distribution to meet system needs; and
- Nearness to next school.

The key informant interview with the HWDSB representative provided additional insight into how they choose sites for their schools. Generally speaking, they operate on the principle that “we have enough system-wide capacity.” In terms of working with parent demand, the informant indicated “parents/caregivers are demanding additional programs so they do not have to leave their home community... I work with [Trustees who approve French immersion schools] to make them aware that program quality may be impacted by over-expansion.” And “Our approach is driven by trustee direction and parent voice.” The informant describes his strategy as one to “Open additional classrooms in schools rather than adding schools.” These comments provide a sense of how WRDSB would have to begin to alter or manage its planning process under a centralized registration system.

11.4.4 HDSB Class Formation

HDSB's policy document ([HDSB: Policy Statement French as a Second Language](#)) indicates that “an elementary school program is considered viable if it meets the following conditions: 1) There are sufficient students within the school grade structure to establish classes within the prevailing class size requirements; 2) No additional staff resources are required.” Another section indicates “If at the time of registration, Immersion French enrolment (Gr. 1) is below 20... the program will not be offered at that Centre the following September.”

In terms of school selection, to serve as a new French immersion school, the facility must “1) have sufficient accommodation for anticipated growth in Immersion numbers, as well as maintenance of English program while numbers from the school's catchment area warrant; 2) Have facilities adequate to provide full program for the grade level accommodated; and 3) have at least two identified associate schools where the Centre has a Primary/Junior classes.”

SECTION 12: CORE AND EXTENDED FRENCH AND TRANSITION TO SECONDARY FRENCH IMMERSION

12.1 Key Findings Discussed in This Section

Generally, there is very strong support for children receiving any French education in Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB). Three quarters (75%) of parents/caregivers completely agree that they want their children to learn French. While about eight in ten parents/caregivers with children in immersion and extended French completely agree with this, even 54% of parents/caregivers with children in core French completely agree, and 33% somewhat agree, thus suggesting that even parents/caregivers with children in the core program value French education in the WRDSB. Those with lower incomes and lower educations are more likely to agree that they want their children to learn French. This corresponds to views that parents/caregivers in these groups want their children to learn a second language as a way of securing their futures.

While there is strong support for any level of French education in WRDSB, core French teachers, according to a focus group, indicate that they feel undervalued. This is largely because they do not have a classroom, and only spend 40 minutes a day with students, thus having less opportunity to form strong relationships with students. Some participants felt that the way the dual track system is set-up favors immersion students overall, meaning that they receive a better overall education in all subjects/areas compared to their core counterparts. Some core teachers felt that they could not teach to the board's standard set-out in its existing operational goals concerning the outcomes of core French because of the transient nature of core French teacher's relationships with students and an overall focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects.

The perceptual issues with core French are held by parents/caregivers and principals and vice-principals as well. Parents/caregivers feel that teachers who have a real passion for the subject will teach immersion, and that they feel less is expected from core French students than immersion students. principals and vice-principals somewhat agreed that families with children in French immersion are more supportive and enthusiastic about French, but that teaching core French is a challenge that requires core French teachers to be able to build relationships with students given that it is challenging to do so.

A literature review confirmed many of the beliefs held by core French teachers, and provided some solutions including offering core French on a semester basis so that longer times are spent with students. This helps develop relationships and allows for extended use of French in an 80 minute setting. However, if a semester system for French is not possible at the elementary level, WRDSB may need to consider how core French teachers can spend more time with students so that an effective teaching relationship can be formed. Also, the literature advocated a change in pedagogy towards more collaborative and student-lead exercises.

Finally, students in focus groups were asked about transferring out of the French program later in their secondary school years. Students indicate transfers occur because they want to take a different program, that French immersion is not offered at their school, that the quality of teacher becomes more important to them and that extended French is a viable option for them. Students also want to choose program based on friendships and whether they can see themselves using French in their future studies or careers.

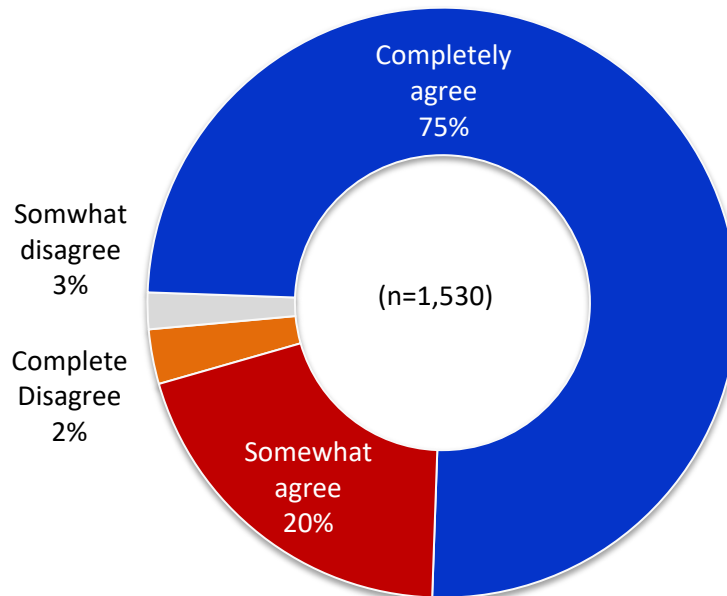
12.2 Focusing on Core and Extended French

12.2.1 Support for Children Learning French in General

Parents/caregivers were asked about whether they want their children to learn French in general and regardless of intensity/program. In total, 75% of all parents/caregivers completely agree that they want

their child to learn French, followed by 20% that somewhat agree with this. In other words, virtually all parents/caregivers on the survey want their child enrolled in some sort of French program. The high proportion of parents/caregivers wanting their children to learn French raises the issue of allocation of French teaching resources throughout the WRDSB to all three French programs: core; extended and immersion.

Figure 12-1: I Want My Child(ren) to Learn French



Parent/Caregiver Survey Q10 Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.... "I want my child(ren) to learn French."

There are some notable differences in the desire to learn French across different segments of the WRDSB population. As would be expected, those with children in French immersion (86%) and extended French (85%) are much more likely to agree that they want their children to learn French than those whose children are in core French (55%). However, with 55% of those with children in core French strongly agreeing with this, and 33% somewhat agreeing, it is still quite clear that a very strong majority favour exposure to French for their children, suggesting that the core French program must be considered as important to those parents/caregivers whose children are enrolled in it.

Another fairly significant finding, and one that is somewhat related to the importance of core French is that those with lower incomes and educations have a higher likelihood of indicating that they want their child to learn French – this finding is based on survey participants and is not representative of the broader WRDSB community. There were some comments in the focus groups that parents/caregivers in these groups perceive learning a second language and being enrolled in French immersion gives their child the possibility greater post-secondary and employment opportunities.

Other differences include the fact that as the grade level of the child increases, the desire to learn French decreases. Those in Cambridge and Kitchener are more likely to agree that they want their children to learn French, compared to those in Waterloo and the Townships.

Table 12-1: Grade and Region Desire for Children to Learn French

% Agree	Grade				Region			
	TOTAL	JK/SK	1 to 8	9 to 12	Cambridge	Kitchener	Waterloo	Townships
Completely	75%	79%	76%	69%	80%	78%	71%	70%
Somewhat	20%	18%	19%	23%	16%	17%	23%	24%
Base	n=1,530	n=452	n=1,168	n=307	n=241	n=620	n=476	n=178

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q10 Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.... "I want my child(ren) to learn French."

Table 12-2: Income and Education Desire for Children to Learn French

% Agree	Income				Level of Education			
	TOTAL	<60	60-90	90+	No BA	BA	>BA	BA+
Completely	75%	82%	81%	73%	79%	73%	75%	74%
Somewhat	20%	13%	15%	22%	16%	22%	20%	21%
Base	n=1,530*	n=85	n=155	n=1,008	n=349	n=543	n=601	n=1,144

*Note, the remaining respondents within the Income columns (282) were either non-respondents or preferred not to answer.

The data also shows that this opinion of exposure to French, or a second language, among lower income individuals, and those with lower educational attainment extends to their belief about life-related outcomes for their children. Specifically, these individuals are more likely to believe that learning a second language increases a student's employment prospects, and that their children will be more likely to get into a first-choice post-secondary institution. One possible implication is that individuals in these groups want to provide children with as many opportunities to succeed as possible and feel that learning a second language may be part of that effort. For the data presented in **Table 12-2** it is important to note that, there are limitations to the survey participation. Respondents voluntarily chose to complete the survey, and the majority of respondents were in the higher income range, hence, it is difficult to know whether results would differ if more respondents in lower income brackets were included.

Table 12-3: Learning a Second Language Increases Employment Prospects

% Agree	Income				Level of Education			
	TOTAL	<60	60-90	90+	No BA	BA	>BA	BA+
Completely	61%	72%	68%	58%	72%	56%	59%	57%
Somewhat	29%	26%	26%	31%	20%	35%	30%	32%
Base	n=1,530	n=85	n=155	n=1,008	n=349	n=543	n=601	n=1,144

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q10 Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.... "Learning a second language increase a students' employment prospects"

Table 12-4: Learning a Second Language Increases Likelihood to Get into First-Choice Post-Secondary Institution

% Agree	Income				Level of Education			
	TOTAL	<60	60-90	90+	No BA	BA	>BA	BA+
Completely	29%	38%	37%	24%	40%	22%	24%	23%
Somewhat	32%	46%	32%	31%	36%	32%	30%	31%
Base	n=1,530	n=85	n=155	n=1,008	n=349	n=543	n=601	n=1,144

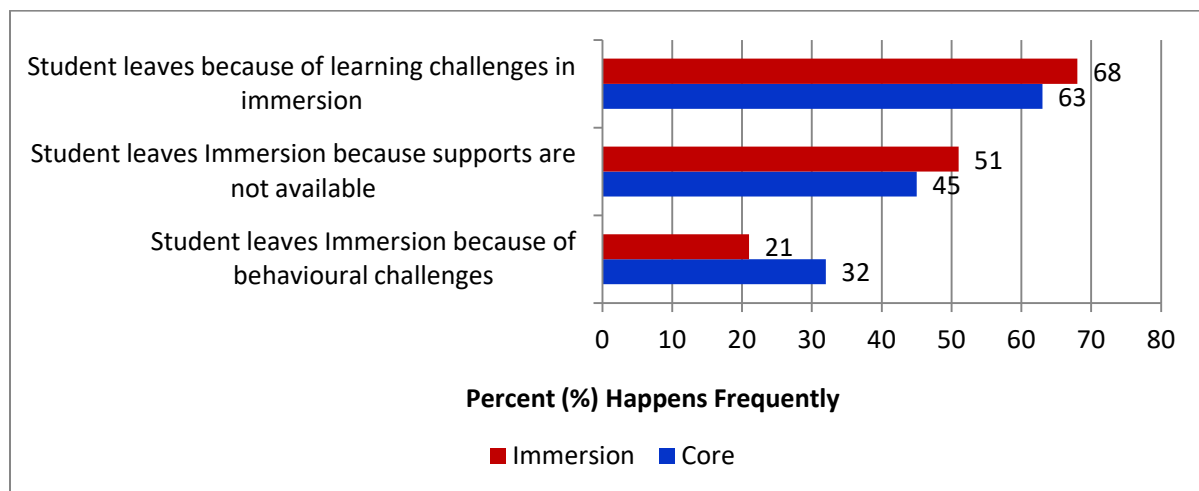
Parent/Caregiver Survey Q10 Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.... "Learning a Second Language Increases Likelihood to Get into First-Choice Post-Secondary Institution"

12.2.2 Qualitative and Quantitative Results among Core French Teachers

There is a sense from a focus group with core French teachers that they feel undervalued. This comes from a few main issues. The first is that many do not have actual classrooms and feel somewhat nomadic, and without a home. In contrast, one did have a classroom for a while and indicated that it made a significant difference to how classes were taught and in regard to student relationship and interaction. Core staff mention that without a classroom, and feeling somewhat undervalued throughout the system, they are unable to build relationships with students that can impact effective learning to them. Core French teachers specifically indicate that French immersion teachers have more of a relationship with students by having them for at least half of the day instead having them just for a period in core French. They say it is always easier to do classroom management and handle behavioural issues when there is a stronger relationship with students. In fact, staff mention that retaining French speaking teachers has been a common issue in the core French program. Teachers are qualified but they usually leave for better jobs or for getting more than one period a day.

The sense of being undervalued contributes to a perception among a few core French teachers that it is not simply that students in French immersion get a better education than those in the core stream. They believe that the students in the core stream get a worse French education because of the very way that the dual-track system is set-up in comparison to core French. Core French teachers indicate that they do not have their own classrooms and have to travel with materials and supplies. They do not spend much time with students, so getting to know their names and their behaviours takes longer, in terms of classroom management.

One issue that is worthwhile mentioning is the fact that core French teachers did not explicitly indicate that they felt that their teaching core French was impeded by behavioural issues or specific learning challenges among the students they were teaching. They did indeed mention, as discussed above, that they have issues with classroom management because they cannot form a relationship with the students the same way other teachers do, who spend more time with the students, but there was not a sense of this truly impeding French instruction. A review of the quantitative analysis in **Figure 12-2** shows that there are not significant differences of opinion between core and immersion French teachers on some of the characteristics of students, with one somewhat small exception. About three in ten core French teachers (32%) indicate that students frequently change from the immersion to core program because of behavioural challenges in the French immersion classroom. About two in ten (21%) of French immersion teachers feel this way. It is important to note though, that this is not to say that the issues do not exist, because well over six in ten of both types of teachers feel that transfers out of French immersion frequently happen because of learning challenges in the French immersion classroom, and some core French teachers supported the idea of increased access to special education assistance in French immersion so that streaming does not occur.

Figure 12-2: Differences of Opinion between Core and Immersion Teachers

Staff Survey Q20 “How often do you feel the following factors influence decisions regarding a student transferring out of a French immersion program?” Base Immersion=167 and Core=120.

A few core French teachers are knowledgeable about and support the vision of WRDSB’s core French program as outlined in **Section 6.2**, to have confidence to use French in simple daily situations. Some participants felt that they were unable to teach the students to a standard that would live up to that goal because of the transient nature and somewhat unsupportive environment in which they work. Some teachers indicated that there is too much focus on math and science to live up to the goals set for core French. However, on a positive note, one teacher affirmed that core French instruction can still be fun, motivating, and very effective for students. Besides, according to a couple of teachers, students in core French can achieve a good level of proficiency in the regular program, which can be extended to be very marketable when it comes to applying for jobs, etc.

12.2.3 Qualitative Perceptions of Core French among Parents/Caregivers and Students

Parents/caregivers and students were asked about their opinions of the core French program in the qualitative sessions. Some parents/caregivers find it poor, while others are quite satisfied. A couple of parents/caregivers mentioned that the best teachers – teachers who are able and motivated – would prefer to teach French immersion as they can avoid many of the behavioural issues found in the core program. They base this opinion on the observation that their children indicate a somewhat high turnover of core French teachers throughout a school year. A few parents/caregivers also mentioned that students do not have enough exposure to the French language during the week and that it could be improved with regular homework and clear expectations for the students.

Parents/caregivers generally felt that it may be more difficult to teach core French, as compared to French immersion, due to lack of adequate supplies. They feel that there are less resource material available to core French teachers than there is to French immersion. Additionally, some parents/caregivers in the groups complained about the lack of support for children with additional learning support need, such as reading, writing, listening and speaking development. Additionally, most parents/caregivers also believe that students in core French do not usually take French language as seriously as the ones in French Immersion.

A couple of parents/caregivers mentioned that it seems like less is expected of core French students. The thought being that if a parent really wanted your child to learn French they would be in French immersion, so core French is just seen as a bonus. Besides, another belief is that the French immersion

program draws the best students, and the best-behaved students, and so outcomes are more positive. Additionally, according to a couple of parents, student achievement/outcomes are linked to the quality of the teacher and also to the class they are assigned to. Apart from the fact that students in core French have different levels of French knowledge, one parent also mentioned the excessive amount of time controlling behaviour, both issues which detract from teaching on core French. It is worthwhile to note that core French teachers did not explicitly mention the behavioural issues of their students to be an issue relating to job satisfaction and/or performance.

Some core students, including those who had previously been in French immersion indicated some disappointment regarding the different levels of French abilities in the classroom among students meaning that usually the teacher has to instruct to the lowest level. Moreover, the idea that French immersion has stronger and better results was mentioned by a few students.

12.2.4 Qualitative Perceptions of Core French among Staff

Focusing qualitatively on principals and vice-principals, there is general agreement that there is more enthusiasm and support for French immersion among families enrolled in it, compared to enthusiasm for core French, which is not perceived to provide as much value to parents/caregivers and students who are enrolled in the core program. According to a few principals, success as a core French teacher comes from having more than a basic level of French, they also need to have the skills and have a passion to teach, and they believe the teachers they have in the WRDSB core French program currently do. This corresponds to opinions provided by core French teachers themselves, who state that given the issues that are involved in teaching core French (outlined in **Section 12.2.2**) success in the core program comes from a passion for the subject and teaching students the core French program. There was some discussion in some interviews around the fact that core French exposed students to another language and another culture, thus making them more well-rounded citizens.

Staff agree that there is a challenge in supporting students with special needs through the core French program itself. They indicate that one reason for the lack of support to accomplish this is because the immersion and core staff may not interact with each other effectively or in a formal way to create supports for both areas of French programming in a dual track school.

12.2.5 Literature Addressing Core French

In 2009 Lapkin, Mady and Arnott conducted a literature review of studies regarding core French in Canada ([Lapkin, Mady, & Arnott, 2009](#)). The article describes many of the issues identified by the WRDSB core French teachers in our interviews, particularly the feelings of marginalization among core French teachers due to both the lack of a classroom, and the inability to form strong relationships with children in order to be effective educators. The article indicates that there is a somewhat circular issue occurring in the sense that there is dissatisfaction among students, especially at the grade nine level and their “lack of progress and their inability to express themselves in French”, including lacking confidence and an inability to express themselves in a French environment. As such, the students at the time they can drop the course in the future do not feel that they are getting benefit from it. The article also goes on to discuss the particular challenges related to teaching students with special education needs in the classroom. The article makes a number of suggestions that may be helpful in addressing the core French program:

- Consider a semester model, where students are receiving 80 minutes of French instruction per class for half a year so that students are able to be more immersed in the language and so that teachers can build a more positive relationship with the students. While not addressed in the literature, if this is not possible in the WRDSB, then it should consider how time between core French teachers and students can be extended so that an effective teaching relationship can be formed;

- A study with special education students revealed that they appreciated “a focus on communication rather than form, simplification of language, provision of feedback, reinforcement [and] oral cues”.
- Core French teachers do not feel adequately prepared to address students with special education needs and they do not feel they have the special education support available in other subjects as they do in French. This is one common thread among immersion teachers found in our research - they too feel they need more support for students with special needs.
- There is a suggestion to move towards a pedagogy that involves collaborative activities and interactive discussion. This could, according to the article also address one of the fundamental issues involved in teaching core French – the use of English by both students and teachers for classroom communication.
- Collaborative dictation, construction of newsletters in French, introducing group drama work, multidimensional project based (MPB) approaches and accelerative integrated method (AIM)⁵⁷ methods are some pedagogical methods that can be introduced in the classroom setting according to the article.

12.2.6 Extended French

All stakeholders were asked about extended French qualitatively. In general, it was not uncommon to hear that there was little familiarity with the program among most stakeholders. The consensus about the program seemed to be that extended French has a place both for Core students who are excelling, and immersion students who wish a less intense exposure to the language, without taking the core program. Some students in the focus groups who stopped taking French immersion felt that the program was an excellent fit for them, and similarly, some staff like the option it presents to students at the end of grade eight as a way of maintaining involvement in French should other factors remove a child from the immersion program itself at that time. In other words, the program seems to be a very good option for those who want or need it.

12.3 Transition to Secondary French Immersion

Staff, other boards and students were asked about the transition from elementary French immersion into secondary French immersion, especially because there is a higher attrition from the French immersion program at this time. While the results below do not provide a solution to the issue, they present some factors to consider about why the attrition rate may increase at the start of the secondary level.

Both HDSB and HWDSB in their key informant interviews indicated that the government is moving towards an increased class size of 28 students at the secondary level, which is placing pressure on those French immersion classes. Moreover, specifically filling the six optional subject credits in French becomes increasingly hard and costly with increased ratios as well. Students in the focus groups definitely noted that subjects they wanted to take in French were not available and/or the teachers that were teaching them in French may not be the right fit for them.

Students in the focus groups provided a number of very practical issues regarding their decision to stay in the French immersion program moving into the secondary program, including:

⁵⁷ AIM combines target language use with gestures, high-frequency vocabulary and drama to accelerate fluency.

- Some students chose other areas of focus such as arts or a particular form of enrichment instead of French immersion;
- A key question is whether French immersion is offered at the school of their choice;
- Quality of the relationship with teachers becomes increasingly important as students will know whether they are able to work well with certain teachers. Students indicate that the relationship is built on overall rapport between teacher and student, as well as the perceived level of passion and knowledge a teacher has for French. Some students indicate that as they enter the later grades they develop a fondness for French culture that they want nurtured by their French immersion teachers; and
- Extended French becomes a viable option for some students, such that they can have increased French exposure while meeting some of the other criteria they want.

However, beyond the practical issues identified above, there were some attitudinal considerations as well that go beyond logistics or choices that need to be made:

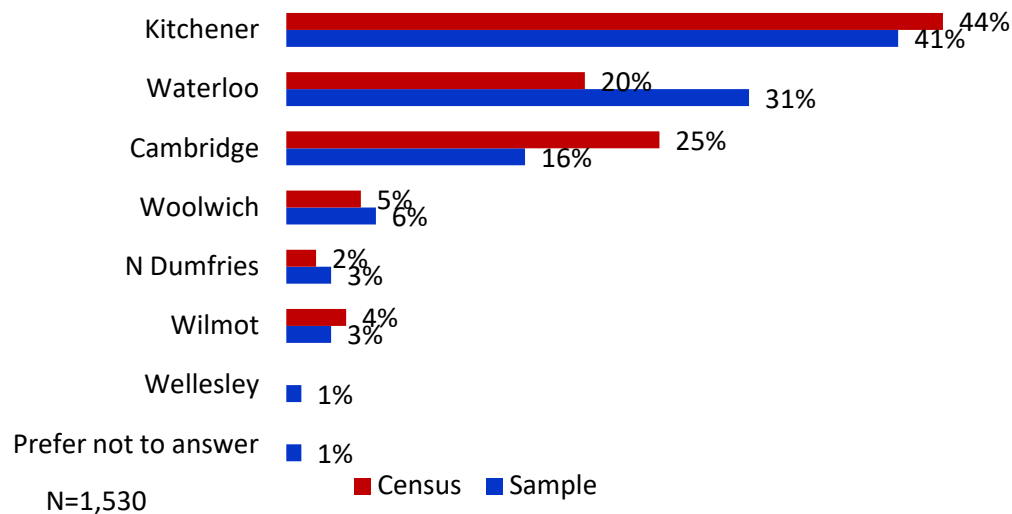
- Students can decide to remain in the program based on friends, which could include staying with friends outside the program, and/or expanding their options to meet new friends;
- Can students see themselves using French in their post secondary education, personal life, family life and/or their career of choice. Some students, in particular felt that entering into the STEM fields required less knowledge of a second language and more knowledge of the particular field of interest;
- Are students attracted to and/or interested in learning French culture? Specifically, some may develop an attachment to it and feel they want to learn more about it by staying involved in immersion. Others might realize, through the first eight years of French education, that they wish to explore other cultures at the time;
- Some indicate that parents/caregivers leave the decisions up to the student at the secondary level; and
- Some continue with the program even though they do not have an intrinsically strong interest in it. That is, their motivation for staying is “I’ve come this far, I may as well finish what I’ve started.”

SECTION 13: PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

13.1 Parents/Caregivers

Among the 1,530 surveys completed by Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) parents/caregivers, **Figure 13-1** shows that 41% indicated that they reside in Kitchener, followed by Waterloo (31%) and Cambridge (16%). Approximately 13% of parents/caregivers indicated they reside in the townships. **Figure 13-1** also shows the 2016 Census distribution of the population across WRDSB. As can be seen, the sample contains a higher proportion of Waterloo residents and a lower proportion of Cambridge residents when compared to the 2016 Census⁵⁸.

Figure 13-1: Area in Which Respondents Reside



Parent/Caregiver Survey Q16 In which region do you live?

As noted in **Table 13-1: Respondent Profile of Languages Spoken Most Often at Home**, the proportion of parents/caregivers (91%) indicating that they speak English most often at home is greater across all cities and townships in WRDSB as compared to the proportions for the 2016 Census. Representation among those who speak a non-official language at home (i.e. a language other than French or English) or a combination of English and another language appear somewhat under-represented in the survey results as compared to the 2016 Census.

⁵⁸ <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-cma-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CMA&GC=541&TOPIC=1>

Table 13-1: Respondent Profile of Languages Spoken Most Often at Home

	English Only		French Only		Non-Official Language Only		English & Non-Official Language	
	Survey	2016 Census	Survey	2016 Census	Survey	2016 Census	Survey	2016 Census
The City of Kitchener	92%	80%	-	0.4%	7%	14%	1%	5%
The City of Waterloo	89%	80%	0.4%	0.3%	8%	15%	2%	5%
The City of Cambridge	93%	89%	0.4%	0.3%	6%	8%	1%	4%
Township of Woolwich	92%	86%	-	0.2%	6%	12%	1%	2%
The Township of North Dumfries	95%	96%	2.3%	0.1%	2%	2%	-	1%
The Township of Wilmot	97%	97%	2.6%	0.2%	-	2%	-	1%
The Township of Wellesley	100%	69%	-	0.1%	-	29%	-	1%
Total	91%	83%	0.3%	0.3%	7%	12%	1%	4%

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q17 Which language does your family speak most often at home? Region of Waterloo 2016 Census Bulletin 4 Language Access

Table 13-2 shows 35% of parents/caregivers have a bachelor's degree, with 39% indicating they have a university degree above bachelor. The City of Waterloo has a greater proportion of parents/caregivers with a university degree above bachelor (47% compared to 35%-37% among rest of the Region) and fewer parents/caregivers with less than a bachelor's degree (12% compared to 27%-31%).

Table 13-2: Respondent Profile of Education

	Total (n=1530)	Cambridge (n=241)	Kitchener (n=620)	Waterloo (n=476)	Townships* (n=178)
Less than a BA	23%	31%	27%	12%	28%
Bachelor's Degree	35%	32%	36%	37%	34%
University degree above BA	39%	36%	35%	47%	37%
Refused	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%

*Includes the Townships of Woolwich, North Dumfries, Wilmot and Wellesley.

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q18 What is the highest certificate, diploma or degree you have completed?

Table 13-3 shows the majority (81%) of parents/caregivers responding to the survey reported a household income of \$90,000 or more, with the highest proportion among those living in the townships (88% compared to 76%-85%). Those with higher incomes are over-represented in the survey results compared to the 2016 Census.

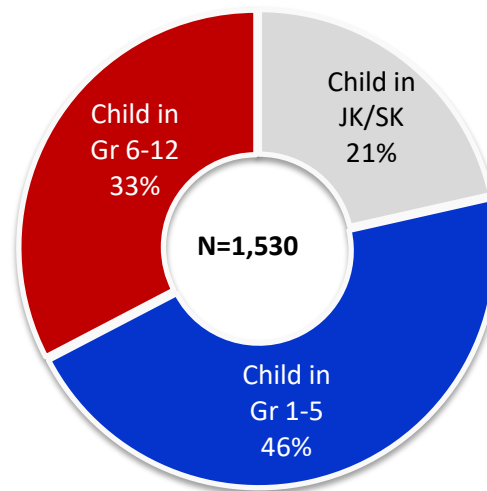
Table 13-3: Income Profile of Respondents

	WRDSB		Cambridge		Kitchener		Waterloo		Townships*	
	Survey (n=1248)	Census	Survey (n=195)	Census	Survey (n=517)	Census	Survey (n=381)	Census	Survey (n=178)	Census
Less \$30,000	2%	15%	3%	14%	2%	16%	1%	16%	1%	8.1%
\$30,000 - \$59,999	5%	23%	4%	24%	7%	26%	5%	20%	1%	17%
\$60,000 - \$89,999	12%	20%	14%	21%	16%	21%	8%	18%	9%	19%
\$90,000 or more	81%	42%	79%	42%	76%	37%	85%	46%	88%	48%

Excludes "Prefer not to answer". *Includes the Townships of Woolwich, North Dumfries, Wilmot and Wellesley.

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q18 What is the highest certificate, diploma or degree you have completed? Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

Figure 13-2: below displays the proportion of parents/caregivers with children in the various grade groupings. About half (46%) have children in grades one through five, with one third having them in grades six through 12. About two in ten (21%) have children in kindergarten.

Figure 13-2: Child's Grade Grouping

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q1 How many children do you have in each grade?

Parents/caregivers were also asked to select where the school their child attends is located. As with location of residence, a greater proportion of schools are located in Kitchener (range of 38% to 46%), followed by Waterloo (range of 28% to 34%), Cambridge (range of 13% to 19%), and the Townships (fewer than 10%) (**Table 13-4**). Table 13-4 below also shows a close alignment between the location of the child's school and the location of residence.

Table 13-4: Location of School vs. Home

	Location of School			Location of Residence		
	JK/SK (n=452)	GR1-5 (n=965)	GR6-12 (n=687)	JK/SK (n=452)	GR1-5 (n=965)	Gr6-12 (n=687)
The City of Kitchener	39%	38%	46%	40%	40%	42%
The City of Waterloo	28%	33%	34%	27%	29%	35%
The City of Cambridge	19%	17%	13%	18%	17%	13%
The Township of Woolwich	6%	7%	4%	6%	7%	4%
The Township of North Dumfries	4%	3%	1%	5%	3%	2%
The Township of Wilmot	3%	2%	2%	4%	2%	2%
The Township of Wellesley	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%
Refused	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q2 In which region is the school(s) your child(ren) attend located? Q16 In which region do you live?

A total of 92% of parents/caregivers indicated that all of their child(ren) attend a school near their residence, while 6% of respondents indicated that all of their child(ren) attend school outside of their area, and 2% have a mix of both (some of their children attending school near their residence and some who attend school outside of their area). Results by grade grouping show that fewer children in grades six through 12 attend school within their catchment zone (**Table 13-5**).

Table 13-5: School Located Within or Outside Zone

	JK/SK (n=452)	GR1-5 (n=965)	GR6-12 (n=687)
Within zone	86%	82%	69%
Outside zone	12%	18%	29%
Refused	2%	1%	2%

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q4 Is the school this child attends located within your designated school zone/catchment area?

When asked how their children typically get to school, a greater proportion of parents/caregivers reported that, across all grade groups, their children walk to school than are driven or bussed (range of 36% to 47% vs. 35%-39% driven and 13% -24% bussed) (**Table 13-6**). However, children in grades six through 12 are less likely to walk and more likely to be bussed than children in lower grades.

Table 13-6: How Child Gets to School

	JK/SK (n=452)	1-5 (n=965)	6-12 (n=687)
Walks	43%	47%	36%
Driven	39%	38%	35%
Bussed	16%	13%	24%
None of the above	1%	1%	4%
Refused	1%	1%	1%

Parents/Caregiver Survey Q3 How does your child typically get to school?

Parents/caregivers were asked whether any of their children have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). As shown in **Table 13-7** survey participants, parents of children in grades six through 12 are more likely to report that their children have an IEP than parents of children in lower grades (22% overall vs. 13% overall in grades one through 5, 2% overall in JK/SK). Among children in JK/SK with an IEP, half have special needs. Among children in grades one through 5 with an IEP, 47% have special needs and 11% are gifted. Among children in grades six through 12 with an IEP, 35% have special needs and 31% are gifted. As mentioned in other areas of the report, results of this research are limited to those parents who participated, they may not fully represent the opinions/scenarios of all parents in the region.

Table 13-7: Child with Individual Education Plan (IEP)

	Total	Cambridge	Kitchener	Waterloo	Townships*
Does child in JK/SK have an IEP?	(n=452)	(n=80)	(n=181)	(n=120)	(n=67)
Yes	2%	4%	2%	2%	1%
No	94%	94%	94%	96%	96%
Refused	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Does child in grade 1-5 have an IEP?	(n=965)	(n=166)	(n=382)	(n=284)	(n=126)
Yes	13%	16%	13%	12%	10%
No	84%	80%	85%	85%	87%
Refused	3%	4%	2%	4%	2%
Does child in grade 6-12 have an IEP?	(n=687)	(n=90)	(n=291)	(n=243)	(n=55)
Yes	22%	24%	23%	21%	18%
No	75%	72%	76%	76%	78%
Refused	2%	3%	1%	3%	4%

*Includes the Townships of Woolwich, North Dumfries, Wilmot and Wellesley.

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q19 Does your child or any of your children have an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

As shown in **Table 13-8**, the majority of parents/caregivers with children in kindergarten indicated that they plan for their child to take the French immersion program in grade one (83% vs. 12% of those indicating their child will take core French). A total of 74% of parents/caregivers with children in grades one through five indicated their child is in French immersion with 25% of children in the same grade

group take core French. Fewer children in grades six through 12 in the sample are likely to take French immersion than children in lower grades (50% vs. 74% grades one through five and 83% kindergarten), with 30% of children in this grade group taking core French (**Table 13-8**).

It is important to note that this sample composition will weigh the total results more towards those with children in French immersion, and as such, the total for this study cannot be representative of the entire WRDSB population. WRDSB's 2018 French Immersion Review Committee Report shows that the proportion of elementary enrollment in French immersion is 22% and secondary enrollment is 6% (WRDSB: French Immersion Review Committee, 2018). The sample collected for this study, as shown in Table 13-8 shows a much higher proportion enrolled in French immersion. To help address this in the report, where opinions between those with children in French immersion and non-French immersion differ, the results for both groups are shown.

Table 13-8: Type of French Programming Child(ren) Receives/Will Receive

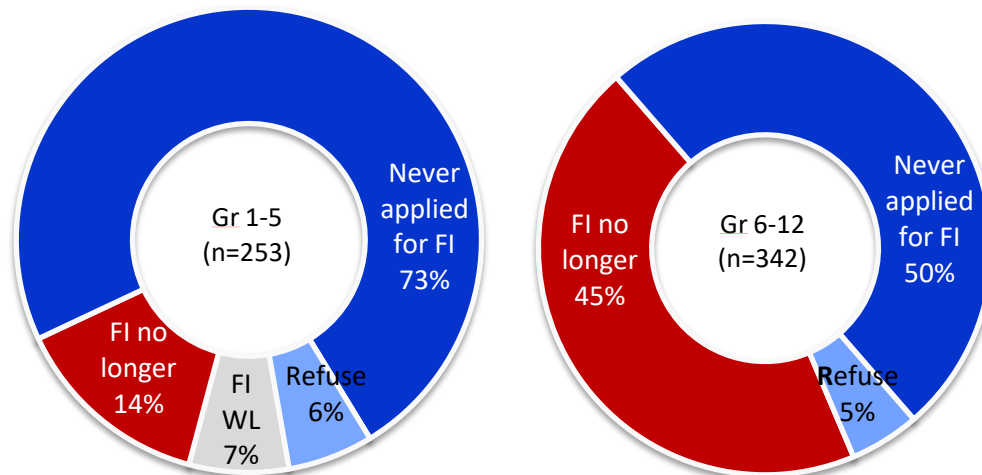
	JK/SK (n=452)	Gr 1-5 (n=965)	Gr 6-12 (n=687)
French immersion	83%	74%	50%
Core French	12%	25%	30%
Instruction in English only	--	--	13%
Extended French	--	--	6%
Refused	5%	1%	1%

Parents/Caregiver Survey Q5 What type of French programming does your child currently receive?

NB – Please see note above involving skew in this sample towards those with children in French immersion.

Parents/caregivers who indicated that their child was not in French immersion were asked if their child's school offered French immersion. Among parents/caregivers with children in kindergarten, 65% of parents/caregivers indicated that their child will attend a dual track school, 28% said their child will attend a school that does not offer French immersion and 7% preferred not to answer the question. A greater proportion of parents/caregivers with children in grades one through five noted their children attend a dual track school (63% vs. 36% non-French immersion school and 1% prefer not to answer); while a greater proportion of children in grades six through 12 attend a non-French immersion school than those who attend a dual track school (56% vs. 38%, 6% prefer not to answer).

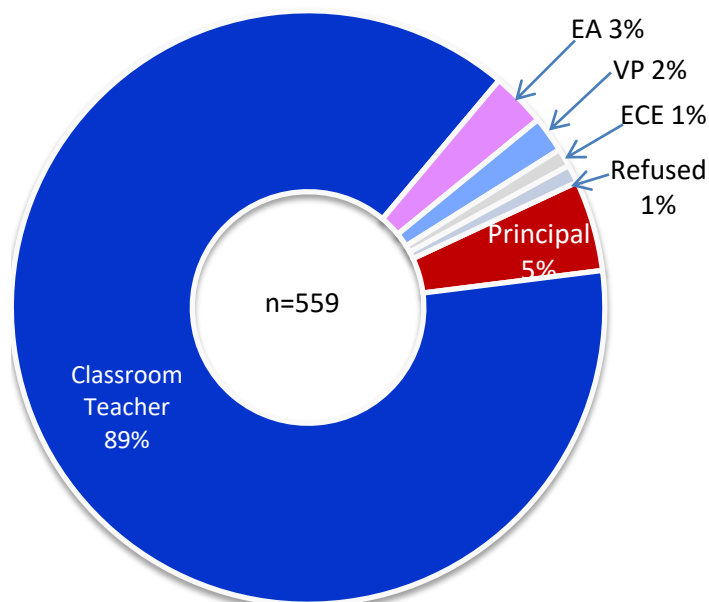
As shown in **Figure 13-3**, parents/caregivers with children not in French immersion were asked to indicate whether they had ever applied for French immersion for that child, whether the child was on a waitlist for French immersion or whether the child was in French immersion but is no longer. Among children in grades one through five, 73% of parents/caregivers indicated that they had never applied for French immersion for their child and 14% indicated that their child was no longer in French immersion; a small proportion (7%) indicated that their child was on a wait list for French immersion and 6% preferred not to answer. Half of parents/caregivers with children in grades six through 12 indicated that they had never applied for French immersion for their child and 45% indicated that their child was no longer in French immersion, with 5% preferring not to answer the question (Figure 13-3).

Figure 13-3: Experience with French Immersion among those with Children not in FI

Parent/Caregiver Survey Q8 Which of the following best describes your child's experience with French immersion...

13.2 Staff

Among the 559 school staff who participated in the survey 89% were teachers, 5% principals, 3% educational assistants (EA), 2% vice-principals, 1% designated early childhood educators (ECE), and 1% of respondents refused to provide their title. Just over three-quarters (77%) of surveyed staff identified as female, 14% as male, fewer than 1% as gender fluid or two-spirited, and 9% preferred not to answer the question as shown in **Figure 13-4**.

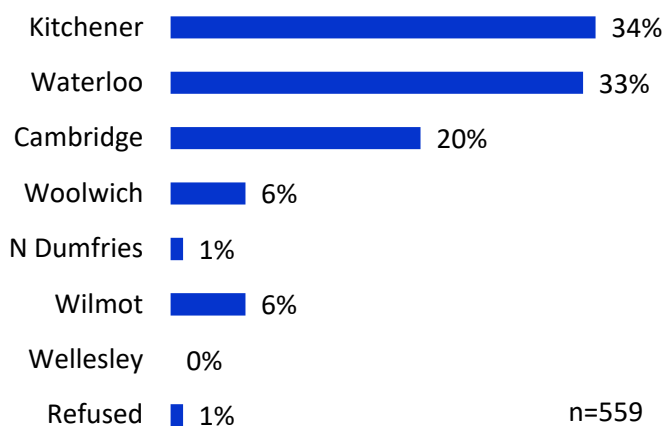
Figure 13-4: Distribution of Staff

Staff Survey Q1 What is your job title?

Approximately one-third of staff surveyed indicated they worked at a school located in Kitchener (34%) or Waterloo (33%), while 20% of staff were located at a school in Cambridge. The remaining 13% of staff

worked at a school in three of the four Townships (6% each in Woolwich and Wilmot, 1% in North Dumfries); the Township of Wellesley was the only location not represented by surveyed staff.

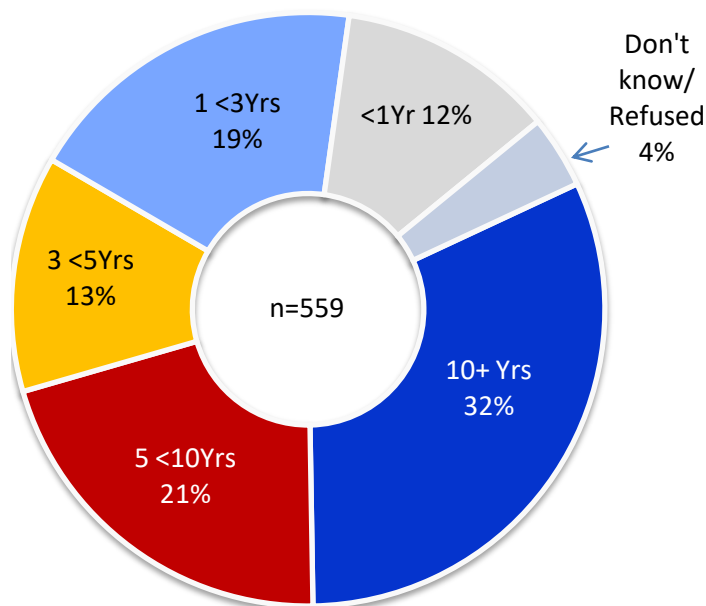
Figure 13-5: Location of Schools Staff Work in



Staff Survey Q2 In which region is your school located?

When asked how long they had been at their school in their current position, just over four in 10 staff had been at their school for less than five years, with 21% indicating they had been there between five and 10 years and 32% had been there for 10 years or longer (**Figure 13-6**).

Figure 13-6: Length at Current School



Staff Survey Q21 How long have you been at this school?

Staff were asked to identify the type of French programming that was delivered in their school. The majority of staff (68%) indicated they work in a school with extended French and French immersion (**Table 13-9**). Across the District, a greater proportion of staff working in Waterloo school's were more likely to indicated that their school delivered core French and French immersion and/or extended French programs (82% vs. range of 50% - 69% across other areas in WRDSB) (**Table 13-9**).

Table 13-9: Type of French Programming Delivered at School

Programming delivered at school	Total (n=559)	Cambridge (n=114)	Kitchener (n=188)	Waterloo (n=182)	Townships* (n=72)
Core French only	32%	46%	31%	18%	50%
French Immersion &/or Extended French	68%	54%	69%	82%	50%

*Includes the Townships of Woolwich, North Dumfries, Wilmot and Wellesley.

Staff Survey Q3 What type of French programming is delivered at your school?

Teaching staff (i.e. teachers, EAs and ECEs) were then asked whether they provided instruction in English only, French only or both English and French. As shown in **Table 13-10** half of teaching staff reported they instruct in English only while 33% provide instruction in French and English, and 16% instruct in French only. Across the District, teaching staff in Waterloo and Kitchener are more likely to provide instruction in French only than teaching staff in Cambridge or the Townships (22% and 18% vs. 10% and 6% respectively) (**Table 13-10**).

Table 13-10: Language of Instruction in Classroom

Programming delivered in classroom	Total (n=517)	Cambridge (n=104)	Kitchener (n=170)	Waterloo (n=175)	Townships* (n=66)
English only	50%	51%	54%	43%	55%
French only	16%	10%	18%	22%	6%
English and French	33%	38%	28%	33%	38%
Refused	1%	1%	--	2%	2%

*Includes the Townships of Woolwich, North Dumfries, Wilmot and Wellesley.

Staff Survey Q4 In which language do you provide instruction in your classroom?

Among staff who indicated that they provide instruction in English only, 91% indicated that they were a permanent educator or educational assistant; while 9% indicated that they were an occasional educator/ educational assistant. When asked if they had ever taught students in a French immersion classroom, the majority (67%) of occasional educators/assistants indicated that they had and 33% indicated they had not. Among occasional educators/assistants who had taught students in a French immersion classroom (n=16), two indicated that they taught these students all the time during the current school year, five some of the time, three rarely, and five indicated they had not taught French immersion students in the current school year (one indicated they did not know).

Staff who indicated that they provide instruction in French or a combination of English and French were asked to identify the type of French programming that they taught or was delivered in the classroom in which they teach. More than 6 in 10 staff that provide all or some instruction in French indicated that they teach in a French immersion classroom (64% vs. 46% core French and 7% extended French) (**Table 13-11**). Across WRDSB, Waterloo staff who instruct in French or French and English were more likely to teach in a French immersion class than those from other areas (73% vs. 45%-67%). Conversely, staff from the Townships who instruct in French or French and English were more likely to

teach a core French class than those from other areas in the District (76% vs. 42%-55%) (**Table 13-11: Length at Current School**).

Table 13-11: Type of French Programming Delivered in Classroom

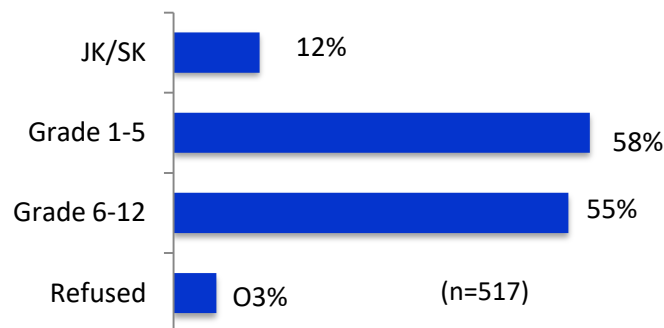
Programming delivered in classroom	Total (n=261)	Cambridge (n=51)	Kitchener (n=81)	Waterloo (n=98)	Townships* (n=29)
Core French	46%	55%	42%	35%	76%
French Immersion	64%	53%	67%	73%	45%
Extended French	7%	2%	12%	6%	--
Refused	2%	2%	2%	2%	--

*Includes the Townships of Woolwich, North Dumfries, Wilmot and Wellesley.

Staff Survey Q5 Which type of French programming do you teach/is delivered in the classroom(s) in which you work?

Teaching staff (i.e. teachers, EAs and ECEs) were asked to indicate what grades they taught or provided assistance. As shown in **Figure 13-7**: 12% of staff indicated they taught or provided assistance in JK/SK, 58% in grades one through five and 55% in grades six through 12.

Figure 13-7: Grades Taught



Staff Survey Q22 What grade(s) do you teach or provide assistance to in the current school year?

Many of the teaching staff indicated that they taught or provided assistance in multiple grades. Among those who selected senior kindergarten, 47% also taught or provided assistance in grades one, two or three; while 3% taught or provided assistance in grades seven or eight. Among those in the grade one through five grouping, 12% indicated that they also taught or provided assistance in kindergarten and 5% indicated grades seven or eight. A greater proportion of teaching staff in the six through 12 grade group indicated that they also taught or provided assistance in the lower grades.

Table 13-12: Grades Taught by Grade Grouping

Class size	Total (n=517)	JK/SK (n=62)	Grade 1-5 (n=298)	Grade 6-12 (n=282)
Junior Kindergarten	12%	97%	12%	6%
Senior Kindergarten	12%	100%	12%	7%
Grade 1	26%	47%	46%	20%
Grade 2	31%	47%	54%	23%
Grade 3	30%	47%	52%	23%
Grade 4	26%	39%	46%	26%
Grade 5	27%	29%	47%	36%
Grade 6	22%	29%	35%	41%
Grade 7	11%	3%	5%	21%
Grade 8	10%	3%	5%	19%
Grade 9	18%	--	--	33%
Grade 10	19%	--	--	35%
Grade 11	17%	--	--	32%
Grade 12	17%	--	--	32%
Refused	3%	--	--	--

Staff Survey Q22 What grade(s) do you teach or provide assistance to in the current school year?

As shown in **Table 13-13**, the majority of teaching staff have class sizes of between 20 and 30 students. Of note, a significantly greater proportion of core French teaching staff have more than 30 students in their class compared to those who teach French immersion and/or extended French (12% vs. 7%). In addition, a greater proportion of teaching staff with less than 20 students in their class teach French immersion and/or extended French (14% vs. 10% respectively) (**Table 13-13**).

Table 13-13: Class Size by Programming Type

Class size	Total (n=517)	Core French (n=162)	French Immersion or Extended French (n=355)
Less than 20	13%	10%	14%
20 to less than 30	73%	72%	73%
30 or more	9%	12%	7%

Staff Survey Q23 How many students are in your classroom?

Teaching staff were asked how many students in their class were newcomers or had been diagnosed or tested as having special needs, gifted or a learning disability. As shown in **Table 13-14**: on average, classes may contain approximately three newcomers, two gifted children, and three or more children with special needs or a learning disability. When analyzed by type of French programming taught, core French classes have a greater reported average of children with a learning disability than French immersion or extended French classes (3.5 and 3.9 vs. 3.4).

Table 13-14: Students who are Newcomers, Gifted, Have Special Needs or Learning Disability

Mean # of students...	Total (n=517)	Core French (n=162)	French Immersion or Extended French (n=355)
Newcomers	3.3	3.0	3.4
Special Needs	3.4	3.6	3.4
Gifted	2.2	2.2	2.2
Learning Disability	3.5	3.9	3.4

Staff Survey Q24 How many students in your class are newcomers to Canada? Q25 Approximately how many students in your class have been diagnosed or have tested as having special needs, gifted or a learning disability?

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WRDSB: OSL Framework. *OSL Framework*.

APPENDIX A: QUANTITATIVE PARENT/CAREGIVER AND STAFF SURVEYS

RAM
Logo

WRDS
B Logo

WATERLOO REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD PARENT/CAREGIVER FRENCH PROGRAMMING SURVEY

[The Header on each page should contain Client Logo, RAM logo and above Title]

Landing Page

If this is your first time visiting this page, please obtain an access code that will allow you to return to complete the survey in multiple sessions. Please write down your access code so you will have it available when you return to the survey.

If you don't have an access code, please click here

If you are returning to this page, please enter your access code and then click the enter button

Enter

Your access code is **[INSERT CODE]**.
Write it out to be able to access your answers in the future.

Your opinion matters!

The Waterloo Region District School Board, in partnership with R.A Malatest and Associates Ltd., is conducting a survey of families who live in the district and have a child or children who attend a school in the district (including Kindergarten).

The survey is about your impressions of the French programming delivered in the school(s) your child(ren) attend, including [core French](#), [extended French](#) and [French immersion](#). If your child is in junior or senior kindergarten, we want to hear what type of French programming you would like for your child when they enter Grade 1.

[Please use template that shows mouse-over's when using cell phones]

[SHOW MOUSE-OVER FOR "CORE FRENCH" EACH TIME THE TERM IS USED THROUGHOUT THE SURVEY: Core French is taught to all students in our elementary schools from Grades 1 through 9. In Grades 10 through 12, students may choose to continue studying French by selecting one Core French course per year. Students learn the French language by speaking, reading and writing.]

[SHOW MOUSE-OVER FOR "EXTENDED FRENCH" EACH TIME THE TERM IS USED THROUGHOUT THE SURVEY: Extended French programs are available to students who have completed the Elementary Immersion program and would like to continue with more intensive French instruction.

Extended French programs require students to complete four French language courses. Students enrolled in Extended French must also complete a minimum of three courses in other subjects taught in French.]

[SHOW MOUSE-OVER FOR “FRENCH IMMERSION” EACH TIME THE TERM IS USED THROUGHOUT THE SURVEY: French Immersion programs are available to students who have completed the Elementary Immersion program and would like to continue with more intensive French instruction.

French Immersion programs require students to complete four French language courses. Students enrolled in Immersion French must complete a minimum of six courses in other subjects taught in French.]

The information from the survey will help Waterloo Region District School Board determine what type(s) of French programming should be offered at schools in the District.

The survey takes about 10 minutes to finish, depending on your responses.

Why is the Waterloo Region District School Board doing this survey?

We want to improve French programming in the Waterloo Region District School Board so that it meets the needs of all families with school age children.

Who can participate?

If your child(ren) attends a school in the Waterloo Region District School Board, this survey is for you! The survey is open to parents/caregivers and caregivers including legal guardians. Please note that we need only ONE response from each family.

When can I participate?

The survey is open for approximately a three-week period and will close May 10, 2019.

Ready to tell us what you think?

Your privacy is important to us. Your individual answers will never be seen by the Waterloo Region District School Board or by any of the staff at the school your child attends. Your answers will be grouped with the answers of others who fill out the survey so we will not know who you are. You will only be asked to provide your email address if you would like to participate in future discussions (such as discussion groups) about French programming in your community.

The information that you share with us will remain anonymous for reporting purposes. This means that only researchers at R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. will have access to your information. More information on our privacy policy can be found at <http://www.malatest.com/Privacy.htm>

This survey is optional. **If you participate, you will be asked to enter a response for each question in the survey. You cannot skip a question. You will have the option to select “I prefer not to answer” if you wish. Some questions will be mandatory because they guide the other questions you will be asked.** You can end the survey at any time.

Who to contact if you have questions:

If you have trouble accessing the survey, please contact enquiries@malatest.com or call 1-855-688-1140.

Wish to complete the survey in another language?

Please note that the survey is offered online in English only. If you would like to complete the survey in another language, please contact enquiries@malatest.com or call 1-855-688-1140 to set up an appointment to complete the survey over the phone in your preferred language.

Do you consent to participate in this survey?

Yes **[CONTINUE]**

No **[TERMINATE: Thank you for your time. EXIT TO W.R.D.S.B. HOME PAGE
<https://www.wrdsb.ca/>]**

CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE

ABOUT YOUR CHILD

[Do not display above Section Title on survey page]

Please choose an answer to each question.

- 1) A. How many children do you have in each grade listed below? (Please (Pick all that apply))

Please note: Only indicate the number of children in each grade. If you have no children in one of the grades listed, please leave it blank. Do not place a zero (0) in any of the grades listed.

[MANDATORY QUESTION. MAXIMUM NUMBER ALLOWED FOR EACH AGE CATEGORY IS 5.]

Error Message:

Incomplete or erroneous data were identified on this page. Please see below.

Please choose a value between 1 and 5.

Please provide at least 1 and at most 5 answers to this question.

You must enter a number of children for at least one grade. Please revise your answer or select "I prefer not to answer" at the bottom of the page.

Please uncheck "I prefer not to answer" or erase any numbers supplied.

	Enter # of children
Junior kindergarten	<input type="text"/>
Senior kindergarten	<input type="text"/>
Grade 1	<input type="text"/>
Grade 2	<input type="text"/>
Grade 3	<input type="text"/>
Grade 4	<input type="text"/>
Grade 5	<input type="text"/>
Grade 6	<input type="text"/>
Grade 7	<input type="text"/>
Grade 8	<input type="text"/>
Grade 9	<input type="text"/>
Grade 10	<input type="text"/>
Grade 11	<input type="text"/>
Grade 12	<input type="text"/>

[ASK THIS QUESTION A MAXIMUM OF 3 TIMES; ONE FOR EACH CHILD IN EACH AGE CATEGORY]

- 2) In which region is the school(s) your **[ENTER GRADE]** child(ren) attend located? **(Pick one answer only)**

The City of Cambridge	<input type="checkbox"/>
The City of Kitchener	<input type="checkbox"/>
The City of Waterloo	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Township of Wilmot	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Township of Wellesley	<input type="checkbox"/>

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| The Township of Woolwich | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The Township of North Dumfries | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

[IF “I PREFER NOT TO ANSWER”: Please provide an answer to this question so that the Waterloo Region District School Board can plan for French programming at schools in your region.]

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

[Do not display above Section Title on survey page]

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WILL BE ANSWERED FOR A MAXIMUM OF 3 CHILDREN, ONE IN JUNIOR OR SENIOR KINDERGARTEN, ONE IN GRADE 1-5, AND ONE IN GRADE 6-12.

SELECTION OF CHILD IN JUNIOR OR SENIOR KINDERGARTEN:

A) IF BOTH JUNIOR AND SENIOR KINDERGARTEN SELECTED AT Q1 AND ONLY ONE CHILD IN EACH GRADE, RANDOMLY SELECT ONE GRADE AND SAY: “You have one child in Junior Kindergarten and one child in Senior Kindergarten. Please answer the following questions about your child in [ENTER RANDOMLY SELECTED GRADE]

B) IF TWO OR MORE CHILDREN IN JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN OR SENIOR KINDERGARTEN, SAY: “You have more than one child in [JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN/SENIOR KINDERGARTEN]. Please answer the following questions about just one of these children.

IF BOTH A) AND B), RANDOMLY SELECT A) OR B)

SELECTION OF CHILD IN GRADE 1-5:

C) IF MORE THAN ONE GRADE AT Q1 AND ONLY ONE CHILD IN EACH GRADE, RANDOMLY SELECT ONE GRADE AND SAY: “You have more than one child in Grade 5 or under. Please answer the following questions about your child in Grade [ENTER RANDOMLY SELECTED GRADE]

D) IF TWO OR MORE CHILDREN IN THE SAME GRADE, SAY: “You have more than one child in the same grade and they are in Grade 5 or under. Please answer the following questions about just one of these children.

IF BOTH C) AND D), RANDOMLY SELECT C) OR D)

SELECTION OF CHILD IN GRADE 6-12:

E) IF MORE THAN ONE GRADE AT Q1 AND ONLY ONE CHILD IN EACH GRADE, RANDOMLY SELECT ONE GRADE AND SAY: “You have more than one child in Grade 6 to 12. Please answer the following questions about your child in Grade [ENTER RANDOMLY SELECTED GRADE]

F) IF TWO OR MORE CHILDREN IN THE SAME GRADE IN GRADE 6-12, SAY: “You have more than one child in the same grade and they are in Grade 6 to 12. Please answer the following questions about just one of these children.

IF BOTH E) AND F), RANDOMLY SELECT E) OR F)

ASK QUESTIONS IN THIS SECTION A MAXIMUM OF 3 TIMES; ONE FOR EACH CHILD IN EACH AGE CATEGORY

3) How does your child in [ENTER GRADE] typically get to school? (Pick one answer only)

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| I/someone else drives my child to school | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Child is bussed to school | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Child walks to school | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| None of the above | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- 4) Is the school this child attends located within your designated school zone/catchment area? **(Pick one answer only)**

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Within designated school zone | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Outside designated school zone | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- 5) What type of French programming does your child in **[ENTER GRADE]** currently receive? **(Pick one answer only)**

IF Q1 = JUNIOR OR SENIOR KINDERGARTEN, ASK:

What type of French programming would you like your child who is currently in **[JUNIOR/SENIOR]** Kindergarten to receive when they enter Grade 1? **(Pick one answer only)**

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| <u>Core French</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| [IF GRADE 9-12] <u>Extended French</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>French immersion</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| [IF GRADE 10-12] <u>Instruction in English only</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

[SHOW MOUSE-OVER FOR "CORE FRENCH" EACH TIME THE TERM IS USED THROUGHOUT THE SURVEY: Core French is taught to all students in our elementary schools from Grades 1 through 9. In Grades 10 through 12, students may choose to continue studying French by selecting one Core French course per year. Students learn the French language by speaking, reading and writing.]

[SHOW MOUSE-OVER FOR "EXTENDED FRENCH" EACH TIME THE TERM IS USED THROUGHOUT THE SURVEY: Extended French programs are available to students who have completed the Elementary Immersion program and would like to continue with more intensive French instruction.

Extended French programs require students to complete four French language courses. Students enrolled in Extended French must also complete a minimum of three courses in other subjects taught in French.]

[SHOW MOUSE-OVER FOR "FRENCH IMMERSION" EACH TIME THE TERM IS USED THROUGHOUT THE SURVEY: French Immersion programs are available to students who have completed the Elementary Immersion program and would like to continue with more intensive French instruction.

French Immersion programs require students to complete four French language courses. Students enrolled in Immersion French must complete a minimum of six courses in other subjects taught in French.]

[SHOW MOUSE-OVER FOR "INSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH ONLY" EACH TIME THE TERM IS USED THROUGHOUT THE SURVEY: From Grade 10 to Grade 12 students are not required to be

enrolled in French programming. Students not enrolled in French programming receive instruction in English only.]

IF Q1 ≠ "JUNIOR OR SENIOR KINDERGARTEN" ASK:

6) How satisfied are you with the [ENTER Q5 RESPONSE] programming your child who is in [ENTER GRADE] currently receives? **(Pick one answer only)**

IF Q5 = "I don't know" or "I prefer not to answer" ASK:

How satisfied are you with the programming your child who is in [ENTER GRADE] currently receives? **(Pick one answer only)**

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Extremely satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not very satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not at all satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

IF Q5 ≠ "FRENCH IMMERSION" ASK:

7) Is French immersion programming offered at this child's school?

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

IF Q1 ≠ "JUNIOR OR SENIOR KINDERGARTEN" OR Q5 ≠ "FRENCH IMMERSION" ASK:

8) Which of the following best describes your [ENTER GRADE] child's experience with French Immersion. **(Pick one answer only) [DO NOT SHOW MOUSE-OVER FOR "FRENCH IMMERSION" IN LIST BELOW.]**

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| [IF GRADE 1-5] Child is on a waitlist for French immersion | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Child used to be in French immersion but is no longer | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I have never applied for French immersion for this child | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

[ASK THIS QUESTION A MAXIMUM OF 3 TIMES; ONE FOR EACH CHILD IN EACH AGE CATEGORY]

9) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "There is a need for more French immersion programming in my [ENTER GRADE] child's school or in my neighbourhood."

(Pick one answer only)

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Completely agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Somewhat agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Somewhat disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Completely disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

IMPRESSIONS OF FRENCH IMMERSION

[Do not display above Section Title on survey page]

[The remaining questions to be asked only once regardless of number of children or children in multiple grade groupings]

- 10) Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.
(Pick one answer for each statement) **[ROTATE STATEMENTS]**

	Completely agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Completely disagree	Don't know/ prefer not to answer
I want my child(ren) to learn French	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
French immersion programming enriches students' educational experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All students should have the opportunity to access French immersion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic outcomes are better for students enrolled in French immersion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having friends or family members in the French immersion stream is important for my child(ren)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A second language increases students' employment prospects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A second language increases the likelihood that students will get into their first-choice post-secondary institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)					

IF Q5 ≠ "FRENCH IMMERSION"

- 11) In general, how would you characterize your opinion of French immersion programming? (Pick one answer only)

Completely in favour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Somewhat in favour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Somewhat against	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completely against	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
I prefer not to answer	<input type="checkbox"/>

IF Q11 = "SOMEWHAT AGAINST" OR "COMPLETELY AGAINST" ASK:

- 12) You indicated that you are **[INSERT Q11 RESPONSE]** French immersion programming. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding French immersion programming? (Pick one answer for each statement) **[ROTATE STATEMENTS]**

IF Q11 = "I don't know" or "I prefer not to answer" ASK:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding French immersion programming? (Pick one answer for each statement) **[ROTATE STATEMENTS]**

I am concerned about...	Completely agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Completely disagree	Don't know/ prefer not to answer
The quality of French instruction in French immersion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equity of learning opportunities for students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issues related to separating (streaming) students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Insufficient staffing resources to meet demands of French Immersion programming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Negative effects on staff wellbeing due to added stress as a result of French Immersion programming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)					

IF Q5 = "FRENCH IMMERSION" OR Q11 ≠ "SOMEWHAT AGAINST" OR "COMPLETELY AGAINST" ASK:

- 13) French immersion programming in the Waterloo Region District School Board is currently delivered in dual-track schools. (Please note: A dual-track model is one in which a school houses both a French immersion program and a regular (English) program. A single-track model is an entire school that is devoted to French immersion.)

In your opinion, should French immersion programming in the Waterloo Region District School Board be delivered in...

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| <u>Single-track</u> schools only | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Dual-track</u> schools only | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Both <u>single-track</u> and <u>dual-track</u> schools | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

MOUSE-OVER FOR "SINGLE TRACK": "A single-track model is an entire school that is devoted to French immersion."

MOUSE-OVER FOR "DUAL TRACK": "A dual-track model is one in which a school houses both a French immersion program and a regular (English) program."

IF Q5 = "FRENCH IMMERSION" OR Q11 ≠ "SOMEWHAT AGAINST" OR "COMPLETELY AGAINST" ASK:

- 14) In the Waterloo Region District School Board, there is one entry point for students to enroll in French immersion and it is Grade one. What do you think the entry point or points should be? If you think there should be more than one entry point, please select more than one from the list below. Note that the last entry point is Grade 5 because a later entry point would not give students the number of hours of instruction required for French immersion. **(Pick all that apply)**

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Junior Kindergarten | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Senior Kindergarten | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Grade 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Grade 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Grade 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Grade 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Grade 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I don't know [exclusive] | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer [exclusive] | <input type="checkbox"/> |

IF Q5 ≠ "FRENCH IMMERSION" AND Q8 ≠ "ON A WAITLIST" ASK:

- 15) You indicated that your child or at least one child is not enrolled in [French immersion](#). Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree that each of the following explains why. **(Pick one answer for each statement) [ROTATE STATEMENTS. DO NOT SHOW MOUSE-OVER FOR "FRENCH IMMERSION" IN LIST BELOW.]**

IF Q1 = "JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN" OR "SENIOR KINDERGARTEN" AND IF Q5 ≠ "FRENCH IMMERSION" ASK:

You did not select French immersion when asked what type of French programming you'd like your child who is currently in **[JUNIOR/SENIOR]** Kindergarten to receive when they enter Grade 1. Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree that each of the following explains why.

(Pick one answer for each statement) [ROTATE STATEMENTS. DO NOT SHOW MOUSE-OVER FOR "FRENCH IMMERSION" IN LIST BELOW.]

	Completely agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Completely disagree	Don't know/ prefer not to answer
Transportation to/from French immersion school is a problem for my family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
French immersion is not offered at child(ren)'s school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our family decided that French immersion was not the best learning environment for this child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I /my child(ren) who is/are not in French Immersion prefer the language programming they are currently receiving [Exclude if response at Q5="I don't know" or "I prefer not to answer" for all instances]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
[IF Q8 = "USED TO BE IN FR IMMERSION"] My child was not learning as much French as much as I thought they should	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Better peer relationships for my child in non-French immersion classrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Better supports for my child in non-French immersion classrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want all my children to attend the same school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
[IF Q1 = "JUNIOR" OR "SENIOR" KINDERGARTEN] I haven't decided yet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I just never thought about French immersion for this child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)					

ABOUT YOU

[Do not display above Section Title on survey page]

The following questions are about you. Responses to these questions will allow R.A. Malatest to group your responses with others who live in your area and have a similar profile, which will help the Waterloo Region District School Board plan for school programming and transportation in your community. The information you share will never be shared with anyone outside the research team at R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. and will be used for no purpose other than school programming and transportation planning

16) In which region do you live? **(Pick one answer only)**

- The City of Cambridge ☐
- The City of Kitchener ☐
- The City of Waterloo ☐
- The Township of Wilmot ☐
- The Township of Wellesley ☐
- The Township of Woolwich ☐
- The Township of North Dumfries ☐
- I prefer not to answer ☐

17) Which language does your family speak most often at home? **(Pick one answer only)**

- English ☐

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| French | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Arabic | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tamil | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Polish | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gujarati | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hindi | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Punjabi | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Urdu | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Spanish | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cantonese | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mandarin | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) | _____ |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

18) What is the highest certificate, diploma or degree you have completed? **(Pick one answer only)**

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Less than high school diploma or its equivalent | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| High school diploma or a high school equivalency certificate | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Trade Certificate or Diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma (other than trades certificates or diplomas) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| University certificate or diploma below the Bachelor's level | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bachelor's Degree (e.g. B.A., B.Sc., LL.B.) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| University certificate, diploma, degree above the Bachelor's level | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

[ASK THIS QUESTION A MAXIMUM OF 3 TIMES; ONE FOR EACH CHILD IN EACH AGE CATEGORY]

19) Does your child or any of your children in **[ENTER GRADE]** have an Individual Education Plan (IEP)? **(Pick one answer only).**

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

IF Q19 = "YES" ASK:

20) Has this child been identified as being gifted or as having special needs? **(Pick one answer only).**

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Yes, <u>gifted</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Yes, <u>special needs</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| This child has not been identified as being gifted or as having special needs | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

[MOUSEOVER FOR "SPECIAL NEEDS": A child with special needs has cognitive, physical, social, emotional, or communicative needs, or needs relating to overall development that require additional supports. Special needs can vary from physical disability to intellectual delays, from social and behavioural challenges to communication difficulties. Disabilities may be visible or invisible and children may be born with them or they may emerge later on.]

[MOUSEOVER FOR "GIFTED": Per the Ministry of Education's 'Policy and Resource' guide, a child is gifted if they possess an unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.]

21) What is your annual household income (before taxes)?

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Less than \$30,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| \$30,000 - \$59,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| \$60,000 - \$89,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| \$90,000 or more | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

INTEREST IN PARTICIPATING IN DISCUSSIONS

[Do not display above Section Title on survey page]

22) Are you interested in participating in future discussions about French programming in your community? If yes, please fill out the following information which will ONLY be used to contact you to participate in these future discussions:

First name: _____

Phone number: _____

ERROR MESSAGE

The information supplied does not resemble a telephone number.

Email: _____

ERROR MESSAGE

The information supplied does not resemble an e-mail address.

Confirm email address: _____

[ERROR MESSAGE IF FORMAT NOT RECOGNIZED AS A VALID EMAIL ADDRESS.]

The email address you entered in "Confirm email address:" did not match the email address you entered in "Enter email address:" Please try again.

Thank you for participating!

[Exit to W.R.D.S.B. HOME PAGE <https://www.wrdsb.ca/>]

WATERLOO REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
French Programming Survey

Landing Page

If this is your first time visiting this page, please obtain an access code that will allow you to return to complete the survey in multiple sessions. Please write down your access code so you will have it available when you return to the survey.

If you don't have an access code, please click here

If you are returning to this page, please enter your access code and then click the enter button

Enter

Your access code is **[INSERT CODE]**.

Write it out to be able to access your answers in the future.

Your opinion matters!

The Waterloo Region District School Board, in partnership with R.A Malatest and Associates Ltd., is conducting a survey of all Principals, Vice-principals, Teachers and Educational Assistants who work at the schools in the District.

The survey is about your impressions of the French programming delivered in the school where you work, including core French, extended French and French immersion. Even if you do not teach French, we are still interested in hearing from you.

[SHOW MOUSE-OVER FOR "CORE FRENCH" EACH TIME THE TERM IS USED THROUGHOUT THE SURVEY: Core French is taught to all students in our elementary schools from Grades 1 through 9. In Grades 10 through 12, students may choose to continue studying French by selecting one Core French course per year. Students learn the French language by speaking, reading and writing.]

[SHOW MOUSE-OVER FOR "EXTENDED FRENCH" EACH TIME THE TERM IS USED THROUGHOUT THE SURVEY: Extended French programs are available to students who have completed the Elementary Immersion program and would like to continue with more intensive French instruction.

Extended French programs require students to complete four French language courses. Students enrolled in Extended French must also complete a minimum of three courses in other subjects taught in French.]

[SHOW MOUSE-OVER FOR "FRENCH IMMERSION" EACH TIME THE TERM IS USED THROUGHOUT THE SURVEY: French Immersion programs are available to students who have completed the Elementary Immersion program and would like to continue with more intensive French instruction.

French Immersion programs require students to complete four French language courses. Students enrolled in Immersion French must complete a minimum of six courses in other subjects taught in French.]

The information from the survey will help Waterloo Region District School Board determine what type(s) of French programming should be offered at schools in the District.

The survey takes about 10 minutes to finish, depending on your responses.

Why is the Waterloo Region District School Board doing this survey?

We want to improve French programming in the Waterloo Region District School Board so that it meets the needs of all families and school staff.

Who can participate?

If you are a Principal, Vice-principal, Classroom Teacher, Education Assistant, Designated Early Childhood Educators who works at a school in the Waterloo Region District School Board, this survey is for you!

When can I participate?

The survey is open for approximately a three-week period and will close May 10, 2019.

Ready to tell us what you think?

Your privacy is important to us. Your individual answers will never be seen by the Waterloo Region District School Board and will be grouped with the answers of others who fill out the survey so we will not know who you are. You will only be asked to provide your email address if you would like to participate in future discussions (including focus groups) about French programming at schools in the District.

The information you share with us will remain anonymous for reporting purposes. This means that only researchers at R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. will have access to your information. More information on our privacy policy can be found at <http://www.malatest.com/Privacy.htm>

This survey is optional. **If you participate, you will be asked to enter a response for each question in the survey. You cannot skip a question. You will have the option to select “I prefer not to answer” if you wish. Some questions will be mandatory because they guide the other questions you will be asked.** You can end the survey at any time.

Who to contact if you have questions:

If you have trouble accessing the survey, please contact enquiries@malatest.com or call 1-855-688-1140.

Wish to complete the survey in another language?

Please note that the survey is offered online in English only. If you would like to complete the survey in another language, please contact enquiries@malatest.com or call 1-855-688-1140 to set up an appointment to complete the survey over the phone in your preferred language.

Do you consent to participate in this survey?

Yes **[CONTINUE]**

No **[TERMINATE: Thank you for your time. EXIT TO W.R.D.S.B. HOME PAGE**

<https://www.wrdsb.ca/>

CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE

ABOUT YOUR JOB

[Do not display above Section Title on survey page]

Please choose an answer to each question.

1) What is your job title? **(Pick one answer only) [MANDATORY QUESTION]**

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vice-principal | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Classroom Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Designated Early Childhood Educator | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Educational Assistant | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| None of the above | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

[IF “NONE OF THE ABOVE” Please provide an answer to this question as the other questions you will be asked depend on your response to this question. If no job title is selected, the survey will terminate.]

[IF “I PREFER NOT TO ANSWER”: Please provide an answer to this question as the other questions you will be asked depend on your response to this question.]

2) In which region is your school located? **(Pick one answer only)**

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| The City of Cambridge | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The City of Kitchener | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The City of Waterloo | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The Township of Wilmot | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The Township of Wellesley | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The Township of Woolwich | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The Township of North Dumfries | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

[IF “I PREFER NOT TO ANSWER”: Please provide an answer to this question so that the W.R.D.S.B. can plan for French programming at schools in your region.]

3) What type of French programming is delivered at your school? **(Pick all that apply)**

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Core French | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Extended French | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| French immersion | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer [exclusive] | <input type="checkbox"/> |

IF Q1 = “CLASSROOM TEACHER” OR “DESIGNATED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR” OR “EDUCATION ASSISTANT” ASK:

4) In which language do you provide instruction in your classroom? **(Pick one answer only)**

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| In English only | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In French only | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In English and French | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

IF Q4 = “IN FRENCH ONLY” OR “IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH” ASK:

5) Which type of French programming do you teach/is delivered in the classroom(s) in which you work? **(Pick all that apply)**

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Core French | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Extended French | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| French immersion | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| None of the above | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer [exclusive] | <input type="checkbox"/> |

IF Q4 = “IN ENGLISH ONLY” ASK:

6) Are you a... **(Pick one answer only)**

- Permanent educator or Educational Assistant ☐
- Occasional educator or Educational Assistant ☐
- I prefer not to answer ☐

IF Q6 = "OCCASIONAL EDUCATOR/EA" ASK:7) You mentioned that you provide instruction in English only. Sometimes, when a French immersion teacher is not available (e.g., due to illness), French immersion students are taught by substitute who teaches in an English classroom. Have you ever taught students in a French immersion classroom? **(Pick one answer only)**

- Yes ☐
- No ☐
- I prefer not to answer ☐

IF Q7 = "YES" ASK:8) How often have you taught students in a French immersion class this school year? **(Pick one answer only)**

- All the time ☐
- Sometimes ☐
- Rarely ☐
- Never ☐
- I don't know ☐
- I prefer not to answer ☐

IMPRESSIONS OF FRENCH IMMERSION**[Do not display above Section Title on survey page]**9) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "There is a need for more French immersion programming in my school or in my neighbourhood." **(Pick one answer only)**

- Completely agree ☐
- Somewhat agree ☐
- Somewhat disagree ☐
- Completely disagree ☐
- I don't know ☐
- I prefer not to answer ☐

IF Q3 or Q5 ≠ "FRENCH IMMERSION" ASK:10) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "If the demand and resources are sufficient, I would support the addition of French immersion to my school." **(Pick one answer only)**

- Completely agree ☐
- Somewhat agree ☐

Somewhat disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completely disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
I prefer not to answer	<input type="checkbox"/>

11) Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

(Pick one answer for each statement) [ROTATE STATEMENTS]

	Completely agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Completely disagree	Don't know/ prefer not to answer
French immersion programming enriches students' educational experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All students should have the opportunity to access French immersion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic outcomes are better for students enrolled in French immersion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A second language increases students' employment prospects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A second language increases the likelihood that students will get into their first-choice post-secondary institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12) In general, how would you characterize your opinion of French immersion programming? **(Pick one answer only)**

Completely in favour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Somewhat in favour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Somewhat against	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completely against	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
I prefer not to answer	<input type="checkbox"/>

IF Q12 = "SOMEWHAT AGAINST" OR "COMPLETELY AGAINST" ASK:

13) You indicated that you are **[INSERT Q12 RESPONSE]** French immersion programming. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding French immersion programming? **(Pick one answer for each statement) [ROTATE STATEMENTS]**

I am concerned about...	Completely agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Completely disagree	Don't know/ prefer not to answer
The quality of French instruction in French immersion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equity of learning opportunities for students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issues related to separating (streaming) students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Insufficient staffing resources to meet demands of French Immersion programming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Negative effects on staff wellbeing due to added stress as a result of French Immersion programming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) [exclusive; do not link with scale]					

14) French immersion programming in the Waterloo Region District School Board is currently delivered in [dual-track](#) schools. (Please note: A dual-track model is one in which a school houses

both a French immersion program and a regular (English) program. A single-track model is an entire school that is devoted to French immersion.)

In your opinion, should French immersion programming in the Waterloo Region District School Board be delivered in...

- Single-track schools only ☐
- Dual-track schools only ☐
- Both single-track and dual-track schools ☐
- I don't know ☐
- I prefer not to answer ☐

MOUSE-OVER FOR "SINGLE TRACK": "A single-track model is an entire school that is devoted to French immersion."

MOUSE-OVER FOR "DUAL TRACK": "A dual-track model is one in which a school houses both a French immersion program and a regular (English) program."

- 15) In the Waterloo Region District School Board, there is one entry point for students to enroll in French immersion and it is Grade one. What do you think the entry point or points should be? If you think there should be more than one entry point, please select more than one from the list below. Note that the last entry point is Grade 5 because a later entry point would not give students the number of hours of instruction required for French immersion. **(Pick all that apply)**

- Junior Kindergarten ☐
- Senior Kindergarten ☐
- Grade 1 ☐
- Grade 2 ☐
- Grade 3 ☐
- Grade 4 ☐
- Grade 5 ☐
- I don't know [exclusive] ☐
- I prefer not to answer [exclusive] ☐

SCHOOL STAFF AT FRENCH IMMERSION SCHOOLS

[Do not display above Section Title on survey page]

IF Q1 = "PRINCIPAL" OR "VICE-PRINCIPAL" AND Q3 = "FRENCH IMMERSION" and/or "Extended French"

ASK:

- 16) If a French teacher is sick or takes time off, how difficult is it for you to find a qualified substitute teacher who is fully fluent in French (both written and spoken) who can take their place in the classroom? **(Pick one answer only)**

- Extremely difficult ☐
- Very difficult ☐
- Not very difficult ☐
- Not difficult at all ☐
- I don't know ☐
- I prefer not to answer ☐

IF Q1 = "PRINCIPAL" OR "VICE-PRINCIPAL" AND Q3 = "FRENCH IMMERSION" and/or "Extended French" ASK:

17) How often have you had to ask an English-language substitute to teach French immersion or extended French students because a French teacher is not available? **(Pick one answer only)**

All the time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rarely	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
I prefer not to answer	<input type="checkbox"/>

IF Q1 = "PRINCIPAL" OR "VICE-PRINCIPAL" AND Q3 = "FRENCH IMMERSION" and/or "Extended French" ASK:

18) When French teachers leave your school, how often is it because they... **(Pick one answer for each statement) [ROTATE STATEMENTS]**

	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't know/ prefer not to answer
Leave for the English program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leave for a Francophone school board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leave for a different French immersion school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)					

IF Q1 = "PRINCIPAL" OR "VICE-PRINCIPAL" AND Q3 = "FRENCH IMMERSION" and/or "Extended French" ASK:

19) To what extent do you agree or disagree that each of the following describes your experience with hiring qualified French teachers? **(Pick one answer for each statement) [ROTATE STATEMENTS]**

	Completely agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Completely disagree	Don't know/ prefer not to answer
It is difficult to find teachers who are fully fluent in French (spoken and written)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is difficult to find fluent French teachers (spoken and written) who are qualified to teach other subjects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We are in competition with other schools for hiring qualified teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Potential candidates are reluctant to accept positions due to the type of contract offered (e.g. occasional or part-time vs. full time)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)					

20) How often do you feel the following factors influence decisions regarding a student transferring out of a French immersion program? **(Pick one answer for each statement) [ROTATE STATEMENTS]**

	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't know/ prefer not to answer
Student or their parent(s)/caregiver(s) feel they have mastered French and no longer require French immersion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student plans to pursue another program of study and doesn't need French	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student wants to join peers in the regular (English) classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student has learning challenges in French immersion classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student exhibits behavioural challenges in French immersion classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The type of supports the student requires are not available in the French immersion program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)					

ABOUT YOU/YOUR STUDENTS

[Do not display above Section Title on survey page]

21) How long have you been a **[ENTER Q1 RESPONSE]** at this school? **(Pick one answer only)**

[IF Q1= Educational Assistant; ask How long have you been an Educational Assistant at this school?]

- Less 1 year ☐
- 1 to less than 3 years ☐
- 3 to less than 5 years ☐
- 5 to less than 10 years ☐
- 10 years or more ☐
- Don't know ☐
- I prefer not to answer ☐

IF Q1 = "CLASSROOM TEACHER" OR "DESIGNATED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR" OR "EDUCATION ASSISTANT" ASK:

22) What grade do you teach or provide assistance to in the current school year? If you teach/assist a split class, please select the grades in your split class. **(Pick all that apply)**

- Junior Kindergarten ☐
- Senior Kindergarten ☐
- Grade 1 ☐
- Grade 2 ☐
- Grade 3 ☐
- Grade 4 ☐
- Grade 5 ☐
- Grade 6 ☐
- Grade 7 ☐
- Grade 8 ☐
- Grade 9 ☐
- Grade 10 ☐
- Grade 11 ☐

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Grade 12 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

IF Q1 = "CLASSROOM TEACHER" OR "DESIGNATED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR" OR "EDUCATION ASSISTANT":

23) How many students are in your classroom? (Pick one answer only)

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Less than 20 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20 to less than 30 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30 to less than 40 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 40 or more | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

IF Q1 = "CLASSROOM TEACHER" OR "DESIGNATED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR" OR "EDUCATION ASSISTANT" ASK:

24) How many students in your class are [newcomers to Canada](#)? Just your best estimate is fine. (Pick one answer only)

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| More than 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

[MOUSEOVER FOR "NEWCOMERS TO CANADA": For the purposes of this survey, a newcomer is an immigrant or refugee who has been in Canada less than 5 years.]

IF Q1 = "CLASSROOM TEACHER" OR "DESIGNATED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR" OR "EDUCATION ASSISTANT" ASK:

25) Approximately how many students in your class have been diagnosed or have tested as... (Pick one answer for each)

[If Q23= Less than 20 OR Q23= 20 to less than 30, do not allow selections that total 30 or more]

Error Message:

"You appear to have more students in these combined categories than you previously indicated you have in your classroom. Please check your numbers or go back two questions and adjust your total classroom size."

	Having <u>special</u> <u>needs</u>	<u>Gifted</u>	Having a <u>learning</u> <u>disability</u>
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than 10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I prefer not to answer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[MOUSEOVER FOR "SPECIAL NEEDS": A child with special needs has cognitive, physical, social, emotional, or communicative needs, or needs relating to overall development that require additional supports. Special needs can vary from physical disability to intellectual delays, from social and behavioural challenges to communication difficulties. Disabilities may be visible or invisible and children may be born with them or they may emerge later on.]

[MOUSEOVER FOR "GIFTED": Per the Ministry of Education's 'Policy and Resource' guide, a child is gifted if they possess an unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.]

[MOUSEOVER FOR "LEARNING DISABILITY": Per the Ministry of Education's 'Policy and Resource' guide, a child has a learning disability if they possess one of a number of neurodevelopmental disorders that persistently and significantly has an impact on the ability to learn and use academic and other skills.]

26) How would you describe your level of fluency in French? (Pick one answer only)

Fully fluent (both spoken and written)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Written fluency but not spoken	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spoken fluency but not written	<input type="checkbox"/>
Somewhat fluent (either written or spoken)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not very fluent (either written or spoken)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not fluent at all (English only)	<input type="checkbox"/>
I prefer not to answer	<input type="checkbox"/>

27) What is your gender identity? (Pick one answer only)

MOUSE-OVER FOR "GENDER IDENTITY": Gender identity consists of a person's internal and deeply felt sense of being a man, a woman, both, neither or having another identity on the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be different from the sex assigned at birth (e.g., female, intersex, male). For more information of gender identity, please refer to the [Ontario Public Service Glossary on Gender Identity](#).

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Female/Woman | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Male/Man | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gender fluid | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gender non-conforming | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Non-binary | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transgender | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Two-spirit | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A gender not listed above (please specify): | |
| I prefer not to answer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

INTEREST IN PARTICIPATING IN DISCUSSIONS

[Do not display above Section Title on survey page]

28) Are you interested in participating in future discussions about French programming in your community? If yes, please fill out the following information which will ONLY be used to contact you to participate in these future discussions:

First name: _____
Phone number: _____

ERROR MESSAGE

The information supplied does not resemble a telephone number.

Email: _____

ERROR MESSAGE

The information supplied does not resemble an e-mail address.

Confirm email address: _____

[ERROR MESSAGE IF FORMAT NOT RECOGNIZED AS A VALID EMAIL ADDRESS.]

The email address you entered in "Confirm email address:" did not match the email address you entered in "Enter email address:" Please try again.

Thank you for participating!
[Exit to W.R.D.S.B. HOME PAGE <https://www.wrdsb.ca/>]

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDES – WRDSB PRINCIPAL/VP AND OTHER BOARDS' ADMINISTRATORS

Interviews with Principals/Vice-principals Working at French Immersion Schools

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) is conducting a review of the French immersion programming offered at schools in the District. R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd. (Malatest), a research firm, has been hired to complete this review. Malatest will be conducting interviews with Principals and/or Vice-principals at schools in the District in order to better understand their perceptions of, and experiences with, French language programming. This includes core French, extended French and French immersion so we would like to hear from Principals/Vice-principals who work at school offering French immersion and working at schools that do not offer French immersion.

The interview will last approximate 45 minutes, depending on your responses. We hope to audio record the discussion to ensure that the information provided is accurately documented. The recording will only be heard by the researchers at Malatest and will be destroyed after the submission of the final report.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:	All of the information that you share during the interview will remain anonymous for reporting purposes. This means that only researchers at R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. will have access to identifying information in connection with focus group findings. More information on our privacy policy can be found on our website at http://www.malatest.com/Privacy.htm
Informed Consent:	Prior to beginning the interview, we will confirm that you have no questions about the objectives of the study or the purpose of the interview, and that we have your permission to begin the focus group.
Impartiality:	Malatest is committed to conducting all research in a fair and impartial manner. We are members of the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) and the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA) and follow their ethics and codes of conduct for researchers.
Questions:	If you have any questions about this discussion, please contact Bess Ashby, Project Manager at R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., at b.ashby@malatest.com or 416-644-0161 x 151 or 1-800-598-0161 (toll-free). If you have any questions about this project, please contact Bill Lemon, Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being, at bill_lemon@wrdsb.ca

Background

1. Could you start by telling me:
 - a. How long you have been a Principal/Vice-principal at **[NAME OF SCHOOL BASED ON INFO COLLECTED DURING RECRUITMENT PROCESS]**
 - b. If you have worked at other schools in the District. Other French immersion school(s)?
Schools not offering French immersion?

French Immersion Delivery Model

2. What are the some of the key successes or benefits of having French immersion at your school?
Probe for:

- a. Student achievement/outcomes
- b. Supports for students

3. Are there any challenges associated with having French immersion at your school and how have you attempted to mitigate these challenges?

Probe for:

- a. Hiring and/or retaining French immersion teachers
- b. Impacts on non-French immersion staff
- c. Student achievement/outcomes
- d. Drop-off rates in French immersion
- e. Providing sufficient supports for students in French immersion classes
- f. Perceptions of French immersion (e.g., equity of learning opportunities for students, separating/streaming students, etc)
- g. Accessibility (e.g., waitlists for French immersion, enrollment caps, transportation/bussing)

French Immersion Vision/Mission Statement

4. According to the WRDSB website, the current goal of French immersion is to: “Offer French instruction so that your child has a level of fluency and comfort to communicate effectively with other French speakers.” The goal for core French is: “Offer French instruction for part of the school day so that your child has the confidence to use French in simple daily situations and conversations.” Do you agree with these goals?

Probe for:

- a. Should there be additional goals or entirely different goals?
- b. Should these goals be included in a vision or mission statement for the French immersion program? If so, what would that look like?

Future French Programming

5. What do you think of French programming should look like for WRDSB schools moving forward?

Probe for:

- a. Should there be French immersion in more schools, fewer schools, or leave as is?
- b. Should there be extended French in more schools or fewer schools?
- c. Should French immersion be delivered in single track schools, dual track schools, or a mix of both?
- d. Currently, the only access point for French immersion is grade 1. Do you think grade 1 should be the only access point or should there be additional points of access (e.g., JK/SK, grade 2)?
- e. Changes to the proportion of French offered in various grades; currently at 50% French language instruction in program. Should this be increased or decreased for any grade(s)?

Closing Comments

6. Is there anything we haven't covered that you'd like to add?

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your views. Your input is valuable and appreciated.

Interviews with Principals/Vice-principals Working at Schools Not Offering French Immersion

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) is conducting a review of the French immersion programming offered at schools in the District. R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd. (Malatest), a research firm, has been hired to complete this review. Malatest will be conducting interviews with Principals and/or Vice-principals at schools in the District in order to better understand their perceptions of, and experiences with, French language programming. This includes core French, extended French and French immersion so we would like to hear from Principals/Vice-principals who work at school offering French immersion and working at schools that do not offer French immersion.

The interview will last approximate 45 minutes, depending on your responses. We hope to audio record the discussion to ensure that the information provided is accurately documented. The recording will only be heard by the researchers at Malatest and will be destroyed after the submission of the final report.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:	All of the information that you share during the interview will remain anonymous for reporting purposes. This means that only researchers at R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. will have access to identifying information in connection with focus group findings. More information on our privacy policy can be found on our website at http://www.malatest.com/Privacy.htm
Informed Consent:	Prior to beginning the interview, we will confirm that you have no questions about the objectives of the study or the purpose of the interview, and that we have your permission to begin the focus group.
Impartiality:	Malatest is committed to conducting all research in a fair and impartial manner. We are members of the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) and the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA) and follow their ethics and codes of conduct for researchers.
Questions:	<p>If you have any questions about this discussion, please contact Bess Ashby, Project Manager at R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., at b.ashby@malatest.com or 416-644-0161 x 151 or 1-800-598-0161 (toll-free).</p> <p>If you have any questions about this project, please contact Bill Lemon, Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being, at bill_lemon@wrdsb.ca</p>

Background

1. Could you start by telling me:
 - a. How long you have been a Principal/Vice-principal at **[NAME OF SCHOOL BASED ON INFO COLLECTED DURING RECRUITMENT PROCESS]**
 - b. What type of French programming is currently delivered at your school
 - c. If you have worked at other schools in the District. Have you ever worked at a school that offers French immersion?

French Programming Delivery Model

2. What are the some of the key successes or benefits of the French programming that is currently offered at your school?

Probe for:

- a. Student achievement/outcomes
- b. Supports for students

3. Are there any challenges associated with the French programming delivered at your school and how have you attempted to mitigate these challenges?

Probe for:

- a. Hiring and/or retaining French speaking teachers
- b. Student achievement/outcomes
- c. Providing sufficient supports for students
- d. Other challenges

French Programming across the District

4. What are your impressions of the different types of French programming offered at WRDSB schools? Let's start with French immersion. What about extended French? And how about core French?

Probe for:

- a. Quality of teaching
- b. Student achievement/outcomes
- c. Supports for students
- d. Future learning opportunities or career placement
- e. Challenges (equity of learning opportunities for students, separating/streaming students, drop-out rates, etc)
- f. Accessibility (e.g., waitlists for French immersion, enrollment caps, selection process (did not get in), number of schools offering French immersion, transportation/bussing)

French Immersion Vision/Mission Statement

5. According to the WRDSB website, the current goal of French immersion is to: "Offer French instruction so that your child has a level of fluency and comfort to communicate effectively with other French speakers." The goal for core French is: "Offer French instruction for part of the school day so that your child has the confidence to use French in simple daily situations and conversations." Do you agree with these goals?

Probe for:

- a. Should there be additional goals or entirely different goals?
- b. Should these goals be included in a vision or mission statement for the French immersion program? If so, what would that look like?

Future French Programming

6. What do you think of French programming should look like for WRDSB schools moving forward?
Probe for:
- a. Should there be French immersion in more schools, fewer schools, or leave as is?
 - b. Should there be extended French in more schools or fewer schools?
 - c. Should French immersion be delivered in single track schools, dual track schools, or a mix of both?
 - d. Currently, the only access point for French immersion is grade 1. Do you think grade 1 should be the only access point or should there be additional points of access (e.g., JK/SK, grade 2)?
 - e. Changes to the proportion of French offered in various grades; currently at 50% French language instruction in program. Should this be increased or decreased for any grade(s)?

Closing Comments

7. Is there anything we haven't covered that you'd like to add?

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your views. Your input is valuable and appreciated.

Interviews with Administrators of Other School Boards

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) is conducting an operational review of the French immersion programming offered at schools in the District. R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd. (Malatest), a research firm, has been hired to complete this review. Malatest will be conducting interviews with administrators at other school boards in order to better understand the operations and relative costs of delivering French Immersion programs under a range of alternative service delivery models. This information will help the District assess the extent to which cost efficiencies in WRDSB's current delivery system could be realized if changes are made. The goal of the operational review is to identify aspects of the delivery models used by other school boards that could improve the cost effectiveness of WRDSB's delivery model; however, for context, this interview guide includes a few questions about your current delivery model as well.

The discussion will last 45 to 60 minutes, depending on your answers. We hope to audio record the discussion to ensure that the information provided is accurately documented. The recording will only be heard by the researchers at Malatest and will be destroyed after the submission of the final report.

Informed Consent:	Prior to beginning, we will confirm that you have no questions about the objectives of the study or the purpose of the interview, and that we have your permission to begin the interview.
Impartiality:	Malatest is committed to conducting all research in a fair and impartial manner. We are members of the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) and the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA) and follow their ethics and codes of conduct for researchers.
Questions:	<p>If you have any questions about this discussion, please contact Bess Ashby, Project Manager at R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., at b.ashby@malatest.com or 416-644-0161 x 151 or 1-800-598-0161 (toll-free).</p> <p>If you have any questions about this project, please contact Bill Lemon, Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being, at bill_lemon@wrdsb.ca</p>

Background

1. Please describe your role as it pertains to supporting French immersion programming in the schools within your board.

French Immersion Delivery Model

2. We sent you an outline of the information we collected from your website about your current French immersion delivery model. Could you confirm that the information we have is accurate?
 - a. If not, could you let us know what we need to change so that the information we have is accurate?
3. Are you currently able to meet the demand for French immersion programming in the schools across your board?
 - a. Do you have a waitlist? How long is the waitlist?

- b. Has demand for French immersion been increasing, decreasing, or remained relatively stable over the past 5 years? If it is increasing, are you planning to expand French immersion programming to more schools in the District?
4. In considering alternative service delivery models for French Immersion, why did your Board adopt your current structure?
 - a. What are the key successes of your current French immersion delivery model?
5. Are there any challenges or limitations to your current French immersion delivery model?
 - a. Funding challenges?
 - b. Staffing challenges (recruitment, retention, both)?
 - c. Perception challenges (equity of learning opportunities for students, separating/streaming students, etc)
 - d. Drop-out rate? (In what grade do most students drop out of the program? What are the main reasons students drop out of the program?)
6. Are any changes or modifications planned for your current French immersion delivery model? Please describe the planned changes and the timeline for implementation.

Cost per Pupil

7. What metrics do you use to determine the per student cost for French immersion programming in your board (e.g., staff costs, operations and maintenance, transportation/bussing, etc)?
8. Has the cost per pupil in your French Immersion program been increasing at the same rate, a higher rate, or a lower rate (i.e., per student cost) as that of the overall student population?
 - a. What has contributed to higher/lower cost escalation?
9. What is the actual cost per metric? If you can't provide the actual cost, could you let us know what percentage of the overall program delivery cost each represents?
 - a. Which has the most impact on the overall cost of delivering the program?
 - b. Since its inception, have you made any changes to the program that helped reduce the cost of program delivery? What changes?
 - c. Do you see any areas where could cost efficiencies be realized?
 - d. If applicable: Were any of the planned changes you mentioned earlier proposed in order to reduce the cost of delivering the program?
10. Is there anything we haven't covered that you'd like to add?

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your views. Your input is valuable and appreciated.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDES – FOCUS GROUP GUIDES: STUDENTS, STAFF AND PARENTS**Focus Groups with Students Enrolled in French Immersion**

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) is conducting a review of the French immersion programming offered at schools in the District. R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd. (Malatest), a research firm, has been hired to complete this review. Malatest will be conducting focus groups with senior high school students at schools in the District in order to better understand their perceptions of, and experiences with, French language programming. This includes core French, extended French, and French immersion so we would like to hear from both students who have experience with French immersion and those who do not. Participants in this focus group have a commonality in that all of you are taking French immersion.

The focus group will last 1.5 to 2 hours. We hope to audio record the discussion to ensure that the information provided is accurately documented. The recording will only be heard by the researchers at Malatest and will be destroyed after the submission of the final report.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:	All of the information that you share during the focus group will remain anonymous for reporting purposes. This means that only researchers at R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. will have access to identifying information in connection with focus group findings. More information on our privacy policy can be found on our website at http://www.malatest.com/Privacy.htm
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Background

1. First, let's go around the table and I'd like each of you to tell me...
 - a. What grade you're in
 - b. What grade you began taking French immersion
 - c. Whether you have siblings taking French immersion and if so, what grade(s) they are in currently

French Immersion Programming

I would like to discuss some of your perceptions or feelings about French immersion.

1. As far as you are aware, why did your parent or caregiver decide to enroll you in French immersion in grade 1? Have you ever talked about this?
 - a. Do you think they made a good decision?
 - b. Are you glad you're in the program?
2. What are some of the things you enjoy about the French immersion program you are currently taking?
Probe for:
 - a. Reasons for taking the program
 - b. Benefits of the program
3. For those of you who aren't graduating this year, do you plan to continue with the program until you graduate? What is the main reason you're continuing with the French immersion program?
Probe for:
 - a. Was continuing in the French immersion program your decision, your parent(s)/caregiver(s)' decision, or a combination of both?
 - b. Friends are in the program
 - c. Help getting a job
 - d. Help getting into first-choice postsecondary institution
 - e. Did you ever consider taking a different type of French programming (extended French) or moving into the English only program?
4. For those of you who are graduating, why did you decide to complete the program?
Probe for:
 - a. Was continuing in the French immersion program your decision, your parent(s)/caregiver(s)' decision, or a combination of both?
 - b. Friends are in the program
 - c. Help getting a job
 - d. Help getting into first-choice postsecondary institution
 - e. Did you ever consider taking a different type of French programming (extended French) or moving into the English only program?
5. Do you feel like you are a part of the same student body or do you feel like there are two separate streams one for French immersion and one for English?
6. Is there anything about the French immersion program you think could be improved?
Probe for:
 - a. Issues or challenges with teachers
 - b. Issues or challenges with course material
 - c. Issues or challenges with peers in the class

- d. Issues or challenges with other peers in the school
7. Do they think the only entry point for French Immersion should be grade 1 or should there be other entry points as well? Please explain why you feel this way.
8. What do you think would be the advantages/disadvantages of having a single-track French immersion school?
Probe for:
- a. Would you have preferred to be in a single track French immersion elementary school if one was available?
 - b. Would you have preferred to be in a single track French immersion high school if one was available?
 - c. Should single track French immersion schools be made available in WRDSB schools?
9. What do you think the goals of French immersion are currently? (Current goal is: Offer French instruction so that your child has a level of fluency and comfort to communicate effectively with other French speakers.)
Probe for:
- a. Fluency (both oral and written); ask how many feel they are fluent in French
 - b. Should there be additional goals or an entirely different goal?
10. How do you plan to use French to maintain your bilingual capabilities beyond high school?
Probe for:
- a. Any participants considering applying to a French language college or university
 - b. Other ways they plan to maintain their French language
11. What advice would you have for younger students taking French immersion?

Closing Comments

12. Is there anything we haven't covered that you'd like to add?

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your views. Your input is valuable and appreciated.

Focus Groups with Staff in Favour of French Immersion

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) is conducting a review of the French immersion programming offered at schools in the District. R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd. (Malatest), a research firm, has been hired to complete this review. Malatest will be conducting focus groups with staff at schools in the District in order to better understand their perceptions of, and experiences with, French language programming. This includes core French, extended French, and French immersion so we would like to hear from staff who have experience with French immersion and those who do not. Each of you recently participated in a survey about French programming in the WRDSB and, based on your survey responses, we have determined that participants in this focus group have something in common: **all of you are, to some extent, in favour of French immersion programming.**

The focus group will last 1.5 to 2 hours. We hope to audio record the discussion to ensure that the information provided is accurately documented. The recording will only be heard by the researchers at Malatest and will be destroyed after the submission of the final report.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:	All of the information that you share during the focus group will remain anonymous for reporting purposes. This means that only researchers at R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. will have access to identifying information in connection with focus group findings. More information on our privacy policy can be found on our website at http://www.malatest.com/Privacy.htm
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Background

1. First, let's go around the table and I'd like each of you to tell me...
 - a. Your name

French Immersion Delivery Model

2. What are the some of the key successes or benefits of having French immersion at your school? For those who do not currently have French immersion programming, do you feel it should be offered at your school and if so, what would be the benefits of having French immersion at your school?

Probe for:

- a. Student achievement
- b. Supports for students

3. Is there anything about the French immersion programming offered in WRDSB schools you think could be improved?

Probe for:

- a. Access to French immersion programming; enrollment caps, selection process
- b. Supports students require in the French immersion program
- c. Solutions to reduce drop-out rates
- d. Other improvements

4. According to the WRDSB website, the current goal of French immersion is to: “Offer French instruction so that your child has a level of fluency and comfort to communicate effectively with other French speakers.” The goal for core French is: “Offer French instruction for part of the school day so that your child has the confidence to use French in simple daily situations and conversations.” Do you agree with these goals?

Probe for:

- a. Should there be additional goals or entirely different goals?
- b. Should these goals be included in a vision or mission statement for the French immersion program? If so, what would that look like?

Future French Programming

5. What do you think of French programming should look like for WRDSB schools moving forward?

Probe for:

- a. Should there be French immersion in more schools, fewer schools, or leave as is?
- b. Should there be extended French in more schools or fewer schools?
- c. Should French immersion be delivered in single track schools, dual track schools, or a mix of both?
- d. Currently, the only access point for French immersion is grade 1. Do you think grade 1 should be the only access point or should there be additional points of access (e.g., JK/SK, grade 2)?
- e. Changes to the proportion of French offered in various grades; currently at 50% French language instruction in program. Should this be increased or decreased for any grade(s)?

Closing Comments

6. Is there anything we haven't covered that you'd like to add?

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your views. Your input is valuable and appreciated.

Focus Groups with Staff Against French Immersion

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) is conducting a review of the French immersion programming offered at schools in the District. R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd. (Malatest), a research firm, has been hired to complete this review. Malatest will be conducting focus groups with staff at schools in the District in order to better understand their perceptions of, and experiences with, French language programming. This includes core French, extended French, and French immersion so we would like to hear from staff who have experience with French immersion and those who do not. Each of you recently participated in a survey about French programming in the WRDSB and, based on your survey responses, we have determined that participants in this focus group have something in common: **all of you are, to some extent, against French immersion programming.** During today's focus group, we would like to hear from each of you so that we better understand why you feel this way.

The focus group will last 1.5 to 2 hours. We hope to audio record the discussion to ensure that the information provided is accurately documented. The recording will only be heard by the researchers at Malatest and will be destroyed after the submission of the final report.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:	All of the information that you share during the focus group will remain anonymous for reporting purposes. This means that only researchers at R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. will have access to identifying information in connection with focus group findings. More information on our privacy policy can be found on our website at http://www.malatest.com/Privacy.htm
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Questions:	<p>If you have any questions about this discussion, please contact Bess Ashby, Project Manager at R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., at b.ashby@malatest.com or 416-644-0161 x 151 or 1-800-598-0161 (toll-free).</p> <p>If you have any questions about this project, please contact Bill Lemon, Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being, at bill_lemon@wrdsb.ca</p>

Background

1. First, let's go around the table and I'd like each of you to tell me...
 - a. Your name

French Immersion Delivery Model

2. What are your impressions of the different types of French programming offered at WRDSB schools? Let's start with French immersion. What about extended French? What about core French?

Probe for:

- a. Student achievement
- b. Supports for students
- c. Challenges and solutions to mitigate these challenges

3. Is there anything about the French programming offered in WRDSB schools you think could be improved?

Probe for:

- a. Improvements overall and improvements specific to each French program (core, extended and immersion)
- b. Supports students require in the various French programs

4. According to the WRDSB website, the current goal of French immersion is to: “Offer French instruction so that your child has a level of fluency and comfort to communicate effectively with other French speakers.” The goal for core French is: “Offer French instruction for part of the school day so that your child has the confidence to use French in simple daily situations and conversations.” Do you agree with these goals?

Probe for:

- a. Should there be additional goals or entirely different goals?
- b. Should these goals be included in a vision or mission statement for the French immersion program? If so, what would that look like?

Future French Programming

5. What do you think of French programming should look like for WRDSB schools moving forward?

Probe for:

- a. Should there be French immersion in more schools, fewer schools, or leave as is?
- b. Should there be extended French in more schools or fewer schools?
- c. Should French immersion be delivered in single track schools, dual track schools, or a mix of both?
- d. Currently, the only access point for French immersion is grade 1. Do you think grade 1 should be the only access point or should there be additional points of access (e.g., JK/SK, grade 2)?
- e. Changes to the proportion of French offered in various grades; currently at 50% French language instruction in elementary French immersion program. Should this be increased or decreased for any grades? Should the proportion of French language instruction in core or extended French be changed?

Closing Comments

6. Is there anything we haven't covered that you'd like to add?

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your views. Your input is valuable and appreciated.

Focus Groups with Parents/Caregivers

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) is conducting a review of the French immersion programming offered at schools in the District. R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd. (Malatest), a research firm, has been hired to complete this review. Malatest will be conducting focus groups with parents/caregivers of children who attend schools in the District in order to better understand their perceptions of, and experiences with, French language programming. This includes core French, extended French, and French immersion so we would like to hear from parents/caregivers whose children have experience with French immersion and those who do not. Each of you recently participated in a survey about French programming in the WRDSB and, at the end of the survey, indicated that you would be willing to participate in future discussions about French programming in your community, so thank you for your interest!

The focus group will last 1.5 to 2 hours. We hope to audio record the discussion to ensure that the information provided is accurately documented. The recording will only be heard by the researchers at Malatest and will be destroyed after the submission of the final report.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:	All of the information that you share during the focus group will remain anonymous for reporting purposes. This means that only researchers at R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. will have access to identifying information in connection with focus group findings. More information on our privacy policy can be found on our website at http://www.malatest.com/Privacy.htm
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Background

1. First, let's go around the table and I'd like each of you to tell me...
 - a. How many children you have
 - b. What grade(s) they are in
 - c. What type of French programming they:
 - i. Currently take
 - ii. Have taken in the past

- iii. For those of you with child(ren) in JK/SK, what type of programming they will take

Impressions of French Programming

2. What are your impressions of the different types of French programming offered at WRDSB schools? Let's start with French immersion. What about extended French? And how about core French?

Probe for:

- a. Quality of teaching
- b. Student achievement/outcomes
- c. Supports for students
- d. Future learning opportunities or career placement
- e. Challenges (equity of learning opportunities for students, separating/streaming students, drop-out rates, etc)
- f. Accessibility (e.g., waitlists for French immersion, enrollment caps, selection process (did not get in), number of schools offering French immersion, transportation/bussing)

Focus on French Immersion Programming

I'd like to focus now on French immersion programming in WRDSB...

3. **IF NOT ALREADY ANSWERED AT Q2:** Could those of you who said your child(ren) was once enrolled in French immersion but is no longer tell us why?
4. Let's recap the main challenges you mentioned earlier. **[SUMMARIZE CHALLENGES]** What do you think should be done to minimize if not resolve these issues?

Probe for:

- a. Quality of teaching
- b. Student achievement/outcomes
- c. Supports for students
- d. Future learning opportunities or career placement
- e. Challenges (equity of learning opportunities for students, separating/streaming students, drop-out rates, etc)
- f. Accessibility
- g. Other mitigation strategies

5. According to the WRDSB website, the current goal of French immersion is to: "Offer French instruction so that your child has a level of fluency and comfort to communicate effectively with other French speakers." The goal for core French is: "Offer French instruction for part of the school day so that your child has the confidence to use French in simple daily situations and conversations." Do you agree with these goals?

Probe for:

- a. Should there be additional goals or entirely different goals?
- b. Should these goals be included in a vision or mission statement for the French immersion program? If so, what would that look like?

Future French Programming

6. What do you think French programming should look like for WRDSB schools moving forward?
Probe for:
- a. Should there be French immersion in more schools, fewer schools, or leave as is?
 - b. Should there be extended French in more schools or fewer schools?
 - c. Should French immersion be delivered in single track schools, dual track schools, or a mix of both?
 - d. Currently, the only access point for French immersion is grade 1. Do you think grade 1 should be the only access point or should there be additional points of access (e.g., JK/SK, grade 2)?
 - e. Changes to the proportion of French offered in various grades; currently at 50% French language instruction in program. Should this be increased or decreased for any grade(s)?

Closing Comments

7. Is there anything we haven't covered that you'd like to add?

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your views. Your input is valuable and appreciated.