

**STUDENT ATTRITION IN SPECIALIZED HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS:
AN EXAMINATION OF THREE FRENCH IMMERSION CENTRES**

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Dedication

To my father and mother

Romano Cadez
(1931 - 1993)

and

Adrienne Cadez
(1931-)

Your love, support, and encouragement throughout my life have given me
both inspiration and confidence to realize many of my personal goals,
including the completion of this study.

Abstract

Student attrition has always been a problem for French immersion programs, especially at the high school level. In response to a lack of current research, this study seeks to discover if the problem persists. It also examines how today's French immersion high schools are dealing with other problem areas identified in research done in the past. These areas include, among others, students' learning challenges, behavioural challenges, and difficulties with the French language. The study documents the attrition rates from 1990 to 2004 in three high schools in Manitoba that are French immersion centres. In an effort to understand why students remained or left the immersion programs, 35 teachers, 220 current students, and 18 former students who have left the program to attend English schools were surveyed. All three sample groups' perceptions of the program show that while many things that were considered problematic in the literature are no longer a concern, other issues continue to persist. Furthermore, the data show that male and female students tend to leave the French immersion program for different reasons. However, the common motive that instigates the decision to leave appears to be the perception that higher grades can be achieved in an English school.

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To my wife Lisa, thank you for your patience as this study took away many hours that we could have spent together. I want to thank you especially for your support and encouragement. You were always there to give me a boost when I needed it and I could not have finished my degree without you there beside me.

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Table of Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	x
List of Figures.....	xi
Chapter 1: Background and Introduction	1
Impetus for this Study.....	1
Introduction to the Study.....	2
Definition of Terms	3
Attrition	3
French Immersion Education.....	3
Types of French Immersion Programs	4
High Schools in Manitoba	6
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	7
History of French Immersion Schooling.....	8
Canadian Perspective	8
Canadian Politics in French Immersion	10
Manitoba Perspective	12
Student Achievement Documented Through Research	14
French Language Achievement	14
English-Language Achievement.....	16

Academic Achievement.....	17
Positive Outcomes of Early Immersion.....	18
Cultural Awareness	20
Children with Learning Problems	22
Student Achievement: Summary	27
Limitations of French Immersion Programs	28
Charges of Elitism.....	28
Attrition of Students	33
Chapter 3: Methodology	47
Purpose of the Study	47
Research Methodology	49
Validity of a Web-Based Survey	50
Sample: Teachers, Current Students, Former Students.....	51
Delimitations of the Study	54
Chapter 4: Results	57
Students' Language Abilities	77
Quality of School Programs	78
General Perceptions about the French Immersion Program.....	82
Personal Endorsement of the Immersion Program	85
Parental Influence	86
Other Areas of Concern	89
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	91
Students' Language Abilities	92

Quality of School Programs	94
General Perceptions about the French Immersion Program.....	101
Personal Endorsement of the Immersion Program	106
Parental Influence	108
Other Areas of Concern	112
Summary and Conclusions.....	116
Chapter 6: Recommendations	120
Profile of Former Students	120
Reasons for Student Transfer	122
Collection of Student Population Data	123
Targeting Levels of Attrition.....	124
Profile of English School Students	124
Performance of Former Students in English Schools	126
Summary	126
References.....	129
Appendix A: Comparison of Attrition Rates for Cohorts from the Three Sample High Schools, 1990 to 2005 (%)	137
Appendix B: Kindergarten to S4 Attrition Rates for Cohorts of students from the Three Sample School Communities (%), 1990 to 2005	138
Appendix C: Average Annual Change in Student Enrolments for the Three Sample School Communities. Consecutive Grades from 1990 to 2004 (%).....	139
Appendix D: Survey for Teachers.....	140
Appendix E: Survey for Students Who Have Left the Immersion Program	143

Appendix F: Survey for Current Students	147
Appendix G: School Division Consent Form	150
Appendix H: Teacher Consent Form.....	153
Appendix I: Instructions for Teacher Survey.....	155
Appendix J: Former Student Consent Form	156
Appendix K: Instructions for Former Student Survey	158
Appendix L: Current Student Consent Form.....	159
Appendix M: Instructions for Current Student Survey	161

List of Tables

Table 1. Current Students: Personal Background	53
Table 2. Former Students: Personal Background.....	55
Table 3. Teacher Survey Responses: Means and Standard Deviations (n = 35)	59
Table 4. Current Student Survey Responses: Means and Standard Deviations (n = 220)	61
Table 5. Former Student Survey Results: Means and Standard Deviations (n = 18).....	63
Table 6. Survey Frequencies: Teachers – Male – Female (n = 35).....	65
Table 7. Survey Frequencies: Current Students – Male – Female.....	68
Table 8. Survey Frequencies: Former Students – Male – Female (n =18).....	73

List of Figures

Figure 1. Reasons for student attrition in French immersion programs.....	38
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Chapter 1: Background and Introduction

Impetus for this Study

I have been a teacher and administrator in a French immersion school for over a decade, working in all grade levels, but mostly in grades 7 to 12. Although I started my career with very limited French skills, my work environment, with its constant exposure to French, enabled me quite quickly to become bilingual. I was able to rise to the challenge of teaching in a French immersion program because of my interest and desire to learn; these were nurtured and sustained by the positive environment provided by students, colleagues, and administrators. I simply assumed that this was the same reality that thousands of students experience every day in the environment of French immersion schools across Canada.

However, as I spent more time teaching, it became apparent that, although students were becoming bilingual, something about the French immersion experience was not sufficient or satisfying for all students. Year after year, students would leave to pursue their studies in other schools that were offering exclusively English programs. For example, at the beginning of my career in senior high school French immersion, colleagues estimated that up to 40% of grade 7 students would leave the immersion program to go to an English program prior to graduation at the end of grade 12. As a staff, we concluded that we had to find the reasons for the departures and to devise solutions to keep students in the school. After implementing several measures to address the attrition problem, we estimated that 30% of students leave our French immersion program between the end of grade 7 through grade 11. However, until now, no formal data has been collected or studied by the school in relation to this perceived problem.

My interest in French immersion generally – and specifically in the reasons why some high school students leave French Immersion and turn to English-language high school programs, while others stay – stems from this background.

Introduction to the Study

French immersion schools have existed in Canada since the 1960s. Over time these programs have evolved, become widely accepted, and are recognized as effective means for students to learn a second language while simultaneously learning all the required elements of provincial curricula. However, over the years it has become clear that the immersion programs are not meeting the needs of all their students. It is well known that significant numbers of students transfer to English programs at various points in their schooling.

The literature on the attrition of students who completely drop out of school is vast. However, there has been very little exploration of the attrition of students from specialized programs who continue in other programs. Furthermore, while studies have been undertaken that focus specifically on French immersion attrition, none focus exclusively on schools that operate as French immersion centres. The three schools in this study offer an ideal opportunity for conducting such research as all three are based on the French immersion centre model.

The broad objective of this study is to gain insights into why students leave French immersion programs in favour of English programs at the high school level. Specifically, this study uses surveys to document the perceptions of three groups associated with the three French immersion centre high schools in Manitoba: former French immersion high school students who left the program; high school French

immersion teachers who are currently teaching at the three schools; and high school French immersion students who are currently in the French immersion program. The survey data are used to identify factors that account for attrition or retention within the two samples of students; teacher statements are used to supplement and enhance the student-generated data.

Definition of Terms

Attrition

For the purposes of this research, a very specific definition of attrition is employed: the transfer of students from a French immersion centre to an English-language school. Thus, attrition does not refer to students who leave school altogether, but rather to those who choose to leave the French immersion program to continue their schooling in an English program. Students who are described in this research as former students are not what are commonly known as “high school drop-outs,” nor are they graduates. They are students who have left the French immersion program for an English program. This specific definition holds throughout the remainder of this work, unless otherwise specifically stated.

French Immersion Education

The literature (Genesee, 1987; Heffernan, 1986; Lapkin, 1998; Stern, 1984) generally agrees that French immersion education is defined as teaching non-French-speaking students all or some subject matter in French so that the content of the subjects taught becomes a means to learning the language. Furthermore, the literature (Day & Shapson, 1996; Genesee, 1987; Lambert & Tucker, 1972) is clear that the goal of French

immersion education goes beyond the inculcation of linguistic duality. A cultural appreciation is also expected to result from exposure to the French language.

For the purposes of this study, French immersion in Canada is defined as follows: the teaching of the French language and culture to students whose mother-tongue is not French, in an environment where students are exposed to French for a substantial part of their school day. The desired outcomes of French immersion education are bilingualism and an appreciation of French culture, although Heffernan (1995) cites problems with the actualization of this cultural aspect of French immersion programs.

Types of French Immersion Programs

Before considering any study on French immersion, it is important to note the type of program to which the study relates. Three basic types of French immersion programs can be found in three different types of schools. According to the literature (Canadian Education Association, 1992; Lapkin, 1998; Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2002b; Swain & Argue, 1987; Swain & Lapkin, 1982), immersion programs include (a) early immersion, which starts in either kindergarten or grade 1; (b) middle immersion, which begins in grades 4 or 5; and (c) late immersion, which starts in grades 6, 7, or 8. These varying entry points affect the amount of time that each student will spend learning both languages, and the time when instruction in English first takes place.

According to Obadia (1996), early immersion is the most common option, chosen by about 80% of parents. Most early immersion programs start teaching English to students in grade 2 or 3. In Manitoba, the situation is slightly different. According to Manitoba Education, Training and Youth (2002a):

Most early immersion programs start teaching English to students in grade 2 or three. Children learn to read in English in Grade 1. In Grade 2, children begin formal reading instruction in French. In the St. Boniface School Division, children learn to read in French in Grade 1 and in English in Grade 2. (p. 11)

Several studies (Lapkin, Andrew, Harley, Swain, & Kamin, 1981; Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2002b; McGillivray, 1978) offer definitions of three different types of schools that house French immersion programs. One type of immersion school is the French immersion centre, which can exist in two forms. One form consists of an immersion wing, or a designated part of a school that exists either within a predominantly English school and is exclusively for the French immersion program and its students, teachers and office staff.

The second type is the single-track French immersion school, also referred to as a French immersion centre. This is a true immersion environment where the totality of the school day – from announcements, to all staff and student interaction – is in French. This type of French immersion centre exists only to serve the immersion students, and other programs do not share the building and its contents. The only courses that are not taught in French in this type of school are English language arts courses.

The third type is the dual-track school, which offers English-language instruction programs and French immersion programs concurrently. In this approach, the French immersion students are more integrated with the English students than in the immersion centre models, since dual-track immersion students and English students often have some common teachers and classes. Dual-track schools usually operate in an English milieu.

For the purposes of this study, the term “French immersion centre” refers only to the second definition, that is, a single-track school. All three schools in this study are independent buildings and offer all courses in French, in an entirely French milieu. In practice, all three of the schools involved in the study typically refer to themselves as immersion centres.

High Schools in Manitoba

There are provincial variations in level designations and terminology for high school students. The students in the sample are in their final two years of high school or, as would commonly be designated across Canada, grades 11 and 12. At the time that this study was conducted, in the province of Manitoba, the complementary designation for those grades was Senior 3 and Senior 4, commonly noted as S3 and S4. The abbreviated titles S3 and S4 are used throughout this study.

In summary, early, middle, and late immersion programs have different grade entry points. Furthermore, these programs can exist independently in an immersion centre or single-track school, or as part of a predominantly English school, or as a dual-track school. The study focuses on the attrition issue in three French immersion high schools that are immersion centres. All of the high schools and their feeder elementary schools are based on an early immersion model. The students in the study are in their Senior 3 or Senior 4 year and are referred to as S3 and S4 students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

While a plethora of studies on student attrition exist that focus on high school or university students who drop out, studies that focus on high school students who leave a specialized program to enrol in another program are rare. For example, Lee (2002) considered girls in gifted math and science classes who left the gifted program to continue in a regular stream. Heffernan (1981), while focusing on French second language programs (FSL) and core French in particular, investigated why students dropped out of FSL programs. Only a few specialized program attrition studies (Adiv, 1979; Alberta Education, 1985; Duhamel, 1985; Halsall, 1991; Hayden, 1988; Lewis & Shapson, 1985; Obadia & Thériault, 1995; Ottawa-Carleton, 2000; Parkin, Morrison, & Watkin, 1987) focus on French immersion programs.

This is rather surprising, since the phenomenon of French immersion is itself a thoroughly studied topic in education research. Over two decades ago, Krashen (1984) observed, “No program has been as thoroughly studied and documented” (p. 61). Cummins (1983) also commented on the role of research in French immersion programs: “Research has played a crucial role both in the spread of French immersion programs across Canada and in establishing the Canadian experiment as one of the most significant innovations in second-language teaching this century” (p. 118). That said, there is a shortage of current research that focuses on attrition in French immersion.

Three aspects of French immersion explored in the literature are reviewed to provide background and context for this study, then summarized. The first is the history of French immersion schooling from both a Canadian and then, more specifically, a Manitoba perspective. The second is student achievement documented through research

with a focus on the following: French-language achievement, English-language achievement, academic achievement, positive outcomes of early immersion, cultural awareness, and achievement of children with learning problems. The third is an examination of the limitations of French immersion, including a discussion of charges of elitism and the problem of student attrition.

History of French Immersion Schooling

Canadian Perspective

“Bilingual education is not a new or recent phenomenon. It is likely that it has existed since the very beginnings of formal education” (Genesee, 1987, p. 11). Cummins (1983) offers modern examples of bilingual education from Ireland, the Philippines, and several African countries that were in existence prior to the first programs in Canada.

In Canada, the most famous school from the early days of French immersion schooling is one started in the Montreal suburb of St. Lambert in 1965. However, while St. Lambert represented the first major program, the literature documents the existence of other, smaller, immersion programs prior to 1965. For example, in 1958 a class of 18 students were involved in an experimental program on the west side of Montreal at Cedar Park School (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2002a; Rebuffot, 1993).

The first immersion program that is acknowledged to have had an impact on subsequent immersion programs is the Toronto French School (TFS). This early immersion private school, founded by Harry and Anna Giles, opened its doors in 1962. At that time, the TFS had only six students. The original cohort gradually grew to 15 students and graduated in 1975 (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2002a; Obadia, 1981; Rebuffot, 1993; Toronto French School). Because the Toronto program

was small and set in a private institution, it was not able to reach as many people as a public school can. St. Lambert school therefore had a greater impact because, as a public school, it was generally accessible. However, the TFS had an influence on the development of the St. Lambert French school.

Olga Melikoff was one of the founding parents who fought hard to create the first French immersion program in St. Lambert. According to Melikoff (1972), prior to the start of the St. Lambert program, the French supervisor for the school board in St. Lambert made several visits to the Toronto French School to see how that program worked. These consultations helped the St. Lambert board and the parents decide that early immersion was the best option for their new program in St. Lambert and for most programs that followed across Canada. Because of initial concerns about the viability of this new education program, Melikoff and other St. Lambert parents decided to seek the assistance of researchers to study the children, to ensure that they were learning at the same rate as those in the English-language program. This research became essential in sustaining the French immersion program in St. Lambert.

Wallace Lambert and Richard Tucker, two McGill professors, led the research on the St. Lambert immersion school. They documented the entire process – from the conception of the idea of a French immersion school to testing the students through grade 6 – in order to measure the success of the program over the long term. The names Lambert and Tucker have become synonymous with French immersion research because of their contributions to French immersion in the original experiment and subsequent studies.

Canadian Politics in French Immersion

Melikoff (1972) writes that the St. Lambert experiment arose from the concerns of English-speaking parents like herself who felt that their education had made it difficult for them to communicate in French with their neighbours, in business, and with regard to other dimensions of Quebec's changing society. The parents observed that Quebec society was becoming more and more French; they felt that their children would have a better chance at economic success if they became bilingual.

To understand why Quebec society was changing in the 1960s, why it was becoming more French, and what brought about the beginning of French immersion education, one must look at Canadian history and the politics of the time. French Quebecers started what became known as "the Quiet Revolution" under the government of Jean Lesage in 1960. Rocher (2002) notes, "Thus Jean Lesage . . . liked to present Quebec as the 'political expression of French Canada' and even indicated that it should play the role of 'mother country' for Francophones outside Quebec" (p. 3). The result of the Lesage government's nationalistic policies was an infusion of French into Quebec society. Everything began to change as Francophones in the province began to take control of all of their institutions over the next decades. This political action produced a Quebec society that would eventually function almost exclusively in French; it also created a demand for bilingual education.

With the Official Languages Act of 1969, Canadian history and politics once again played a prominent role in the promotion of the French language. This time, the result was an increase in the demand for bilingual education in areas outside of Quebec:

The historical and cultural events leading to confederation in the 19th century led a century later to Canada's adoption of the Official Languages Act (1969, revised in 1988), which makes French and English the official languages of Canada and provides for special measures aimed at enhancing the vitality and supporting the development of English and French linguistic minority communities. Canada's federal departments, agencies, and Crown corporations reflect the equality of its two official languages by offering bilingual services. (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2001, p. 1)

One significant consequence of the Official Languages Act was that federal civil servants had to be able to speak French and English: "The act does not require that all Canadians be bilingual, only government employees dispensing federal services" (Genesee, 1987, pp. 5-6). That meant that opportunities for employment with the federal government would be reduced for people who were not bilingual. Consequently, there was a growing public desire to pursue bilingual education for the next generation, to ensure that jobs with the federal government would be available to them both in and out of Quebec. The federal government's move to make its employees bilingual, together with changes in Quebec society, encouraged the development of immersion programs. These events served as an impetus for parents to implement immersion programs in schools throughout Canada.

However, this did not mean that every school board across the country would experience a high demand for French immersion programs. Those programs were still experimental, and the data from the research group in St. Lambert was not published until 1972. However, between 1973 and 1986, after Lambert and Tucker's study, over 40

school boards established immersion programs across Canada (Canadian Education Association, 1992, p. 3).

According to Makropoulos (2003), the federal government also played a role in encouraging school boards to start immersion programs by offering financial incentives. After the Official Languages Act was adopted, the government established the Official Languages in Education Program to promote second language instruction by offering money to provincial and territorial governments to help pay for the new programs.

In summary, there was federal funding, starting in the early 1970s, to ensure that French immersion education would continue to grow across the country. The Official Languages Act helped to trigger the emergence of French immersion programs outside of Quebec. Those factors, combined with Lambert and Tucker's (1972) research that showed many positive outcomes from immersion education, led to increased demand for new immersion programs in all parts of Canada.

Manitoba Perspective

Manitoba started its French immersion programs around the same time as the Lambert and Tucker (1972) research was published, as Manitoba Education, Training and Youth (2002a) noted:

French Immersion started in Manitoba in the 1970s, when the first French Immersion classes were established in St. Boniface School Division # 4 and Winnipeg School Division # 1. In 1973, there were 216 students enrolled in Immersion at École Sacré-Coeur. (p. 7)

Cadez (2005) explains that the early St. Boniface immersion model was slightly different from the Sacré-Coeur model in that it offered half of the curriculum in English

rather than being a full immersion model. Also, because of the large number of Francophones in the St. Boniface community, there were Francophone schools in the area that were created to serve the French speaking population and taught all subjects except English in French. These schools were intended for children whose mother tongue was French. Anglophone parents soon started to take advantage of the opportunities offered by those schools and began sending their children there, rather than to the designated immersion schools, in order to learn French. Jean-Yves Rochon, former St. Boniface Superintendent, explained:

The way that immersion evolved was there was no such thing as immersion for a while. If you were a parent who was an Anglophone parent or you spoke English at home and one parent was French, and you said maybe we should send our kids to learn French. So where would you go? You'd go to a French school. It was the only game in town. (quoted in Cadez, 2005, p. 10)

It was the success of the experiences of those first students in Francophone schools in Manitoba, and the resulting pressure from the Francophone community to have the Anglophones removed, that prompted the creation of French immersion schools in St. Boniface which were based on the Francophone school model. Cadez (2005) explains that parents insisted on that type of program in the new schools. As a result, the former St. Boniface, St. Vital, and Transcona/Springfield School Divisions now have full French immersion programs that continue to offer all courses in French in an entirely French milieu, right to the end of high school. Where other school divisions created dual-track schools, these divisions and their parental communities insisted on a Francophone school model from kindergarten to grade twelve.

The French immersion centre model at the high school level is unique in Canada. No reference to a similar model outside of Manitoba was found in the literature. However, Cadez (2005) mentions that Roger Millier, along with a few of the other founders of the first French immersion centre high school in Manitoba, Collège Béliveau, had visited an immersion centre high school out of the province prior to the creation of the St. Boniface school in 1982.

Student Achievement Documented Through Research

French Language Achievement

The most significant goal of French immersion programs in Canada is to achieve bilingualism, that is, to produce students who can function in both French and English. The literature (Genesee, 1979, Lambert & Tucker, 1972, Swain & Lapkin 1982) shows that students attain varying degrees of French proficiency through immersion programs. The general conclusion is that students who go through such programs become more proficient in some aspects of language and communication than in others. The areas of language proficiency studied in both languages include listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

Lambert and Tucker (1972) wrote extensively about the tests administered to their St. Lambert group, and the test results. They concluded that the students' greatest abilities in French lay in listening and reading comprehension, and that their oral skills were noticeably different from those of the native-French control groups. However, the students were very expressive and used a diverse vocabulary, especially when offered the opportunity to invent their own stories and to be creative. The immersion students consistently made more grammatical errors than the French control group, yet what they

were saying could easily be understood, meaning that they were functional in the second language.

Swain and Lapkin (1982) drew similar conclusions in their studies of French immersion programs in Ontario schools from 1971 to 1979. The studies involved over 1,000 students in both regular English and French immersion programs. To test French proficiency, the researchers used standardized tests intended for Francophone students in Quebec rather than a French control group. Swain and Lapkin reached this conclusion:

The receptive skills (French listening and reading comprehension) of the French immersion students appear to develop near native-like levels by grade 8 of an early immersion program. French speaking and writing skills, however, remain less native-like, although immersion students are able to convey the meaning of what they want to say. (p. 54)

Rivard (2001) compared the writing of Senior 1 to 4 Francophone and immersion students in Manitoba (grades 9 to 12) and found similar results:

Although at the beginning of the secondary programme, significant differences between FL1 [francophone] and FL2 [French immersion] students were evident for style, language usage and fidelity to the text, by graduation, style was the only variable which still differentiated the written summaries of these two groups. (p. 184)

Genesee (1979), in a study for the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal (PSBGM), noticed differences between native and non-native speakers, but did not dispute the fact that the immersion students could communicate effectively in French:

In summary, the results of the French language testing indicated that: the immersion students had acquired “native-like” or near native-like proficiency in decoding French; they had acquired very good, although not native-like, functional oral communication skills in French. (p. 23)

The literature offers consistent evidence of success in oral comprehension. French immersion students understand French very well, can effectively communicate, and have good reading comprehension in their second language. However, proficiency may be lacking in written and especially oral communication, both of which are noticeably different from those of native-French speakers. However, this situation can improve as students spend more time in the immersion program.

English-Language Achievement

Another point of success for immersion programs is the conclusion (Genesee, 1979; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Parkin et al., 1987; Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Turnbull, Hart, & Lapkin, 2003) that levels of English proficiency in all aspects do not suffer because of the French immersion experience. The literature is consistent in showing that students in French immersion eventually perform as well as or better than their English program peers in all aspects of English-language ability.

After comparing scripts provided by immersion and non-immersion kindergarten children, Pelletier (1999) concluded, “Children in French immersion kindergarten are able to give accounts of their school day which are at least as long, if not longer, and more complex than their counterparts in regular English-language kindergarten” (p. 219).

Turnbull et al. (2003) analyzed tests given to grade 3 and grade 6 French immersion students across Ontario to compare their abilities to those in the English

program. The test measured knowledge and ability in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Analysis of the data led to this conclusion:

The results from this study corroborate those of large-scale evaluation studies of French immersion programs conducted some 20 and more years ago. This study establishes that French immersion does not have a negative effect on students' reading, writing, and mathematics skills in English. French immersion students are not disadvantaged in English in the medium to long term. (Conclusion, ¶ 1)

Research (Genesee, 1979; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Parkin et al., 1987; Pelletier, 1999; Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Turnbull et al., 2003) has clearly shown that French immersion students suffer no loss in English-language proficiency. There is no negative effect on English performance in the long term for French immersion students.

Academic Achievement

Another criterion for success revolves around the question of whether academic achievement in subjects other than English might suffer because of French language instruction. Researchers present data that demonstrates that students are not disadvantaged as a result of being taught all subjects in French. In mathematics, for example, Lambert and Tucker (1972) found, "There is no question that the Experimental pupils are able to process mathematical notions with great skill in either English or French" (p. 150). Students performed as well as comparison groups and scored beyond the 80th percentile on national norms (p. 205).

Swain and Lapkin's (1982) study documents similar results with Ontario students. Specifically, early immersion students performed as well as or better than their English peers in areas of science and mathematics even when those subjects were taught in

French. Swain and Lapkin found more inconsistent results with late immersion students. Their limited amount of exposure to French before entering immersion had an impact on their learning of subjects taught in French at the beginning of their immersion experience; however, once these students became more familiar with the language, the results improved. Swain and Lapkin conclude that, “In general and over the long run, immersion students are able to maintain standards of achievement consistent with those of their English-educated peers” (p. 68).

More recent research has demonstrated that these findings still hold for contemporary French immersion programs. For example, Turnbull, Hart, and Lapkin (2003), through their provincial test analysis, found that “Grade 6 immersion students outperformed those in the regular program in all skill areas” (Overall Grade 6 Test Results, ¶ 1).

It can be concluded that teaching the curriculum in a French immersion setting does not have a negative impact upon student learning. In fact, it may have a positive impact on students’ level of success.

Positive Outcomes of Early Immersion

Swain and Lapkin (1982) undertook their study not solely to determine if immersion students are as capable in languages and other academic areas as English school children. They compared different groups of immersion students, compiling information relating to varying abilities in all aspects of learning between students in all three types of immersion programs (early, middle, and late immersion). They found that early immersion students consistently outperformed middle or late immersion students in areas of language. The early immersion students’ abilities in French came closest to those

of native-Francophones. In looking at French competency in high school immersion students, Swain and Lapkin noted that, “There is a general trend for early immersion students to perform better than late immersion students” (p. 6).

Genesee (1979) concluded:

Delayed or reduced use of French as a medium of instruction yields lower levels of competence in French than does total early immersion . . . Overall, comparisons of total early and late immersion students favour the early immersion group, at least until the end of grade 8. (p. 28)

Swain (1978) came to the same conclusion: “Early total immersion appears to be the best route to follow among those discussed” (p. 584).

A common result found in the literature was that students in early immersion experience a slower development of English-language skills until grade 3 than do non-immersion students. Swain and Lapkin (1982) and Lambert and Tucker (1972) believe that this result can be explained by the fact that these students have typically not had any formal English instruction to that point in their schooling. Many immersion programs do not begin to teach reading in English until grade 3. The discrepancy resolves itself once English is introduced in the curriculum. It has been found (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Turnbull et al., 1983) that, by grade 4 or 5, students are very capable in French and are able to achieve as well as or better than their English program peers in reading, writing, speaking, and understanding English.

More recent research suggests that the more students are exposed to the second language, the better they perform in all areas. In a British Columbia study (Bournot-Trites & Reeder, 2001), two groups of students from the same school were followed from

grades 4 to 7. One class had 50% of its instruction in French, and the other had 80%, with only English language arts taught in English. After administering a standardized mathematics test, the researchers found that the 80% group outperformed the other group in this test. According to Bournot-Trites and Reeder, “This result provides further evidence for the benefits of a higher proficiency level in the second language – especially in the domain of academic language – to school success in that language” (p. 1).

It can be concluded from the literature that French immersion produces linguistic and academic results comparable to those of non-immersion programs. Furthermore, the best results for French language achievement correlate with early total immersion. The more students are exposed to French and the earlier that exposure begins, the better they perform in the second language.

Cultural Awareness

Originally, a second goal of French immersion education beyond bilingualism was to develop a sense of appreciation for the French culture. It was felt this would lead to a greater understanding between francophone and non-francophone communities across Canada. Only a small part of the research literature focuses on this area, possibly because culture appreciation is a difficult outcome to measure. For this reason, perhaps, Heffernan (1995) undertook a study of cultural inputs in French immersion and other educational settings. He found that students’ exposure to the francophone perspective and French culture was more limited than he had expected.

In addition to being difficult to measure, perhaps cultural awareness is not a prevalent focus in the research because it may play a much smaller role in modern French

immersion programs. More specifically, over time, this goal may have diminished in importance in order to appease Anglophone parents. Heffernan (2004) explains:

Reassurance that there would be no ‘threat’ to their children’s identity as Anglophones was provided over and over [to parents], became a kind of mantra and permanent subtext in the pertinent literature, and eventually became subsumed in theoretical foundations underpinning the French immersion program. (p. 5)

That said, early on, some progress was made in advancing cultural awareness through French immersion. For example, Lambert and Tucker (1972) studied cultural appreciation in each of the experimental classes they evaluated. They did so by asking questions about students’ perceptions of themselves, other Anglophones, and Francophones. Students filled out attitude profiles wherein they rated themselves, French Canadians, English Canadians, and people from France as “smart” or “dumb,” “bad” or “good,” “friendly” or “not friendly,” and so on. The results show that there are differences in how immersion students view other groups, compared to the English and French comparison groups. Specifically, immersion students rate French and English people more similarly than do non-immersion students, who tend to rate their own group higher than the other. It is interesting to note that Lambert and Tucker found that most of the immersion students’ answers still favoured the English, but not to the same degree as the English program students.

Based on their data, Lambert and Tucker (1972) concluded that cultural appreciation is enhanced by the immersion experience. By the end of grades 4 and 5, students “have also come to appreciate French people and French ways of life and now

consider themselves to be both English- and French-Canadian in makeup” (pp. 200-201). Thus, there seems to be some cultural benefit to the immersion experience. However, more research is needed in this area to determine whether immersion education is indeed achieving the goal of greater cultural appreciation, tolerance and awareness.

Children with Learning Problems

Several researchers (Bruck, 1978; Cummins, 1983; Genesee, 1976, 1987; Obadia 1996) believe that immersion does not have a negative effect on students with learning disabilities. In other words, studying in French immersion will not prevent a learning disabled student from doing as well in all subject areas as he or she would in an English program. In fact, these researchers conclude that learners with problems in French immersion would experience the same problems in any program. In his summary of three decades of French immersion research, Obadia concludes that “Children with learning difficulties will experience some problems in trying to cope with the French immersion curriculum – the same problems they would encounter in the English-language stream” (p. 4).

Bruck (1978) undertook an extensive study on language-disabled children, those who acquire a language “with painful slowness” (p. 885). After testing kindergarten to grade 3 children, Bruck concluded that language disabled children in immersion programs learn at their expected rate, which is slower than their peers, and experience the same difficulties as language-disabled children in English programs. The only difference is that immersion students learn a second language. This study tested children in Quebec, where speaking French is an essential part of daily life. The immersion students had learned enough French to function in French-speaking Quebec society, while the core

French students in the English program with the same learning difficulties had learned little or no French. Bruck concluded that it would be unfair to eliminate these children from the immersion experience because doing so would be detrimental to their future as citizens in the bilingual province of Quebec, where speaking French is essential.

After reviewing Bruck's (1978) research, Genesee (1987) also concluded that such students suffer no adverse effects from the immersion experience. Genesee also looked at other atypical students, students with below average IQs, and concluded that, "In the case of IQ, all evidence, direct and indirect, suggests that level of IQ is not an impediment to achievement in French immersion programs any more than it is in a regular academic program in the native language" (p. 512).

The conclusions reached in these studies (Bruck, 1978; Genesee, 1987) on disadvantaged students are reinforced by the research of Cummins (1983). Cummins concludes that there is a misperception in education that "Students who experience learning problems in early immersion would be better off in an English program. [On the contrary,] the research conducted on these issues suggests that these assumptions have little foundation" (p. 125). Cummins found not only that there are no disadvantages for children studying in immersion, but that there are benefits beyond the language for the children learning in immersion programs. Specifically, Cummins argues that "Cognitive advantages may accrue to children who develop high levels of bilingual skills" (p. 134).

Genesee (1976) also studied low socio-economic status students. The assumption was that this group of students would not be able to achieve as well in French as in English. However, Genesee found that, "The evidence pertaining to working class children in French immersion similarly suggests that these children benefit from French

immersion in the area of French-language acquisition and do not suffer any negative effects to native language competency” (p. 512).

Rousseau (1999) studied 13 learning-disabled students in French immersion schools in Edmonton who were placed in a special program designed to re-integrate these students back into the regular French immersion classroom over a period of two years. She found that this support program allowed the students to succeed in school, improve self-esteem, develop a greater awareness of how to deal with their learning problems, and have a more positive attitude towards school and learning. The students in the re-integration program were able to succeed in a French immersion program, but they needed extra support. However, support would have been necessary in any program because the disability had nothing to do with learning in a second language. Obadia (1996) agrees:

Children with learning difficulties will experience some problems in trying to cope with the French immersion curriculum – the same problems they would encounter in the English-stream program. Learning assistance should be provided for them, whether they are in immersion or in the regular English program. (p. 3)

Based on the above-cited research results (Bruck, 1978; Cummins, 1983; Genesee, 1976, 1987; Obadia, 1996; Rousseau 1999), there is good reason to believe that all children can learn in an immersion program and can gain the benefit of knowing a second language. Doing so will help them to be more functional in the more bilingual sectors of our society, an advantage that should arguably be made available to all students in every large Francophone community in Canada. That is certainly a positive outcome

for French immersion education, as the research literature suggests that immersion education is inclusive and beneficial in some way to all learners.

However, not all researchers agree with the positive outcomes described by Bruck (1978), Cummins (1983), and Genesee (1976, 1987). Others (Makropoulos, 2003; Trites, 1978; Wiss, 1989) who have looked at the same issue conclude that some children should not be placed in French immersion programs – or at least not in early immersion. This strand of research suggests that some children need time to develop their linguistic skills in order to learn all subject matter, and that this is too difficult to attempt in French. These researchers argue that many students will perform better in English programs.

Trites (1986) is one who concludes that immersion is not suitable for every child. She advocates the development of tests to be administered prior to kindergarten to ensure that only suitable candidates are selected for immersion: “These results raised the possibility that an early identification could be developed which, when given to four-year-old children, would accurately predict their future performance in a primary French immersion program prior to their entry into such a program” (p. 2). Trites assumes that some children cannot succeed in the immersion environment due to a maturational lag in the development of the brain. This has little to do with intelligence but more to do with slower than normal physical development:

Should the child who experiences difficulties in Immersion be switched to the regular English program? The answer to this question is a very definitive “YES.” Studies in our Laboratory have indicated rather clearly that there are certain children who have a specific maturational lag affecting their ability to progress satisfactorily in a primary French Immersion program. (Trites, 1978, p. 888)

Trites (1978, 1986), studied 200 students for seven years starting in 1976. (The findings from this study were first published in 1983, and were more widely distributed in 1986. The 1986 edition was the only one available for my research.) Trites concluded that those students who transferred to the English program benefited from the transfer because fewer than half of the transfer students had to repeat a grade. She attributed the grade repetition to the fact that most had not had any formal English instruction up to that point and needed to catch up with their new peers. However, if these students were given the same time to achieve in the immersion program, their successes may have equalled their eventual successes in the English program.

Trites' theories (1978, 1986) are not generally accepted. Cummins (1983), after studying Trites' research, states, "There is very little empirical evidence that children who drop out of EFI [early French immersion] have a unique pattern of deficits or suffer from a maturational lag in temporal lobe regions of the brain" (p. 130). Cummins does not believe that a maturational lag is a real problem for students who leave immersion programs. Furthermore, he does not recognize Trites' research as valid and questions the methods she used to reach her conclusions.

Wiss (1989) agrees that "Trites' (1978, 1986) notion of a maturational lag which makes some children poor candidates for early immersion, may be viable" (p 527). However, like Cummins (1983), she finds Trites' methodology for identification unsound. Wiss suggests that looking at linguistic and cognitive development would be more useful than looking at specific neuroanatomical structures, as Trites did. Although Wiss (1989) disagrees with Trites' (1986) methodology, she agrees with the notion of early identification of unsuitable immersion candidates.

Despite the research of Trites (1978, 1986) and Wiss (1989), the literature generally agrees that immersion is suitable for almost all children. As Obadia (1996) argues, “Apart from some extreme cases, children with learning difficulties should not be denied the right and privilege of becoming bilingual and also should be able to draw satisfaction and pride from speaking two world languages” (p. 6).

The literature reflects two views relating to students with learning challenges. Some (Bruck, 1978; Cummins, 1983; Genesee, 1976, 1987; Obadia, 1996; Rousseau 1999) believe that all students can succeed as well in French immersion as they could in an English program. Others (Makropoulos, 2003; Trites, 1978, 1986; Wiss, 1989) argue that French immersion is not appropriate for all students. On balance, the literature seems to indicate that students of all levels of ability can succeed in an immersion setting, although further research is needed to address the issues raised by those who disagree.

Student Achievement: Summary

Many positive results have come from French immersion programs over the last 40 years. Above all, there are many bilingual graduates who might not have had the opportunity to learn French were it not for the immersion experience. For most students, this benefit has come without a price; the research clearly shows that immersion students have done as well in all aspects of their education as their English program peers.

One factor that determines students’ level of fluency is the type of immersion program in which they are enrolled. Early immersion, which seems to produce students with more native-like French abilities, is the preferred program as indicated by the research. The view that a positive correlation between increased exposure to French and improved French performance is well established.

Exposure to French language and culture has also allowed French immersion students to gain an appreciation and acceptance of French culture in ways that their English program peers have not. However, more research is needed in this area to demonstrate this as convincingly as the other positive outcomes of French immersion.

It also appears that children with learning difficulties have relative success in French immersion programs, but there are conflicting opinions in this area. It is possible that, as the clientele in French immersion programs changes, more children with learning difficulties will be in the programs. This would allow a broader sample for research, and eventually a consensus in the data may emerge. This too is an area in need of further study.

Limitations of French Immersion Programs

Charges of Elitism

Although French immersion has been proven to be successful, it is not a popular choice for many parents, and most Canadian students never enter the program. In the past, this type of schooling appealed to a specific societal group who did not realistically represent society as a whole. As Hart and Lapkin (1998) note, “a recurrent criticism of French immersion education is that it is elitist” (p. 324). In the early years, French immersion programs did not cater to all types of students and often lacked sufficient resources to address the needs of all types of learners and was thus unable retain all of the students in the program. Students experiencing difficulty would likely leave for the English program while others never even entered the immersion stream. This left only the most capable students in the French immersion programs, reinforcing the charges of elitism.

Some researchers (Krashen, 1996; Parkin et al., 1987) have corroborated the elitist label. According to Krashen, “Children in CSI [Canadian-style immersion] are typically middle class and do a considerable amount of reading outside of school” (p. 76). As Parkin et al. note, “Students who enrol [in French immersion] tend to have a more positive attitude than those in core programs and to be well motivated, so that there is relatively little scope for improvement” (p. 4).

According to Hart and Lapkin (1998), the criticism of elitism has two basic dimensions. The first focuses on the socioeconomic status of the parents and students, and the second on the academic ability or success of the students. The two come together in the accusation that upper-middle-class parents send their children to French immersion to keep ahead of the majority of society, simultaneously taking the best students out of regular English programs and thereby weakening those programs.

Much of the perception of elitism stems from the socio-economic status of the founders of immersion programs across Canada. Most programs started in suburban areas with educated, middle-class families who were interested in advancing their children’s career and social opportunities. According to Genesee (1987), “[Immersion] does not threaten the status quo of the more powerful English Canadian community; to the contrary, it serves to maintain the socioeconomic status” (p. 153). As noted earlier, many middle class parents responded to the government’s initiative to make the federal bureaucracy fully bilingual by embracing bilingualism, attempting to ensure their children every opportunity to maintain their socio-economic status.

The parents of students in the first immersion programs were extremely dedicated to and involved in the programs and generally had to struggle to have a program started

in their area. Gibson (1984), a parent of children in immersion in British Columbia, stated that she had met many parents who, like her, drove great distances to get their children to school because of their commitment to having them learn French: “Immersion is not for the lazy or insecure parent” (p. 9). Gérald Gagnon, a former administrator of three different elementary and secondary immersion schools, commented:

One of the things about immersion parents, especially in the early years, is they were highly committed, highly dedicated. They were great believers in the program. If I were to compare parental support then and parental support in my last years, I think I look back on the early years where the parents were much more intimately involved and much more, shall we say, active supporters and promoters of the program. (personal communication, March 15, 2005)

In other words, immersion programs, especially in the early days, were not meant for everyone, as every parent would not be able to make such a commitment. Thus, the elitist label prevailed.

Elitism has been ascribed to many experimental education initiatives. According to Genesee (1987), “It may be that the first groups of students to enrol in the program are not representative of later groups; for example, because the first groups are more select” (p. 28). Hart and Lapkin (1998) note that, “There is some evidence that newly introduced programs, particularly those that appear experimental, will disproportionately draw students from families with high socioeconomic status” (p. 330).

Hart and Lapkin (1998) base their research on work by Burns (1983), who studied immersion programs in northern Ontario. Burns concluded:

[Elitism] occurs because high SES (socio-economic status) parents tend to be more willing to gamble on innovations; policy makers at the school board level have frequently hindered (perhaps not intentionally) universal admissibility; and the tracking out phenomenon (where it occurs) tends to effect homogeneity. (p. 5)

Burns's "tracking out phenomenon" refers to the fact that students with academic or attitudinal/behavioural problems tend to leave the immersion program, an argument that is supported in other research (Bruck, 1978; Halsall, 1991). In the early years, the suggested solution when a child was struggling in an immersion program was to place the child in an English program. Hayden (1988) found that most students who left immersion did so because of academic difficulty, especially in language arts (p. 226). Trites (1986) also drew a connection between departure from the program and academic difficulty.

Carey (1984) studied students in an English program in order to demonstrate that immersion was a drain on talent from the English system. He attempted to show that, compared to the French immersion program, the English program received a disproportionate number of lower-achieving students. Based on teachers' reported perceptions of their students, Carey found that the English program received more children whom their teachers perceived to be below average in ability, fewer whom they perceived to be above average, and more whom they perceived to be likely to encounter learning difficulties. Based on the teachers' perceptions, Carey concluded, "Thus, the French immersion program appears to be clearly composed of the most capable students" (p. 251).. More research is needed to support or invalidate these conclusions.

Clift (1984) argues that elitism is one reason for the popularity of immersion. He writes:

Another factor which helps explain the growing popularity of French immersion is the appeal it makes to the elitism which has long been characteristic of Canadian society. In other words, immersion has many of the attributes of private schools. But it is all at public expense since federal and provincial funding, offered in the interest of national unity, makes the whole system viable. (p. 66)

The attitudes of some immersion teachers seem to support Clift's opinion that immersion schools have the attributes of private schools. For example, when immersion teachers in the Ottawa-Carleton area were asked their opinions on admission criteria for entrance to the immersion program, 63% said that there should be admission standards that would prevent certain students from enrolling in the full immersion program (Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board, 2000, p. 38).

Other researchers do not share this view (Bruck, 1978; Genesee, 1987; Obadia, 1996). They argue that immersion should be available to all students and that only in rare circumstances would it be unsuitable for a child. Excluding students and promoting elitism would be detrimental to the survival of the program, according to Bruck:

Unless we decide that French immersion programs should be made available only to average English Canadian children with no cultural, emotional, language or learning problems, then we must begin to change the program so that it is more suitable for a wider range of children. (p. 887)

With the passing of time, the "elitist" descriptor for French immersion schools has become less valid than it once was. Because the program was new, innovative, and experimental in its early years, many parents did not consider it a viable alternative to the regular English program. As Bienvenue (1986) found, parents continued to view

immersion as experimental for some time. It was not until 1996 that Manitoba became the first province to adopt a curriculum policy for French immersion programs outlining expectations and graduation course requirements (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2002a).

Now that the “experimental” label has faded, and immersion programs are more widely accepted, as students and parents from more varied backgrounds have become involved in the program. Perhaps it now appears less risky. Many of the factors contributing to the elitist connotations associated with French immersion education have been eliminated. According to Obadia (1996), “This criticism (of elitism) may have been valid when the French immersion program began. However, with hundreds of thousands of students in the program, if this were ever true, it is not the case today” (p. 4). The sheer number of students involved in today’s French immersion programs makes it difficult to charge the programs with elitism. According to Canadian Parents for French (2003), almost 300,000 Canadian students were enrolled in immersion in 2002.

Nonetheless, the perception of elitism continues to hound immersion programs. If these programs appear to exist only for middle class or academically exceptional students, they lose some of their legitimacy. However, with the passing of time and with the large numbers of students now in immersion programs in Canada, much of the perception of elitism associated with the program in its early days has diminished.

Attrition of Students

Overview of the problem. Attrition rates in immersion schools may have helped to fuel the notion that the program is elitist, because immersion programs frequently do not retain their students from kindergarten to graduation. According to Canadian Parents for

French BC and Yukon (2001), “Attrition in French immersion programs, particularly at the secondary level, is a significant concern of French immersion parents” (p. 9).

Duhamel (1985) also believes that the issue of attrition has great importance:

Because the attrition problem is so serious, on the face of it, and because the continuation, or resolution, of the problem will have a profound effect upon the health of the immersion idea, an attempt should be made to identify its possible causes and assess their significance for the future of the program. (p. 821)

Background research for this study indicates that attrition also occurs in the three schools targeted in this study. According to student population figures obtained from Manitoba Education, Citizenship, and Youth (MECY), an average of 13.19% of students left the immersion program between S1 and S4 in the three sample schools between 1990 and 2005. However, the situation is better now. For example, the average S1 to S4 attrition rate for the last five cohorts, those starting S1 since 1998, is only 8.4%.

Appendix A contains further information on S1 to S4 attrition rates for each of the three sample schools.

Another way of looking at the attrition problem is to see how many students who start the program in kindergarten continue through to S4. MECY data since 1990, when five cohorts of students made it from kindergarten to S4, show that an average of 40.76% of students dropped out of French immersion between kindergarten and S4 in the three sample schools. Appendix B contains further information on kindergarten to S4 attrition rates for each of the three sample schools.

Attrition research. Numerous studies (e.g., Adiv, 1979; Halsall, 1991; Ottawa-Carleton, 2000) have examined attrition in French immersion programs. Figure 1

summarizes the results of those as well as other studies by documenting the attrition rate and the reasons given by the respondents.

Before turning to Figure 1, it is important to explain the context of each study listed. The Adiv (1979) study surveyed 222 grade 10 and 11 students in Montreal Protestant schools to see what students liked and did not like about their French immersion experience. Adiv used this information to reach conclusions as to why students left the program. Most of the students in Adiv's study were enrolled in late immersion programs starting in grade 7. Therefore, by the time they dropped out, most had roughly two years of experience in a French immersion program. The relevance of that study for today's programs is minimal since, as stated earlier, about 80% of students enrol in early immersion (Obadia, 1996). Although the same problems may have existed for students leaving after eight to ten years of immersion education, further research would be necessary to offer convincing evidence that current early immersion students experience these problems and that similar results would be obtained today. Adiv concludes that most students transferred because program was too difficult, too demanding, or they were struggling academically in the immersion program.

In 1985, Alberta Education studied how three schools implemented new French immersion programs in grades 1 to 6. Interviews were conducted with those involved with the programs to determine reasons for attrition. The interviewees in the study provided the following reasons for attrition: 1) the transient nature of the population, 2) the grade one mandatory entry point, 3) a decline in community population, and 4) a lack of adequate specialized staff for those immersion students having learning difficulties.

Duhamel (1985) used government statistics to analyze the rate of attrition in high school immersion programs in Manitoba. He concluded that students left because of a lack of options available in French. He also concluded that students may perceive that they could attain higher grades in an English school. Duhamel offered only his own opinions concerning the reasons for that rate of attrition, but no empirical evidence to support his conclusions.

Also in 1985, Lewis and Shapson studied high school students from nine dual-track schools in four districts in British Columbia. Surveying 84 transfer or former French immersion students and 128 current French immersion students, they found an attrition rate of 35% over a period of two years. Lewis and Shapson concluded that the most common reasons for student attrition include dissatisfaction with the quality of instruction, a perception that higher grades would be attained in English, difficulty with courses, and dissatisfaction with course content.

Parkin et al. (1987) analyzed data collected in other studies focusing on K-6 schools, in order to draw conclusions regarding reasons for attrition in French immersion. The researchers concluded that difficulty in understanding, speaking, and reading in French, difficulty reading in English, poor relations with the immersion teacher, emotional or behavioural problems and lack of remedial help within the immersion program all contribute to the attrition problem.

In 1988, Hayden studied 28 children in grades 1 to 6 who had transferred out of a French immersion program to attend an English program in the same dual-track school. Interviews were conducted with parents, students, and teachers to determine the reasons why the students left the program. Students experiencing difficulty in language arts, and

parent/teacher recommendation were the most commonly mentioned reasons for transfer reported by parents and teachers in Hayden's study.

Halsall (1991) undertook a study for Canadian Parents for French to determine the rate of attrition and reasons for attrition at all levels in schools across Canada. Although the study examined all levels, it focused mostly on high school. The attrition data reported in Figure 1 refer to high school students. Halsall reported an attrition rate across Canada, based on past research, of between 20% and 80%. She concluded that a lack of course options and a heavy work load were the main reasons for student attrition at the high school level.

Obadia and Thériault (1995) surveyed 31 teachers, 22 school principals, and 26 divisional French coordinators in British Columbia to measure their perceptions on the attrition problem and reasons for student attrition at all grade levels. Based on the responses of all three groups, the researchers concluded that student attrition in French immersion programs is related to three major issues: 1) academic difficulty, 2) social and emotional difficulties, and 3) the quality of teaching programs. Minor contributing factors include a limited choice of subjects and peer pressure. Academic difficulty was most often rated as the primary reason for student transfer in Obadia and Thériault's study.

The Ottawa-Carleton (2000) study reports on French as a second language, or core French programs, in the Ottawa District, and immersion programs in the Carleton District. Both parts of the study focus on the high school level and report only enrolment statistics. The Carleton District reported that, "By grade 12/OAC, approximately 8% of the students remain in the immersion program" (p. 26). The 92% attrition rate noted in

Figure 1 was determined from this 8%. Note that the Ottawa-Carleton (2000) study includes immersion, partial immersion, and core programs.

Researcher	City/Province/Country	Respondents	Attrition Rate (%)	Academic Difficulty	Difficulty in French	Difficulty in English	Behavioural Problems	Lack of Support	Quality of Instruction/Teachers	Too Difficult	Too Much Work	Better Grades in English	Fear of Falling Behind in English	Lack of Options in French	Teacher/Parental Influence	Pursue Other Programs	Other Issues
Adiv (1979)	Montreal	Students	20							•	•		•	•	•		•
Alberta Education (1985)	Alberta	Students	30					•									•
Duhamel (1985)	Manitoba	Students	N/A									•					•
Lewis & Shapson (1985)	British Columbia	Students	35	•				•	•	•		•		•		•	
Parkin, et al. (1987)	Ottawa	Students	N/A	•	•	•	•	•	•								
Hayden (1988)	Alberta	Students	N/A	•	•	•		•	•						•		
Halsall (1991)	Canada	Students	20-80		•	•	•	•	•					•	•	•	•
Obadia & Theriault (1995)	British Columbia	Teachers	N/A	•						•	•			•			•
		Admin.	N/A	•						•	•			•	•		•
		French Coordinator	N/A	•					•	•	•			•	•		•
Ottawa-Carleton (2000)	Carleton	Enrolment Statistics	92														
Ottawa-Carleton (2000)	Ottawa	Enrolment Statistics	84														

Figure 1. Reasons for student attrition in French immersion programs.

When attrition occurs. According to MECY data, attrition in the three sample schools peaks after S1, when an average of 7.53% of students transfer out of the immersion program. At the elementary level, the data indicate that attrition in the three sample school communities peaks after grade 6, when an average of 7.06% transfer out. Refer to Appendix C for further information on attrition rates per grade for each of the three sample schools.

According to the literature, the highest rate of attrition occurs between grades 7 and 9. Campbell (1992) found a total attrition rate, from grades 1 to 9, of 49%, among whom 52% left between junior high school and grade 9 (p. 12). Obadia and Thériault (1995) came to a similar conclusion: “Principals and teachers both reported that the highest attrition occurred in grade 7 [in] early immersion type programs. Principals reported that the attrition levels in secondary years were at their highest in grade 8” (p. 10). Morton, Lemieux, Diffey, and Awender (1999) noted that, in Ontario, the end of Grade 8 is a common point where students decide whether or not to continue in French immersion. Grades 7 and 9 are interesting departure points for students, as they also represent points at which students typically change schools in any case, moving either from elementary to junior high, or from junior high to high school.

Other researchers have found attrition to be more persistent at the high school level. Halsall (1991) reported, “The respondents felt that attrition was more of a problem at the secondary level than at the elementary level” (p. 3). Adiv (1979) studied grade 11 students and found an attrition rate of 20%, with most students switching in grade 9. Lewis and Shapson (1989), studying high school students in British Columbia, found an attrition rate of 35% over two years, a significant loss of students over a short time. As

Foster (1998) noted, “Significant numbers of students enrolled in bilingual programs are choosing not to continue study in their second language at high school” (p. 3).

The Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board (2000) determined from its enrolment statistics that historically, students leave between grades 9 and 12: “For both sectors, in general, the drop out from French as a Second Language program begins to occur in grade 9 and continues to rapidly decline to grade 12/OAC” (p. 26). The Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board figures reported in Figure 1 include immersion *and* core students choosing French as an option in an English program. However, while the study indicates that significant numbers left immersion in those programs, it does not report an exact percentage.

Although different conclusions are drawn in the studies, there is consensus among the majority of researchers that attrition in French immersion schools peaks between grades 8 and 9. Further studies are urgently needed that focus on students entering and completing these grades.

Academic achievement. A wide variety of reasons are reported in the literature for students opting out of immersion programs. Figure 1 lists these reasons by date of study. The reason most frequently given was related to some type of academic difficulty: either the program was too difficult, or the student had learning problems, or there were specific problems in learning either French or English. Lewis and Shapson (1989) observed that students who left the immersion program “seemed particularly disappointed about their inability to keep up in the immersion program.” (p. 545). Hayden (1988) obtained a similar result: “The most frequently cited reason for withdrawal focused on the children’s

academic difficulty in school with particular emphasis on their lack of success with language arts (90%)” (p. 226).

Adiv (1979), Duhamel (1985), and Halsall (1991) all reported that students expected to achieve higher grades in English schools. Teachers’ expectations in the immersion program were perceived to be higher than those of teachers in the regular English program. Students’ expectation that they might obtain higher grades in the English program may also indicate unsatisfactory results in the immersion program; in other words, they may be having academic difficulty. However, these studies do not document the achievement of those students in the immersion program who believed that they might achieve better results in the English program.

The teaching staff surveyed in the Ottawa-Carleton (2000) study looked more closely at the academic challenges that students face and cite as reasons for attrition. These included “students with special needs such as ESL students, students with learning disabilities, students who are speech and language delayed, and students having significant difficulty meeting the expectations of the grade level” (pp. 35-36). Obadia and Thériault (1995) obtained the same results from teachers and administrators in their survey. Both groups cited academic difficulty as one of the three major problems cited by students leaving immersion programs; the other problems were social and emotional difficulty, and the quality of teaching programs (p. 3).

However, Morton et al. (1999), studying a group of grade 8 students in Ontario, found that “neither achievement in French nor achievement in other academic subjects (English, Math, Science, History) was differentiating between the persistent and the nonpersistent.” This study contradicts the above noted research. Since Morton et al.

performed their study more recently than the others, it may signal a change in the character of immersion schools and programs. Alternatively, it may simply be an anomaly in the research. Either way, Morton et al. signal a need for continuing research.

Student services. With the exception of Morton et al. (1999), the literature (Alberta Education, 1985; Halsall, 1991; Hayden, 1988; Lewis & Shapson, 1989; Parkin et al., 1987) clearly shows that academic difficulties play a major role in the decision of the parents and students to leave the immersion program. Students encountering academic or social problems in school tend to need special assistance in order to succeed. If that assistance is not available, the situation may not improve. However, because of the small size of many immersion programs, as well as the somewhat elitist attitude that prevailed in the early days, little support was given to students experiencing difficulties. As a result, they were under pressure to leave if they wanted to succeed, which is a point that adds strength to the elitist argument. A significant part of the attrition problem can be attributed to the fact that, in the past, immersion schools offered little support to students in need. This forced students and their parents to seek resources elsewhere, generally in an English program.

This explanation is consistent with conclusions reached in several studies. For example, the Canadian Education Association (1992) reasoned:

French immersion programs may not have the support or structure of well-established regular English programs; parents and students may be concerned by a perception that it is not as well-developed. Students who have learning difficulties may transfer out of French immersion programs because of a lack of special education support services. (p. 8)

Similarly, Lewis and Shapson (1989) found that students who left immersion “seemed frustrated about not receiving help when they were having difficulty” (p. 545). Hayden (1988) observed:

Fifty percent of parents felt that their children were not provided the special help they needed in order to overcome their deficiencies and cope with their frustrations.... There was a general feeling among parents that somehow their children were being short-changed, that if adequate help had been provided . . . they might not have considered transfer or at least not carried it out. (pp. 227-228)

Several studies mention lack of support as a reason for attrition (Alberta Education, 1985; Halsall, 1991; Hayden, 1988; Lewis & Shapson, 1989; Parkin et al., 1987).

Immersion administrators share this sentiment. Alain Nault (personal communication, March 26, 2005), speaking about his time as an administrator in the mid 1990s, stated, “Those [academically challenged] students were made to feel that they had to go somewhere else and often with some encouragement from administration.” Retired principal Gérald Gagnon (personal communication, March 15, 2005) explained, “You didn’t have the resources [in immersion programs] that you had perhaps in English-language schools in terms of professionals who would be available to teachers.”

It seems clear that, historically, immersion programs have tended to offer insufficient support to allow students to overcome their academic difficulties. It seems equally clear that this situation has at times influenced parents and students to seek necessary services in an English program, thus increasing immersion’s rate of attrition and enhancing an image of elitism.

Amount of French. In the Ottawa-Carleton (2000) study, teachers stated that entrance tests should be administered to immersion students. Most did not want to see the immersion program converted into an immersion centre school. Teachers, parents, and students in the study also stated their belief that it is not essential to teach any course in French; in fact, it would be preferable to teach many of the math and science courses in English (pp. 34-35). There was little support for a more intensive immersion program from neither parents nor teacher suggesting that students were not likely encouraged to increase the amount of courses that they would take in French nor would more courses likely become available in the future.

This lack of dedication to full immersion on the part of the staff and community in the Ottawa Carleton (2000) study may help to explain the high levels of attrition in the immersion schools in this district. It also points to an understudied possible reason for attrition in immersion programs, that is, too little exposure to French in the learning environment beyond the classroom content. The possibility that students may leave immersion programs because of a lack of support for the French language in the system has been overlooked in the literature.

Lambert and Tucker (1972) compared students' attitudes towards learning French and found that a greater emphasis on French encouraged the learners to further their studies. They concluded that immersion students want more French, while the core students do not want any at all and feel that they already have too much: "Too little French turns out to be too much for them, while a great deal of French has, it would seem, merely whetted the appetites of the experimental children" (p. 201).

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth (1991, 2002b) found that graduates of immersion programs also agree that increasing the amount of French used at school would improve the French immersion experience. These studies suggest that more oral French interaction and more cultural activities are the most popular ways of improving the immersion program.

In the studies by Manitoba Education, Training and Youth (1991, 2002b), significant differences were observed between early and late immersion graduates, and single- and dual-track graduates. It can be concluded that the level of exposure to French has an impact on the value that students place on learning the language. In the 1991 study, the early immersion and single-track graduates looked more positively on their immersion experience than did dual track graduates. For example, late immersion grads were more likely to favour the idea of having courses such as math and science taught in English. Early immersion graduates were more likely to recommend the program to others; 98% of early immersion graduates would recommend the program, while only 83% of late immersion graduates felt the same way (p. 11). McGillivray (1978) concluded that the immersion centre lost fewer students than did dual-track schools. Such studies show the potential for a correlation between the amount of exposure to French and retention rates.

Shortage of qualified teachers. As indicated by Duhamel (1985), a lack of qualified teachers can be a problem for many French immersion schools. In areas with small Francophone communities, it may be difficult to find enough qualified candidates to fill teaching positions in all subject areas, grades, and specialties. However, the Canadian Education Association (1992) concludes that, “As immersion programs become

more well-established, such services (like resource and special education teachers who are qualified to teach in French) are increasing” (p. 10).

Parents also have noticed the problem and continue to appeal for a focus on teacher training and retention. Canadian Parents for French (2002, 2003) has raised awareness about the shortage of qualified immersion teachers, and claims that attrition and teacher shortage are two of the most important issues needing attention in immersion education. Webster (1986), a founding member of Canadian Parents for French, wrote, “Unfortunately, it is true too often that boards lack qualified teachers (for French immersion programs)... Teachers are the key to quality education” (p. 11).

To summarize, research on attrition from specialized programs is virtually non-existent. The largest body of research touching on the topic is in the area of French immersion education (see Figure 1). The evolution of French immersion education from an experimental program to an accepted part of the education system has drastically changed the student population of French immersion schools since the time when most of the attrition studies were conducted. Consequently, more current research is needed in the area of student attrition. The literature has shown that attrition is one of the major challenges facing French immersion education.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to document the perceptions of three groups associated with the three French immersion centre high schools located in Manitoba, Canada: French immersion high school students who left the program; high school French immersion teachers who are currently teaching at the three schools; and high school French immersion students who are currently in the French immersion program. The data gathered are used to identify selected factors that account for attrition or retention within the two samples of students while the teacher statements are used to supplement and enhance the student-generated data.

Fictitious names have been assigned to the two school divisions within which the three schools are located. Also, the three schools are listed as School A, B, and C to protect their anonymity. The Langevin School Division has two French immersion high schools: Schools A and B. The Taché School Division has one school: School C. In all three schools, all subjects are taught in French, with the exception of the English language arts program, and all in-school communication is also in French. These schools and their buildings serve only the French immersion program. They do not share space with any other programs, allowing them to maintain a French milieu.

School A is in a large Francophone community and differs from the other two schools in that it is a grade 7 to S4 school. The other two are S1 to S4 schools. School A, when established, was the first immersion centre high school in Manitoba, and according to the founders it was also the first in western Canada (Cadez, 2005). The total population of School A in the 2004-2005 school year was 591 students from grade 7 to S4. The S1 to

S4 population was 372 students. School A's community has four K-6 elementary schools that feed into the school.

School B also has a large number of Francophone residents in its area. In fact, there is a K-8 Francophone school situated very close to School B, and some students from the Francophone school will transfer to School B once they reach S1. Having a Francophone elementary school partially feed into an immersion high school is unique to this school. The S1 to S4 student population of School B was 557 in the 2004-2005 school year. School B's community has four K-8 schools that officially feed into the school, as well as a portion of the Francophone school previously mentioned.

The third French immersion school included in this study, School C, is situated in a mostly non-francophone community. However, it is located not far from Schools A and B. The S1 to S4 student population of School C was 332 in the 2004-2005 school year. School C's elementary feeder community is made up of two K-4 schools, one 5-8 school, and one K-8 school.

All three schools draw upon a broad cross section of the population. As mentioned, each high school officially has four feeder elementary schools. The social class composition of each of the feeder schools is quite unique. In each case, some of the feeder schools are situated in suburban, upper middle-class, professional neighbourhoods; others are in working class areas; and still others have part of the population living at or below the poverty line. School C has one school feeding into it from a rural area. There are also students who transfer into these schools from outside of the schools' catchment areas. The socio-economic status and education levels of the families in all three schools are quite diverse.

Research Methodology

Students' and teachers' perceptions about attrition were collected using three Likert-scale surveys that paralleled each other and were administered to the above-noted population samples. Appendices D, E, and F provide the surveys. The surveys were administered via the Internet. Each respondent was given a personal code to enter in order to access the appropriate survey, and data was continuously collected.

Permission was acquired from the school divisions involved through a written communication and a signed consent form (see Appendix G). Once permission to access the schools was obtained, the sample groups were presented with the necessary information.

For teachers, the study was presented at a staff meeting. All who verbally consented to participating in the survey submitted a signed consent form (see Appendix H). A personal code and instructions for completing the survey were returned to participants through e-mail. The message used to communicate this information can be found in Appendix I.

To administer the survey to the former students, I contacted the principal or vice principal of the English school that these students currently attended to organize a meeting time for completing the survey. I then went to the three English schools to meet the students, distribute the consent form (see Appendix J) and information about the study, and provide them with a personal code and web address ticket to complete the survey. The instructions read to the students can be found in Appendix K.

For the current student survey, seven classroom teachers were given the consent forms (see Appendix L) for students to sign, along with tickets that had an individual

personal code and the web address for the survey. They were asked to distribute these to the students in some of their classes, along with a list of instructions (see Appendix M).

All three surveys employ a five-point Likert scale with a range of responses from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Responses are recorded as percentages so that comparisons between sample groups, as well as comparisons to previous studies, can be made. The statements in the surveys come from a variety of sources referred to in the literature review. Statements that focus on the negative aspects of the program are based on statements used and data collected in previous studies on attrition in French immersion programs (Adiv, 1979; Halsall, 1991; Hayden, 1988; Lewis & Shapson, 1989; Obadia & Thériault, 1995). Statements that focus on the positive aspects of French immersion are based on questions used in student perception studies conducted by the Manitoba government (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 1991, 2002b). The statements focusing on parents are based on Hayden’s (1988) study; although that study focused on grades 1 to 6, its results are still pertinent for this research. All of the above-noted sources were drawn upon because they have previously generated data.

Validity of a Web-Based Survey

The decision to administer the survey via the Internet was made because this method is, in identifiable ways, preferable to mailed paper surveys and provides some advantages over mail surveys. Mertler and Earley (2003) explain:

Advantages of Web surveys include a high rate of response, short time frame for the collection of responses, . . . protection against the loss of data, easy transfer of data into a database for analysis, cost savings, convenience for the respondent, the

possibility of wider geographic coverage, and a potentially better response rate.
(pp. 3-4)

This method of survey distribution does not have a negative impact on responses when compared to the traditional paper survey method. Specifically, Mertler and Earley (2003) conclude that web-based surveys produce data that are as reliable as that produced by surveys delivered by traditional methods:

Analysis of the paper-and-pencil survey data generated a Cronbach's α equal to .88; analysis of the Web survey generated a value of .89. Further informal comparisons of the item analyses revealed very similar patterns in the responses to individual items, indicating that the two modes of survey delivery were quite comparable. (p. 2)

Sample: Teachers, Current Students, Former Students

Teachers. The teacher survey was distributed to a total of 50 teachers in the three schools. Of those 50 teachers, 35 responded to the survey: 20 males and 15 females. Eleven of the 35 teachers had between two and five years of experience, four had between six and ten years of experience, and 19 had more than ten years of experience teaching in French immersion. The teachers were drawn from a variety of senior high grades, and most teach more than one grade level: 21 teach S1, 25 teach S2, 25 teach S3, and 24 teach S4. These numbers add up to more than 35 (the total sample of teachers) because, as noted, most teach more than one grade level. The survey asked them to check off all grade levels that they currently teach.

Current students. The current student survey was distributed by classroom teachers to two S3 and two S4 classes of students in each of the three schools. Wherever

possible, French classes were selected for survey completion because French is a compulsory subject for all students, and there is no stream for them to choose from as there is in mathematics or English. Thus, French classes offer the best representation of the entire school population. However, in School A, only one S3 class of French was available, so a Comprehensive English course was chosen as the second S3 class. Even though Comprehensive English is a chosen stream, it tends to offer the broadest representation of students when compared to the other two English options. No students were selected who would have been in both the S3 French and the S3 English class, nor was there any duplication of students in any of the other classes. At School C, there was also only one S3 French class. The other class available at the same time as French was Pre-Calculus Mathematics. Thus, that class was used to obtain a reasonably sized S3 sample from this school.

The survey was administered to a total of 220 current students. That group included 87 boys and 133 girls, and an even balance of 110 students from both S3 and S4. Table 1 gives an overview of the current students surveyed. It indicates the number of males and females per grade, the number of respondents per school, whether a close family member of the students – parent, sibling, or uncle, aunt, or grandparent – is able to speak French, and the year when students started their immersion education.

Table 1. Current Students: Personal Background

	School A	School B	School C	Total
S3 Male	16	14	22	52
S3 Female	26	18	14	58
S4 Male	10	13	12	35
S4 Female	20	32	23	75
Total	72	77	71	220
Students who have a relative* who speaks French				
	60	53	52	165
Started immersion in:				
Kindergarten	64	68	66	198
Grade 1	4	4	4	12
Grade 4	—	1	—	1
Other	4	4	1	9

*Relative refers to parent, sibling, uncle, aunt, or grandparent.

Former students. To locate previous students, divisional class lists of senior three and four students were requested for all English-language high schools in each division. School office personnel in each of the three French immersion schools studied the lists of names and identified former students, as well as their current English school. After the proper school administrations gave permission, those students were contacted in their current schools. Of the 21 students identified, 18 were available to take the survey. Of those students, 12 are in S3 and 6 in S4; 11 are males and 7 females. Table 2 summarizes

the background information of all three sample groups. The data indicate students' gender, last year attending a French immersion school, whether or not they have a relative who speaks French, and the grade in which they started French immersion.

Delimitations of the Study

This study employs the use of a survey and, with that, arises the potential for a low response rate. Fortunately, this was not the case. There was a 100% response from all current and former students who were provided with the opportunity to complete the survey. As for teachers, 35 out of 50 surveys were answered, providing a 70% response rate. The balance of grade levels taught, male and female respondents, and number of years of experience make this a reasonable sample to capture the opinions of the teaching staff. Unfortunately, the survey inadvertently did not ask the teachers which school they taught at. Thus, it is not possible to determine the response rate from each school, nor will it be possible to compare responses between teachers in different schools.

The study is also limited in that it focuses on three French immersion centres in one province. As noted in the previous chapters, there are several varieties of French-language schooling in Canada. Therefore, generalizations from this research to the contexts of other French-language programs must be made with great caution, if at all. Furthermore, comparison between the three schools will be difficult in the case of the former student sample. Due to the small number of former student respondents, it is not possible to compare results for these subjects between schools. With only one sample from School C, four from School B, and 13 from School A, there is limited representation from each school for purposes of comparison.

Finally, the surveys only used questions based on previous surveys (Adiv, 1979; Halsall, 1991; Lewis & Shapson, 1989; Manitoba Education, Training, and Youth, 1991, 2002b; Obadia & Theriault, 1995). Therefore, the results recorded will only show whether or not the perceptions of the respondents in this study are consistent with past studies. If new reasons for student attrition exist today, they will not be directly shown through the surveys.

Table 2. Former Students: Personal Background

	School* A	School B	School C	Total
S3 Male	5	1	1	7
S3 Female	4	1	—	5
S4 Male	4	1	—	5
S4 Female	—	1	—	1
Total	13	4	1	18
Last year attending FI school **:				
S1	8	2	—	10
S2	3	1	1	5
S3	2	1	—	3
Students who have a relative ^b				
that speaks French	11	4	1	16
Started immersion in:				
Kindergarten	9	4	1	14
Grade 1	4	—	—	4

*School is the last French immersion high school that the respondent attended.

**Relative refers to parent, sibling, uncle, aunt, or grandparent.

Chapter 4: Results

Data for this study on student attrition in French immersion centres were gathered from three sources. One set of data was collected from teachers ($n = 35$) currently teaching in the three French immersion centres, another from students currently enrolled in the three schools ($n = 220$), and a third set from students who left the immersion centres to continue their schooling in English-language high schools ($n = 18$). Each sample group completed a 5-point Likert scale survey. The possible range of responses was from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”; for tabulation and presentation purposes, corresponding numbers were assigned to responses: strongly agree = 1, agree = 2, neutral = 3, disagree = 4, and strongly disagree = 5.

For the purposes of this study, rough cut-off points on the means were established, with a view to describing attitudes as positive (P) if the mean score on the 5-point scale is 2.45 or below, and negative (N) if the score is 3.45 or above. Mean scores within the 2.45 to 3.45 range are regarded as uncertain (U). The standard deviations shown in Tables 4 and 5 indicate that the scale discriminates among responses. The standard deviations in Table 3 are not as strong, but are acceptable for the purposes of this study.

The entire reporting of results that follows refers to data represented in Tables 3 through 8. Tables 3, 4, and 5 provide the means and standard deviations for the entire scale for all three population samples: teachers (Table 3), current students (Table 4), and former students (Table 5). Tables 6, 7, and 8 show the frequency of response for the three groups. Tables 6 to 8 list as percentages the overall, total responses of the entire population sample (T), male responses (M), and female responses (F). Teacher responses

are shown in Table 6, current student responses in Table 7, and former student responses in Table 8.

In reporting respondents' degrees of agreement and disagreement with statements, the categories "strongly agree" and "agree" are collapsed, as are "disagree" and "strongly disagree," for convenience of reporting and ease of reading. Responses are represented under columns indicated as follows: "strongly agree" and "agree" = SA/A, neutral = N, "disagree" and "strongly disagree" = D/SD.

For specific distributions across all five possible categories of response, refer to Tables 6 to 8. In these tables, the percentages reported are rounded off to one decimal point.

Slight variations in wording occur, born of the need to tailor questions in an appropriately meaningful manner for each population sample; however, the surveys administered to all three groups closely parallel each other in order to facilitate comparison of responses between groups. The teacher survey was made up of 20 statements, while the student surveys had 25 statements each. The additional five statements in the student surveys address the students' beliefs about their parents' perceptions of the French immersion program.

In reporting the results of this study, and referring to Tables 3 through 8, the responses of all three sample groups to each statement will be reported together. Furthermore, as noted, the statements were composed to complement and parallel each other, and the researcher has grouped statements by themes for reporting purposes. The themes are identified as follows: a) students' language abilities: statements 2, 3, and 14; b) quality of school programs: statements 5, 6, 11, 13, 15, and 20; c) general perceptions

about the French immersion program: statements 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 18; d) personal endorsement of the immersion program: statements 16 and 17; e) parental influence: statements 21 to 25 on both student surveys only; and f) other areas of concern: statements 1, 4, and 19.

Table 3. Teacher Survey Responses: Means and Standard Deviations (n = 35)

Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Students who left my school to go to an English school are typically academically weak students.	2.4	1.01
2. Students who left my school to go to an English school tended to experience difficulty learning in French.	2.43	0.85
3. Students who left my school to go to an English school tended to experience difficulty in English.	3	0.97
4. Students who left my school to go to an English school tended to frequently get in trouble for behavioural issues.	2.46	0.92
5. My school offers students the support that they need to succeed.	1.66	0.54
6. The teachers at my school are excellent.	1.57	0.61
7. I think the immersion program is very difficult for students.	3.77	0.91
8. The immersion program is too demanding for students.	4.26	0.66
9. Most students would be able to get better grades at an English school.	3.94	0.91
10. Students' abilities in English are diminished because of their time in French immersion.	4.66	0.64
11. There are too few course options available for students at my	2.83	1.38

Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
school.		
12. I believe that the expectations of immersion teachers are higher than those of the teachers in English schools.	2.83	1.07
13. There is ample opportunity in my school for students to practice their French.	2.03	1.01
14. Students in my school speak French outside of school.	4.29	0.93
15. Cultural activities are organized in my school to promote the use of the French language on an ongoing basis.	2.03	0.79
16. I would send my own children to a French immersion school.	2.06	1.11
17. I would encourage other parents to send their children to a French immersion school.	1.26	0.51
18. Many students believe that if they attended English schools they would be better prepared for university.	3.54	1.09
19. Of the students who have left my school for an English school, many did so because one or more of their friends had also left.	3.43	1.01
20. I have encouraged a student to leave my school to go to an English school on at least one occasion.	3.94	1.28

Table 4. Current Student Survey Responses: Means and Standard Deviations (n = 220)

Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. I consider myself an academically strong student.	2.23	0.90
2. I experience difficulty learning in French.	3.76	0.98
3. I experience difficulty in English.	4.42	0.74
4. I am often in trouble for behavioural issues.	4.36	0.90
5. My school offers me the support that I need to succeed.	2.19	1.00
6. The teachers at my school are excellent.	2.16	0.92
7. I think the immersion program is very difficult.	3.63	0.79
8. The immersion program is too demanding.	3.73	0.87
9. I would be able to get better grades at an English school.	2.75	1.20
10. My abilities in English have been diminished because of my time in French immersion.	3.49	1.17
11. There are too few options available at my school.	2.37	1.26
12. I believe that the expectations of immersion teachers are higher than those of the teachers in English schools.	2.58	1.03
13. There is ample opportunity in my school for students to practice their French.	2.06	0.93
14. I currently speak French outside of school.	3.69	1.13
15. Cultural activities are organized in my school to promote the use of the French language on an ongoing basis.	2.27	0.87
16. If I had to start my education again, I would choose to go to a French immersion school.	1.88	1.00

Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
17. I would encourage other students to go to a French immersion school.	1.96	0.96
18. If I went to an English school I would be better prepared for university.	3.03	1.20
19. Some students have left my school because one or more of their friends left.	3.04	1.12
20. Teachers in my immersion school will sometimes encourage students to go to an English school.	3.54	1.10
21. Staying in French immersion is my decision.	1.91	1.12
22. Staying in French immersion is my parents' decision.	3.08	1.35
23. My parents believe I would do better in an English school.	3.83	1.10
24. My parents are satisfied with my academic progress.	2.17	1.00
25. Overall, my parents are satisfied with my high school.	1.96	0.97

Table 5. Former Student Survey Results: Means and Standard Deviations (n = 18)

Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. I consider myself an academically strong student.	2.72	0.67
2. I experienced difficulty learning subjects in French.	3.17	0.86
3. I experienced difficulty in English.	3.22	1.22
4. I was often in trouble for behavioural issues.	3.61	1.38
5. The immersion school offered me the support that I needed to succeed.	2.61	0.78
6. The teachers at the immersion school were excellent.	2.72	1.18
7. The immersion program was very difficult.	3	0.77
8. The immersion program was too demanding.	3.39	0.78
9. While I was in immersion, I thought that I would be able to get better grades if I was attending an English school.	2.33	1.03
10. My abilities in English have been diminished because of my time in French immersion.	3.5	1.1
11. There were too few options available at my French immersion school.	2.67	1.24
12. The expectations of immersion teachers are higher than those of the teachers in my English school.	3.06	0.87
13. There was ample opportunity in the immersion school for students to practice their French.	2.22	1
14. When I was attending immersion school, I spoke French outside of school.	4.17	0.92

Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
15. Cultural activities were organized in the immersion school to promote the use of the French language on an ongoing basis.	2.39	0.7
16. If I had to start my education again, I would choose to go to a French immersion school.	3	1.28
17. I would encourage other students to go to a French immersion school.	2.44	0.62
18. I left French immersion for an English school to better prepare for university.	2.89	1.08
19. I left the immersion school because one or more of my friends had left for an English school.	3.67	1.03
20. An immersion teacher(s) encouraged me to go to an English school.	3.67	1.28
21. Leaving French immersion was my decision.	1.89	0.83
22. Leaving French immersion was my parents' decision.	3.33	1.28
23. I left the immersion school because my parents believed I would do better academically in an English school.	2.89	1.13
24. My parents were satisfied with my academic progress while I was in French immersion.	2.83	1.1
25. Overall, my parents were satisfied with the French immersion high school.	2.61	1.24

Table 6. Survey Frequencies: Teachers – Male – Female (n = 35)

Statement	SA/A			N			D/SD		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
1. Students who left my school to go to an English school are typically academically weak.	71.4	85	53.3	8.6	0	20	20	15	26.7
2. Students who left my school to go to an English school tended to experience difficulty learning in French.	68.6	85	46.7	14.3	10	20	17.1	5	33.3
3. Students who left my school to go to an English school tended to experience difficulty in English.	34.3	40	26.7	34.3	35	33.3	31.4	25	40
4. Students who left my school to go to an English school tended to frequently get in trouble for behavioural issues.	60	60	60	22.9	30	13.3	17.1	10	26.7
5. My school offers students the support that they need to succeed.	97.1	95	100	2.9	5	0	0	0	0
6. The teachers at my school are excellent.	94.3	90	100	5.7	10	0	0	0	0
7. I think the immersion program is very difficult for students.	14.3	15	13.3	11.4	15	6.7	74.3	70	80

Statement	SA/A			N			D/SD		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
8. The immersion program is too demanding for students.	2.9	5	0	2.9	5	0	94.3	90	100
9. Most students would be able to get better grades at an English school.	11.4	20	0	8.6	15	0	80	65	100
10. Students' abilities in English are diminished because of their time in French immersion.	2.9	5	0	0	0	0	97.1	95	100
11. There are too few course options available for students at my school.	51.4	50	53.3	14.3	25	0	34.3	25	46.7
12. I believe that the expectations of immersion teachers are higher than those of the teachers in English schools.	40	45	33.3	28.6	30	26.7	31.4	25	40
13. There is ample opportunity in my school for students to practice their French.	77.1	70	86.7	8.6	5	13.3	14.3	25	0
14. Students in my school speak French outside of school.	8.6	0	20	5.7	10	0	85.7	90	80

Statement	SA/A			N			D/SD		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
15. Cultural activities are organized in my school to promote the use of the French language on an ongoing basis.	80	90	66.7	14.3	10	20	5.7	0	13.3
16. I would send my own children to a French immersion school.	74.3	70	80	11.4	15	6.7	14.3	15	13.3
17. I would encourage other parents to send their children to a French immersion school.	97.1	100	93.3	2.9	0	6.7	0	0	0
18. Many students believe that if they attended English schools they would be better prepared for university.	25.7	30	20	14.3	20	6.7	60	50	73.3
19. Of the students who have left my school for an English school, many did so because one or more of their friends had also left.	17.1	15	20	25.7	30	20	57.1	55	60
20. I have encouraged a student to leave my school to go to an English school on at least one occasion.	22.9	20	26.7	5.7	5	6.7	71.4	75	66.7

Table 7. Survey Frequencies: Current Students – Male – Female

Statement	SA/A			N			D/SD			
	<i>n</i>	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
1. I consider myself an academically strong student.	220	68.6	64.4	71.4	21.4	24.1	19.5	10	11.5	9.0
2. I experience difficulty learning in French.	220	12.7	14.9	11.3	16.8	19.5	15.0	70.5	65.5	73.7
3. I experience difficulty in English.	219	2.3	0.0	3.8	8.2	8.1	8.3	89.5	91.9	88.0
4. I am often in trouble for behavioural issues.	218	5.0	10.6	1.5	11.0	20.0	5.3	83.9	69.4	93.2
5. My school offers me the support that I need to succeed.	217	69.6	69.0	69.9	19.8	21.4	18.8	10.6	9.5	11.3
6. The teachers at my school are excellent.	216	67.1	68.7	66.2	24.5	25.3	24.1	8.3	6.0	9.8
7. I think the immersion program is very difficult.	217	10.6	10.7	10.5	24.9	29.8	21.8	64.5	59.5	67.7
8. The immersion program is too	217	9.7	11.9	8.3	23.0	29.8	18.8	67.3	58.3	72.9

Statement	SA/A			N			D/SD			
	<i>n</i>	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
demanding.										
9. I would be able to get better grades at an English school.	217	47.0	58.3	39.8	25.8	21.4	28.6	27.2	20.2	31.6
10. My abilities in English have been diminished because of my time in French immersion.	217	24.0	21.4	25.6	20.7	22.6	19.5	55.3	56.0	54.9
11. There are too few options available at my school.	219	65.3	69.8	62.4	11.0	8.1	12.8	23.7	22.1	24.8
12. I believe that the expectations of immersion teachers are higher than those of the teachers in English schools.	219	53.9	48.8	57.1	26.5	27.9	25.6	19.6	23.3	17.3
13. There is ample opportunity in my school for students to	218	71.1	75.6	68.2	21.1	18.6	22.7	7.8	5.8	9.1

Statement	SA/A			N			D/SD			
	<i>n</i>	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
practice their French.										
14. I currently speak French outside of school.	218	18.8	15.1	21.2	18.3	15.1	20.5	62.8	69.8	58.3
15. Cultural activities are organized in my school to promote the use of the French language on an ongoing basis.	219	64.4	70.9	60.2	27.9	26.7	28.6	7.8	2.3	11.3
16. If I had to start my education again, I would choose to go to a French immersion school.	219	80.8	72.1	86.5	11.4	19.8	6.0	7.8	8.1	7.5
17. I would encourage other students to go to a French immersion school.	219	75.3	69.8	78.9	16.9	25.6	11.3	7.8	4.7	9.8
18. If I went to an English school I would	218	36.7	37.6	36.1	26.6	32.9	22.6	36.7	29.4	41.4

Statement	SA/A			N			D/SD			
	<i>n</i>	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
be better prepared for university.										
19. Some students have left my school because one or more of their friends left.	219	35.6	37.2	34.6	26.9	31.4	24.1	37.4	31.4	41.4
20. Teachers in my immersion school will sometimes encourage students to go to an English school.	218	18.3	25.9	13.5	28.4	21.2	33.1	53.2	52.9	53.4
21. Staying in French immersion is my decision.	219	79.5	82.6	77.4	8.7	10.5	7.5	11.9	7.0	15.0
22. Staying in French immersion is my parents' decision.	219	38.4	37.2	39.1	21.9	25.6	19.5	39.7	37.2	41.4
23. My parents believe I would do better in an English school.	218	11.9	18.8	7.5	23.4	34.1	16.5	64.7	47.1	75.9

Statement	SA/A			N			D/SD			
	<i>n</i>	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
24. My parents are satisfied with my academic progress.	219	73.5	64.0	79.7	13.2	17.4	10.5	13.2	18.6	9.8
25. Overall, my parents are satisfied with my high school.	219	79.9	77.9	81.2	12.3	17.4	9.0	7.8	4.7	9.8

Table 8. Survey Frequencies: Former Students – Male – Female (n =18)

Statement	SA/A			N			D/SD		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
1. I consider myself an academically strong student.	38.9	27.3	57.1	50	54.5	42.9	11.1	18.2	0
2. I experienced difficulty learning subjects in French.	27.8	18.2	42.9	27.8	36.4	14.3	44.4	45.5	42.9
3. I experienced difficulty in English.	16.7	18.2	14.3	38.9	45.5	28.6	44.4	36.4	57.1
4. I was often in trouble for behavioural issues.	27.8	36.4	14.3	16.7	18.2	14.3	55.6	45.5	71.4
5. The immersion school offered me the support that I needed to succeed.	44.4	36.4	57.1	44.4	45.5	42.9	11.1	18.2	0
6. The teachers at the immersion school were excellent.	50	36.4	71.4	27.8	36.4	14.3	22.2	27.3	14.3
7. The immersion program was very difficult.	27.8	27.3	28.6	44.4	36.4	57.1	27.8	36.4	14.3
8. The immersion program was too demanding.	11.1	0	28.6	44.4	63.6	14.3	44.4	36.4	57.1
9. While I was in immersion, I thought that I would be able	61.1	54.5	71.4	22.2	36.4	0	16.7	9.1	28.6

Statement	SA/A			N			D/SD		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
to get better grades if I was attending an English school.									
10. My abilities in English have been diminished because of my time in French immersion.	22.2	18.2	28.6	11.1	18.2	0	66.7	63.6	71.4
11. There were too few options available at my French immersion school.	55.6	72.7	28.6	11.1	9.1	14.3	33.3	18.2	57.1
12. The expectations of immersion teachers are higher than those of the teachers in my English school.	27.8	36.4	14.3	44.4	45.5	42.9	27.8	18.2	42.9
13. There was ample opportunity in the immersion school for students to practice their French.	66.7	81.8	42.9	27.8	18.2	42.9	5.6	0	14.3
14. When I was attending immersion school, I spoke French outside of school.	5.6	0	14.3	16.7	9.1	28.6	77.8	90.9	57.1

Statement	SA/A			N			D/SD		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
15. Cultural activities were organized in the immersion school to promote the use of the French language on an ongoing basis.	61.1	54.5	71.4	33.3	45.5	14.3	5.6	0	14.3
16. If I had to start my education again, I would choose to go to a French immersion school.	38.9	36.4	42.9	27.8	18.2	42.9	33.3	45.5	14.3
17. I would encourage other students to go to a French immersion school.	61.1	45.5	85.7	33.3	54.5	0	5.6	0	14.3
18. I left French immersion for an English school to better prepare for university.	38.9	27.3	57.1	22.2	18.2	28.6	38.9	54.5	14.3
19. I left the immersion school because one or more of my friends had left for an English school.	16.7	9.1	28.6	22.2	18.2	28.6	61.1	72.7	42.9
20. An immersion teacher(s) encouraged me to go to an	33.3	45.5	14.3	0	0	0	66.7	54.5	85.7

Statement	SA/A			N			D/SD		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
English school.									
21. Leaving French immersion was my decision.	83.3	72.7	100	11.1	18.2	0	5.6	9.1	0
22. Leaving French immersion was my parents' decision.	38.9	54.5	14.3	0	0	0	61.1	45.5	85.7
23. I left the immersion school because my parents believed I would do better academically in an English school.	38.9	45.5	28.6	27.8	36.4	14.3	33.3	18.2	57.1
24. My parents were satisfied with my academic progress while I was in French immersion.	50	36.4	71.4	16.7	18.2	14.3	33.3	45.5	14.3
25. Overall, my parents were satisfied with the French immersion high school.	55.6	54.5	57.1	22.2	18.2	28.6	22.2	27.3	14.3

As noted earlier, the researcher grouped statements into six themes. The results from the survey statements that make up each theme are reported with relevant points highlighted to clarify the findings.

Students' Language Abilities

The theme of perceptions of Students' Language Abilities (statements 2, 3, 14) has three dimensions. On one hand, the three sample populations' perceptions on students' difficulty of learning in French were sought (statement 2). Conversely, difficulty in English was examined (statement 3). Finally, the degree to which students spoke French outside of school was investigated (statement 14).

Statement 2, which addresses difficulty learning in French, yielded the following information. Teachers ($n = 35$) tended to agree ($M = 2.43$) that "Students who left my school to go to an English school tended to experience difficulty learning in French." However, there is little agreement between students and teachers in this area; former students' ($n = 18$) responses to the statement "I experienced difficulty learning subjects in French" fell within the neutral zone ($M = 3.17$), while current students ($n = 220$) disagreed with the statement ($M = 3.76$).

A discrepancy within the survey groups was also found when the responses of former male and female students were compared. Specifically, 42.9% of former female students ($n = 7$) responded positively to statement 2, while only 18% of former male students ($n = 11$) responded positively. Thus, it appears, former female students perceive learning in French to be more of a difficulty than do former male students. However, there was not a notable difference between the responses of male ($n = 87$; $M = 3.66$) and female ($n = 133$; $M = 3.83$) students currently enrolled in French immersion centres,

suggesting that males and females in that group do not perceive learning in French to be a problem.

As for facility in English (statement 3), teachers ($n = 35$) were neutral ($M = 3$) as to whether “Students who left my school to go to an English school tended to experience difficulty in English.” Former students ($n = 18$) expressed a similar ($M = 3.22$) perception on the issue in their responses to “I experience difficulty in English.” However, interestingly, the picture changes when current students ($n = 220$) consider the matter. This group soundly rejects any suggestion of having difficulty in English ($M = 4.4$). Expressed another way, 89.1% of current students did not agree with this statement.

On the subject of how broadly students employ their French-language skills, teachers ($n = 35$) did not agree ($M = 4.29$) with statement 14, that “Students in my school speak French outside of school.” Responses from former students ($n = 18$) to this statement reinforce this perception ($M = 4.17$). Current student ($n = 220$) responses were negative ($M = 3.65$) concerning the statement but leaned more towards neutral than the responses of former students, indicating that students currently in the program may use their French-language skills more than former students did when they were in French immersion.

Quality of School Programs

The theme of quality of school programs (statements 5, 6, 11, 13, 15, 20) encompasses responses relating to support services, teacher quality, course options, opportunities to use French, and cultural activities. Specifically, student and teacher perceptions of the support services offered (statement 5), the quality of the teaching faculty (statement 6), and the perception of insufficient course options were examined

(statement 11). Other elements of the school program explored include opportunities for students to use their French at school (statement 13), and the integration of cultural activities into the program to promote the French language (statement 15). The notion that teachers encourage some students to transfer out of French immersion (statement 20) was also investigated.

Statement 5 shows that current students and former students differ in their perceptions of the adequacy of support services. Current students ($n = 217$) responded positively ($M = 2.19$) to the statement “My school offers students the support that they need to succeed.” Former students ($n = 18$) were neutral ($M = 2.61$). There was some difference of opinion between the former male students ($n = 11$) and former female students ($n = 7$); over half of females (57.14%) responded positively to the statement while only 36.36% of males responded similarly. In fact, not one female responded negatively to statement 5, while 18.18% of males disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Statement 6, which states that the teachers at the immersion school are excellent, drew a neutral response from former students ($n = 18$, $M = 2.72$) that leans towards the positive. In fact, 50% of former students responded positively to the statement, while only 22.22% responded negatively. Within the former student group, a greater percentage of females ($n = 7$, 71.43%) than males ($n = 11$, 36.36%) responded positively. The majority of current students ($n = 216$) responded positively (65.52%) to statement 6, with no notable difference between male and female responses.

Statement 11, which states that there are too few course options in the immersion program, evoked a neutral response from former students ($n = 18$, $M = 2.67$) and teachers ($n = 35$, $M = 2.83$). Current students ($n = 219$) agreed ($M = 2.37$) that there were too few

course options available. Interestingly, the dissatisfaction in this area was greater among current students than among former students. The majority of both student groups (65% of current students and 56.56% of former students) responded positively to statement 11, showing that there is no major difference between the two sample groups' perceptions of the availability of course options.

A discrepancy was found among former student responses to statement 11, "There were too few options available at my French immersion school." Among the former student group, 72.73% of boys responded positively ($M = 2.27$), while only 28.57% of the former female students responded positively ($M = 3.29$). This indicates that course selection was perceived as more of a problem for former male students than for former female students.

Statements 13 and 15 seek students' perceptions about the opportunities offered by the school to speak French (statement 13), and about having sufficient exposure to French culture in the school (statement 15). The responses to these statements show agreement among all three groups. For example, for statement 13, "There is ample opportunity in my school for students to practice their French," teachers ($n = 35$), current students ($n = 219$), and former students ($n = 18$) were all in agreement ($M = 2.03, 2.06$, and 2.22). Note that the current student and teacher responses to statement 13 are almost identical. Among all the student groups, former male students ($n = 11$) were the most in agreement with the statement ($M = 2.00$), while former females ($n = 7$) were the least in agreement ($M = 2.57$).

Statement 15, "Cultural activities are organized in my school to promote the use of the French language on an ongoing basis," elicited a positive mean response from all

three groups, with a mean of 2.03 for teachers ($n = 35$), 2.26 for current students ($n = 219$), and 2.36 for former students ($n = 18$). All three groups perceived the school to actively promote the French language through cultural activities.

Finally, statement 20 addresses how teachers react to students who they feel are possibly not suited to the immersion program. On the current student survey, statement 20 investigates students' belief that teachers encourage other students to leave the immersion program. On the former student survey, statement 20 suggests that the former students were personally encouraged to leave immersion. On the teacher survey, statement 20 suggests that some (22.86%) teachers ($n = 35$) have personally encouraged students to leave.

The most interesting results came from teachers ($n = 35$) and former students ($n = 18$), perhaps because they spoke from personal experiences. Most of the teachers (71.43%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with statement 20, indicating that most have not encouraged a student to transfer out of French immersion. Former students responded negatively ($M = 3.67$) to the statement, indicating that they were not personally encouraged to transfer by a teacher. However, 45.45% of former male students ($n = 11$) responded positively to the statement, while 54.55% responded negatively, providing a neutral mean response of 3.36. Among former female students ($n = 7$), only 14.29% responded positively while 85.71% responded negatively, resulting in a negative mean response of 4.14. Thus, among the former students, males were more likely than females to feel encouraged to leave the program by a teacher.

General Perceptions about the French Immersion Program

The theme of general perceptions about the French immersion program (statements 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 18), explores more general ideas about the French immersion program by considering the program's perceived level of difficulty (statement 7), general demands of the program (statement 8), whether or not students believe that they can attain higher grades in an English program (statement 9), and the perceived impact of French immersion on the students' English-language abilities (statement 10). Statement 12 addresses each group's perceptions of the immersion program in comparison to the English program by looking at teacher expectations in both programs. Statement 18 elicits respondents' perceptions about which program would better prepare students for university. Statements 12 and 18 also allowed former students to reflect on their time in French immersion and compare it to their experience in the English school; this permitted comparison with the perceptions of current students.

In responding to statement 7, "The immersion program is very difficult," current students ($n = 217$) provided a negative response ($M = 3.63$), as did teachers ($n = 35$, $M = 3.77$), while former students ($n = 18$) were neutral ($M = 3$).

Former and current students responded differently to statement 8, "The immersion program is too demanding." Current students ($n = 217$) responded negatively ($M = 3.73$), while former students ($n = 18$) were again neutral ($M = 3.39$).

Statement 9 sought to evaluate whether any group perceived that students might achieve higher marks in the English program. Note that the former students' statement, "While I was in immersion, I thought that I would be able to get better grades if I was attending an English school," refers to students' thoughts prior to leaving the immersion

program and not to their performance since transferring to the English program. The current student statement, “I would be able to get better grades at an English school,” refers to these students’ current perceptions.

There was a discrepancy between the two student group responses. Specifically, current students ($n = 217$) were neutral ($M = 2.75$), while former students ($n = 18$) agreed with the statement ($M = 2.33$). The responses show that former students held a stronger perception than current students that they might achieve greater success in an English school. This idea is reinforced by the percentages of positive responses: 61.11% of former students responded positively to statement 9, while only 46.36% of current students responded similarly. Teachers ($n = 35$), unlike either group of students, confidently disagreed ($M = 3.94$) with the statement, showing that they believed that students would not achieve greater success in an English school. In fact, 80% of teachers responded “disagree” or “strongly disagree” to the statement.

Further investigation into statement 9 also shows a discrepancy between male and female respondents in the student sample groups. Former female students ($n = 7$) responded positively ($M = 2.14$); 71.43% of them agreed with the statement. However, only 54.55% of former male students ($n = 11$) responded similarly, providing a marginally positive mean response of 2.45.

Among current students, female ($n = 133$) responses were neutral ($M = 2.93$), with only 39.85% responding “agree” or “strongly agree,” while males ($n = 84$) provided a positive response ($M = 2.38$) with 58.33% expressing agreement with the statement.

After spending several years in a French immersion learning environment, would students feel as though they had lost some of their abilities in English? Statement 10,

“My abilities in English have been diminished because of my time in French immersion,” addresses that question. Identical responses were received from both student groups; former students ($n = 18$) provided a negative mean response of 3.50, and current students ($n = 217$) an almost identical negative mean response of 3.49.

It is interesting to note that even though former students ($n = 18$) currently study in an English environment, 66.67% of them responded negatively to the statement, showing that they felt that their abilities in English had not suffered. Even more interestingly, a smaller percentage (55.3%) of current students ($n = 217$) disagreed with the statement. Note that former students, who have seen both programs, are more likely to say that their linguistic abilities in English have not diminished than are current students, who have not experienced both programs.

Statement 12, “The expectations of immersion teachers are higher than those of teachers in the English program,” produced a neutral result for all three groups. Specifically, teachers ($n = 35$) provided a mean response of 2.83, while current students ($n = 219$) provided a mean response of 2.58. Even former students ($n = 18$), who had experienced both French immersion and English program teachers, were neutral ($M = 3.06$) on the question of whether the expectations of one group of teachers were higher than the other. It is clear from these responses that no group was certain if the expectations of teachers in immersion schools were higher than those of teachers in English schools.

Statement 18 investigated the students’ perceptions about the idea that an English program can better prepare students for university than a French immersion program, asking former students if that was a reason why they left French immersion. Both former

($n = 18$) and current students ($n = 219$) were neutral ($M = 2.89$ and 3.03) in their responses. In fact, former student responses were equally split, with 38.89% responding positively and 38.89% negatively. This corresponds to the current student responses, where 36.7% responded positively and 36.7% negatively. A greater percentage (57.14%) of former female students ($n = 7$) responded positively than of former male students ($n = 11$) (27.27%). However, the former male and female students' mean responses ($M = 3.18$ and $M = 2.43$) indicate that males were neutral while females tended to agree that they would be better prepared for university if they attended an English school. Therefore, overall, neither current nor former students were certain whether an English school would provide a better preparation for university than a French immersion school. However, contrary to the overall former student response, the majority of former female students (57.14%) agreed ($M = 2.43$) that an English school would provide a better preparation for university.

Teachers were not asked if students would be better prepared in an English school. Instead, their statement 18 addressed what they thought students believed about French immersion as a preparation for university. Teachers ($n = 35$) did not agree ($M = 3.54$) with the statement "Many students believe that if they attended English schools they would be better prepared for university." In fact, 60% responded negatively and only 25.71% positively to the statement.

Personal Endorsement of the Immersion Program

The theme of personal endorsement of the immersion program, which includes only two statements (16 and 17), investigates the extent to which the three survey groups, based on their experiences, personally supported and believed in the program. Statement

16 asks students if they would choose immersion for themselves if they could start over again; it asks teachers if they would send their children to an immersion school.

Statement 17 asks students and teachers if they would recommend immersion to others.

Teachers ($n = 35$) provided a positive response ($M = 2.06$) to statement 16, “I would send my own children to a French immersion school.” Current students ($n = 219$) responded positively ($M = 1.88$) to the statement “If I had to start my education again, I would choose to go to a French immersion school.” Former students ($n = 18$) provided a neutral response ($M = 3.00$) to the same statement.

For statement 17, “I would encourage other parents to send their children to a French immersion school” for teachers, and “I would encourage other students to go to a French immersion school” for students, only one group, the current students ($n = 219$), provided a discriminating response, responding positively ($M = 1.96$) to the statement.

Parental Influence

The theme of parental influence is explored in statements 21 to 25. Statement 21 asks if the student decided himself or herself to leave or remain in French immersion. Statement 22 asks if the students’ parents made that decision. Statement 23 asks if the students thought that their parents believed that their child would perform better in an English school. Statement 24 addresses parental satisfaction with their child’s academic results, while statement 25 addresses parental satisfaction with the immersion high school. Teachers were not asked about their perceptions of parental involvement or satisfaction.

Current students ($n = 219$) and former students ($n = 18$) both provided a similar positive response ($M = 1.91$ and $M = 1.89$ respectively) to statement 21, “Staying/leaving

French immersion was my decision.” Among current students, 79.09% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 83.33% of former students responded similarly, indicating that, among both student groups, students are involved in making their own decision to leave or remain in French immersion.

Statement 22, “Staying in/leaving French immersion was my parents’ decision,” served to support question 21. Both current students ($n = 219$) and former students ($n = 18$) were neutral ($M = 3.08$ and $M = 3.33$) in their responses. However, there were noticeable differences in the responses of former male ($n = 11$) and former female ($n = 7$) students. Specifically, 14.29% of former female students responded positively, while 85.71% responded negatively. Strong disagreement with the statement was shown in the former female student mean response of 4.14. Former male students provided a neutral response ($M = 2.82$), with 54.55% responding positively and 45.45% negatively. There was very little difference between the responses of current male ($n = 86$) and current female ($n = 133$) students, as both responses were neutral ($M = 3.01$ and $M = 3.11$ respectively).

Although the perception that better grades could be obtained in an English school has already been examined in the discussion on statement 9, the parental perspective on this issue has not yet been explored. Statement 23, which suggests that parents believe that their child would do better academically in an English school, elicited a mixed response. Former students ($n = 18$) were neutral ($M = 2.89$), while current students ($n = 218$) were negative ($M = 3.80$). In fact, only 38.89% of all former students ($n = 18$) surveyed responded positively, while an even lower percentage (11.82%) of current students ($n = 218$) responded similarly to the statement.

There were some differences between male and female responses to statement 23. Former female students ($n = 7$) provided a mean response of 3.43, a marginally neutral response that leans towards the negative. Former male students ($n = 11$) also provided a neutral response ($M = 2.82$), but their response does not gravitate towards the negative. Among current students, females ($n = 133$) provided a confident, negative mean response of 4.07. Current male students ($n = 85$) provided a neutral mean response that leans towards the negative ($M = 3.38$). Thus, all groups were neutral on this topic, with the exception of current female students who provided a negative response.

Statement 24 states that parents are satisfied with their child's academic progress in French immersion. Half of the former students ($n = 18$) responded positively to the statement (50%). However, that provided a neutral mean response of 2.83. Breaking those responses down into male and female shows some differences in perceptions. For example, former male students ($n = 11$) were neutral ($M = 3.18$) and only 36.36% responded positively, while 45.45% responded negatively to statement 24. Former female students ($n = 7$) responded positively to the statement ($M = 2.29$); 71.43% agreed or strongly agreed, while only 14.29% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Current students ($n = 219$) responded positively ($M = 2.17$) to statement 24. In fact, 73.19% agreed or strongly agreed. Both males ($n = 86$) and females ($n = 133$) provided a positive response ($M = 2.17$ and $M = 2.02$ respectively). Thus, all groups responded positively to statement 24, with the exception of former male students who were neutral.

Statement 25 sought to determine student perceptions about their parents' satisfaction with the French immersion program. In responding to the statement "Overall, my parents are/were satisfied with my French immersion high school," former students (n

= 18) were neutral ($M = 2.61$), yet over half of them (55.56%) agreed with the statement, and only 22.22% disagreed. Current students ($n = 219$) provided a positive response ($M = 1.96$) to the statement; 79.55% agreed, and only 7.73% disagreed.

Other Areas of Concern

Three statements (1, 4, and 19) did not fit with any of the previous themes but are still of interest for this study. These statements sought to determine how students view themselves academically (statement 1), as well as behaviourally (statement 4). Statements 1 and 4 also examine teachers' impressions about former students in those areas. In addition, statement 19 investigates the influence that peers leaving French immersion may have had on former students' decision to leave the program.

In responding to statement 1, "I consider myself an academically strong student," current students ($n = 220$) provided a positive response ($M = 2.23$), while former students ($n = 18$) provided neutral response ($M = 2.72$). For teachers ($n = 35$), the statement "Students who left my school to go to an English school are typically academically weak students" elicited a positive response ($M = 2.40$). Thus, the teachers' perception of the academic ability of the former students differs from those students' perceptions of themselves.

The response to teacher statement 4, "Students who left my school to go to an English school tended to frequently get in trouble for behavioural issues," was neutral ($n = 35$, $M = 2.46$) but leaned towards the positive. In fact, 60% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with statement 4.

Both groups of students responded similarly to statement 4, "I am/was often in trouble for behavioural issues." Specifically, current students ($n = 218$) and former

students ($n = 18$) both responded negatively ($M = 4.36$ and $M = 3.61$ respectively). However, there was a much greater negative response from current students. In fact, 83.18% of current students responded negatively, while only 55.56% of former students responded similarly.

Differences were found between former male and former female student responses to statement 4. Specifically, former male student responses ($n = 11$) were neutral ($M = 3.27$), with 36.36% responding positively and 45.45% negatively. Former female student responses ($n = 7$) were negative ($M = 4.14$), with only 14.29% responding positively and 71.43% negatively.

Statement 19 suggests that students left the French immersion program to follow friends into the English program. Current students' responses ($n = 219$) were neutral ($M = 3.04$), while former students ($n = 3.67$) disagreed with the statement. Only 16.67% of former students agreed or strongly agreed, while 61.11% disagreed or strongly disagreed. There is an interesting difference in responses between former female ($n = 7$) and former male ($n = 11$) students. Among former female students, 28.57% responded positively, while only 9.09% of former male students responded similarly.

Chapter 5: Discussion

A vast research literature already exists for French immersion programs. In order to make a unique and valuable contribution to that body of literature, this study focuses on a well documented problem: attrition in French immersion high schools. However, this study looks at the problem from a perspective that is virtually unrepresented in the literature, that of the French immersion centre high school.

In order to investigate the attrition problem from this unique perspective, the perceptions of three groups associated with the three French immersion centre high schools were documented: 1) current S3 and S4 students, 2) former students who transferred to an English high school, and 3) teachers currently working in the three schools. The perceptions of the three groups were collected through surveys drawn from instruments used in previous research that focused either on attrition (Adiv, 1979; Halsall, 1991; Lewis and Shapson, 1989; Obadia & Thériault, 1995) or on other aspects of French immersion education (Manitoba Education, Training, and Youth, 2002b).

The data collected through these surveys can be grouped into the following six categories: 1) students' language abilities, 2) quality of school programs, 3) general perceptions about the French immersion program, 4) personal endorsement of the immersion program, 5) parental influence, and 6) other areas of concern. This chapter provides a summary of the findings in each of the six categories and draws conclusions based on those findings to identify reasons why students leave French immersion programs in high school.

Students' Language Abilities

Students' and teachers' perceptions were documented concerning three areas of linguistic competence and usage, including student difficulty learning in French, difficulty learning in English, and the use French outside of school.

Learning in French is clearly not perceived to be a problem for most current students, as only a small group (12.73%) agreed with the statement "I experience difficulty in French," while 70.45% disagreed. The response was not the same from former students, of whom 27.78% agreed and only 44.44% disagreed with the same statement. However, the major difference of interest in this area came from former female students; 42.86% agreed with the statement, while only 18.18% of former male students responded similarly, showing that former female students seemed to have more difficulty learning in French than their male counterparts. Among current students, there was no notable difference between male and female responses. Thus, the only group to report experiencing some difficulty learning in French consists of former female students.

Parkin et al. (1987) and Hayden (1988) both documented difficulty learning in French as a problem related to student attrition. Their research focused on elementary school children. Hayden found that "This centrality for proficiency in French language arts permeated the interviews to a great degree" (p. 226), and it was the most common factor for withdrawal recorded in her survey. Halsall's (1991) study included both high school and elementary school students. She found that attrition related to difficulty learning in French was identified as a problem at the elementary level, but not mentioned at the high school level. The results from the current survey suggest that, while difficulty

learning in French may continue to be a contributing factor in student attrition, it seems to be more so for girls than for boys at the high school level.

Learning in English was not perceived to be a problem for either group of students in the current survey, as only 2.28% of current students and 16.67% of former students agreed with the statement “I experience difficulty learning subjects in English.” In fact, the same number (18.18%) of former male students agreed with this statement as with the previous statement about learning in French. The difference here is that former female students responded similarly to males, with 14.29% agreeing with the statement. Thus, difficulty with the English language was not identified as a problem by a large percentage of any group. This result is not consistent with previous literature (Adiv, 1979; Halsall, 1991; Hayden, 1988; Parkin et al., 1987), which documented difficulties with English as a contributing factor to student attrition in elementary school. Difficulty with English does not appear to be a contributing factor to student attrition at the high school level.

In order to explore the idea that students apply their knowledge of French beyond the classroom, students were provided with the statement “I speak French outside of school.” Most current students (62.84%) disagreed with the statement; in fact, only one former student said that he or she spoke French outside of school when in the French immersion program. Thus, it is likely that most former students did not make a practical connection with the second language, or they were unable to apply their knowledge in any meaningful way. Interestingly, it seems that this is also the case for most current students; however, they remain in the immersion program.

Adiv (1979), Duhamel (1985), Lewis and Shapson (1989), Halsall (1991), Obadia and Thériault (1995) all documented students' inability to apply their linguistic knowledge outside of the classroom as a contributing factor to student attrition. This does not appear to be consistent with the findings in the current study, which suggest that neither current nor former students apply their linguistic knowledge outside of school. While some current students reported feeling able to do so, most felt they were not, yet they remained in the program. This finding suggests that, compared to the dual-track schools studied in previous research, the French immersion centre model may be better at providing students with ample opportunity to use their French. A lack of opportunity to use the French language does not seem to be a contributing factor to student attrition for the sample students in this study.

Quality of School Programs

The study also documented student and teacher perceptions pertaining to the quality of certain aspects of the school program. Included in this area are student support services, quality and attitude of teachers, availability of option courses, opportunity to use French in the school, and promotion of French culture in the school.

Current students appear to feel quite satisfied with the level of support they are receiving at the French immersion school, as 69.59% of them agreed with the statement "My school offers students the support they need to succeed." Most former female students (57.14%) also agreed, while former male students were less in agreement (36.36%). The results show that both former and current students perceived the level of support offered in their French immersion school to be adequate. However, former male students may not have felt the same, or perhaps not to the same extent, indicating that

they may not have received the necessary support services when in French immersion. It should be noted that the small sample of former male students ($n = 11$) and the high level of neutral responses (45.45%) make it unwise to draw a conclusion on this matter.

In the research literature, three studies (Alberta Education, 1985; Halsall, 1991; Hayden, 1988) attribute lack of support as a reason for student attrition at the elementary level. The problem of lack of support may also be inferred from the results of the Lewis and Shapson (1989) study of high school students. Students in that study indicated difficulty with courses and dissatisfaction with instruction as primary reasons for leaving the program. They also seemed frustrated about not receiving help when they were having difficulty. The literature certainly documents lack of support services as a reason for student attrition at the elementary level and suggests that it may have also be a problem at the secondary level.

The current study's findings on support services are not totally consistent with the literature. Specifically, the majority of current students and former female students did not report lack of support services as a problem. However, the results were uncertain on former male students' perceptions about support services. It is possible that more former male students needed support to succeed and did not succeed. Perhaps because only 27.27% of former male students considered themselves academically strong, they may have attributed their lack of success to not getting the support that they believed they needed. Current students do not appear to have had a problem with the level of support offered; most felt that it was sufficient to enable students to succeed in the program.

This study addressed the issue of teacher quality in two ways: 1) asking if teachers encouraged some students to transfer to an English program, and 2) asking

directly if students considered the staff to be excellent. The former relates somewhat to the issue of support services, in that it may offer insight into the way teachers are perceived to deal with students experiencing difficulty. For example, teachers may suggest that a student should transfer out of the program rather than providing the appropriate support services.

While almost half of former male students (45.45%) agreed that they were encouraged to leave the immersion program by a teacher, very few (14.29%) former female students felt the same way. Most teachers (71.43%) did not agree that they had encouraged students to leave the program, although a few agreed (22.86%). Thus, it would appear that the former male students who were encouraged to leave likely received that recommendation from a small group of teachers. Furthermore, the teachers' responses show that they were likely committed to at least maintaining all students in the French immersion program, if not providing necessary support to allow students to succeed. Almost three-quarters (71.43%) of the teachers claimed that they did not encourage students to transfer.

Hayden (1988) reported that 67% of parents took the teacher's recommendation under advisement when deciding whether or not to transfer their child out of French immersion. However, Hayden's study focused on elementary, not high school students. Adiv (1979), who studied high school attrition, reported that, "Some students stated that parental or teacher recommendation had caused them to leave the program" (p. 9). Based on the data in the current study, it appears that many male students were encouraged to transfer by a relatively small number of teachers. It is unclear if that recommendation had any effect on the male students' final decision to transfer.

The former female students agreed (71.43%) that their teachers were excellent. However, fewer former male students (36.36%) agreed on this point. This result may be related to teachers' encouragement of males to transfer to the English program; in other words, those who were encouraged to leave may not have had a positive relationship with their teachers, resulting in the advice to transfer.

Interestingly, exactly the same number of former male students agreed that the staff was excellent as agreed that support services were sufficient. This result may suggest that those who did not need the support services were academically strong enough to continue without assistance, or they received sufficient assistance; thus, their leaving had little to do with academic or teacher problems. Overall, current students were satisfied with the quality of their teachers, as most (67.13%) agreed that the staff were excellent. Responses from both males (68.67%) and females (66.17%) were similar in the current student group.

The literature (Halsall, 1991; Hayden, 1988; Lewis & Shapson, 1989, Obadia & Thériault, 1995) clearly indicates that there is dissatisfaction with teacher quality in both elementary and secondary immersion programs. In fact, Lewis and Shapson cited dissatisfaction with the quality of instruction as the primary reason for student attrition in high school. Half of the French coordinators in the Obadia and Thériault study also cited teacher quality as a cause of the high school attrition problem.

The findings of the current study, especially for former female students, are not consistent with this view concerning teacher quality. While there was clearly more dissatisfaction among former male students, their responses were uncertain; there were virtually as many males who agreed (36.36%) that the teaching staff were excellent as

those who disagreed (27.27%) or were neutral (36.36%). Thus, dissatisfaction with the teaching staff did not appear to be a problem for most students, as it did not appear to be a direct cause of student attrition. However, for some males it may have been a problem that contributed to the decision to transfer.

In summary, the participants in this study have not defined teacher quality as a primary reason for student attrition. The results do suggest that some male students may have experienced difficulties with some aspect of their schooling and may not have received what they would deem sufficient support. Furthermore, the fact that a large percentage of former male students report that teachers encouraged them to leave may indicate a lack of a positive relationship with the teaching staff, or at least with some teachers. Considering the responses of current students and former female students, the former male student problem may not necessarily relate to teacher quality but more to personal conflict with specific teachers. Thus, females do not seem to transfer because of poor teacher quality, while some males may transfer because of problems with the teaching staff that are likely not linked to teacher quality. These findings are not consistent with those in the literature (Halsall, 1991; Hayden, 1988; Lewis & Shapson, 1989; Obadia & Thériault, 1995).

A lack of course options at the high school level is a problem frequently mentioned in the literature (Adiv, 1979; Duhamel, 1985; Halsall, 1991; Lewis & Shapson, 1989; Obadia & Thériault, 1995). In the current study, it was surprising that more current students (65.30%) than former students (55.56%) believed that too few options were available at the immersion high school. Even more surprising, many more former male students (72.73%) than former female students (28.57%) believed that there

were too few options. There was a clear difference of opinion between former male and female students, whereas this difference was not evident between current male and female students. Therefore, a lack of course options was likely a problem for former male students and may have been a factor in their decision to transfer to the English program. Interestingly, most former female students seemed satisfied with their course options, but most current students, while not satisfied, remained in the program.

Previous research (Adiv, 1979; Duhamel, 1985; Halsall, 1991; Lewis & Shapson, 1989; Obadia & Thériault, 1995) indicated that a lack of course options results in student attrition. For example, almost half of the teachers, principals, and French coordinators in the Obadia and Thériault study believed that a lack of course options was a main reason for student attrition. Half of the students in the Lewis and Shapson study indicated that they did not like the course options, citing this as a very significant or somewhat significant reason for leaving the program. However, all of the previous studies were done in dual-track schools where students may not have had access to all subjects in French. In fact, they may not even have had access to some core courses in French. This is not the case with the current study, as all core courses and options were available in French in these schools.

To summarize, previous research has concluded that a lack of course options contributes to student attrition. The current study demonstrates that, while this is still a problem, it only seems to be a factor for male students leaving the immersion program. Furthermore, former female students did not seem to have a problem with the options and transferred, while current students seemed to have a problem with the options but still

remained in the immersion program. These results suggest that course options do not motivate females to leave the program.

A French immersion centre offers a unique opportunity for students to be completely immersed in the French language from kindergarten to high school graduation. For students in the current study, the majority of current (71.10%) and former (66.67%) students agreed that they had ample opportunity to use their French in school. Furthermore, most students agreed that the school organized cultural activities to promote French culture. Thus, language usage and cultural promotion did not appear to be areas of concern for the sample students.

According to a Manitoba Education, Training and Youth (2002b) survey, 74.6% of immersion centre graduates either strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement “I wish I would have spoken French more regularly in high school” (p. 59). The same study also surveyed all other immersion students in the province, including dual-track graduates. Among all immersion students, “The most common suggestion [for improving the immersion program] was that oral French and interaction be increased” (p. 63). Thus, the program graduates from both immersion centres and dual-track schools appeared to feel that there was not enough opportunity to use the language at school. Duhamel (1985), writing about dual-track schools, stated, “Where there is perceived lack of opportunity to develop facility in French, the regular English program may appear to be a sensible alternative” (p. 821). In other words, students may be more likely to transfer if they cannot regularly apply what they learn in a meaningful way at school.

The findings in the current study are quite different, in that most students reported feeling that they had sufficient opportunity to use French and to be exposed to French

culture. Considering previous research, perhaps the situation has changed. However, it would be interesting to learn whether the students in this study feel the same way about their linguistic experience at school, after graduation and a period of reflection away from the immersion environment. That said, concerns about the opportunity to use French and exposure to French culture do not seem to be contributing factors to the attrition problem among the sample students.

General Perceptions about the French Immersion Program

Students and teachers were asked to share their perceptions on a variety of statements pertaining to the difficulty of the program, the demands of the program, the possibility of attaining higher grades in English schools, the impact of French immersion on students' English-language abilities, expectations of immersion teachers, and preparation for university. This section examines participants' responses and compares the findings with those of previous studies.

The literature about attrition (Adiv, 1979; Halsall, 1991; Lewis & Shapson, 1989; Obadia & Thériault, 1995) mentions two common ideas, that the French immersion program is too difficult and that it is too demanding of students. The current study asked students and teachers for their perceptions about these two ideas. The current students seemed to disagree ($M = 3.63$ and $M = 3.73$) with both ideas; they did not appear to find the immersion program too difficult (64.52%) or too demanding (67.28%). The former students seemed undecided, as the neutral response to these two issues was most common (44.44%). Perceptions that the immersion program is too difficult or demanding seem unlikely to be important factors motivating students to transfer out. Former students did not agree that the immersion program was either too difficult or too demanding for them.

Another idea that has been connected with attrition (Duhamel, 1985; Lewis & Shapson, 1989) is that French immersion students believe that they can attain higher grades in an English school. In Lewis and Shapson's study, 69.7% of transfer students reported their belief that they could attain higher grades in English as a very significant or somewhat significant reason for their transfer. In fact, this was the second most commonly cited reason for attrition among the students in the study.

The findings in the current study confirm that this belief is an important factor in students' decision to transfer out of French immersion. Among current students, 47% believed that they would attain higher grades in an English school, while 61.11% of former students reported holding the same belief while they were in immersion. In fact, 71.43% of former female students but only 54.55% of former male students held that belief. The opposite was true with current students, of whom more males (58.33%) than females (39.85%) believed that they would attain higher grades in English. As these indicate, the belief that they could attain higher grades in an English school may have motivated some former students to transfer out of French immersion. Specifically, this belief seems to have motivated former female students, whose responses are quite different from those of the current female students. However, former male student responses are similar to those of current male students, suggesting that this is not necessarily a motivating factor for transfer among males although it may have impacted their decision.

Several studies (Genesee, 1979; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Turnbull, Hart, & Lapkin, 2003; Parkin et al., 1987; Swain & Lapkin, 1982) concluded that French immersion students' abilities with the English language do not suffer any negative effects

because of time spent in French immersion. In the current study, for the statement “My abilities in English have been diminished because of my time in French immersion,” students’ responses were not as conclusive as results reported in previous studies. Both current and former students responses were marginally negative ($M = 3.49$ and $M = 3.50$) to the statement. Furthermore, 23.96% of current students and 22.22% of former students agreed with the statement, suggesting they felt that their English had suffered because of their time in French immersion. The responses suggest some uncertainty on this point among both sample student groups.

In discussing reasons for attrition in her study, Adiv (1979) wrote, “Some [former] students indicated that they feared falling behind in English” (p. 9). Interestingly, in the current study, a greater percentage (66.67%) of former students, who have experienced what it is like to study in English, than current students (53.30%) did not feel that their abilities in English have been diminished. This may indicate that some students perceived a problem where there may not have been one.

The lack of confidence in the responses may also indicate that current students are not confident about their English-language abilities because they have never really been tested outside of their English class. Perhaps this lack of knowledge may have contributed to the perception by some that their abilities are below what they should be. In spite of a lack of confidence in their English, the current students remain in the program. Since current students seem to have a greater concern in this area than former students and yet remain in French immersion, it is unlikely that a perceived loss of English-language ability impacted the decision of former students to transfer to an English school.

Both groups of students and teachers were asked to respond to the statement “The expectations of immersion teachers are higher than those of the teachers in English schools.” All three groups’ responses were neutral, with former students leaning more towards the negative ($M = 3.06$), and current students leaning more towards the positive ($M = 2.58$). Teacher responses fell between the two student groups ($M = 2.83$). This uncertainty likely stems from the fact that the question is very broad and does not refer to specific expectations that teachers may have. Furthermore, most teachers and current students would have never worked or studied in an English school and would have no basis for comparison. Interestingly, the former students, who have seen both programs, leaned the most towards the negative in their response. However, even after that experience, they were still uncertain if immersion teachers had higher expectations than English school teachers.

Previous studies (Adiv, 1979; 1985; Halsall, 1991) drew various conclusions about teacher expectations suggesting that those expectations were higher in French immersion. For example, Adiv wrote about the demands of the courses, while Halsall referred to a “heavy work load” (p. 2).

The students in the current study were asked for their perceptions concerning both areas, and specifically about teacher expectations, in order to determine if either of those points related directly to teacher expectations. The responses show that the groups were uncertain. Thus there is no general perception among the three sample groups that immersion teachers have higher expectations than teachers in English schools.

The question of preparedness for university has not been directly addressed in the attrition research literature. However, according to Manitoba Education, Training and

Youth (2002b), which surveyed immersion graduates, over 70% attended an English post-secondary school (p. 35). The same study also reported that, among students pursuing post-secondary studies, “One quarter of respondents said they had difficulty, largely connected with vocabulary, and that the difficulty was temporary” (p. 2). There appears to be transitional period of adjustment to the different terminology involved, when students move from learning in French to learning in English; however, the transition period appears to be brief. Nonetheless, this may be a concern for students currently in high school who are interested in pursuing post-secondary studies.

To determine whether this concern might be a factor in student attrition, current students and teachers in the study were asked if they believed that students would be better prepared for university in an English school. Also, former students were asked directly if they left immersion in order to gain better preparation for university. The results were mixed; teachers did not believe that students would be better prepared in an English school ($M = 3.54$), while current students and former students were uncertain ($M = 3.03$ and $M = 2.89$).

On further examination of the data, it is clear that this perceived problem had an impact on the decision of certain students to leave the program. Comparison of the mean responses of males and females in both student groups revealed a major difference between current female ($M = 3.10$) and former female ($M = 2.43$) students. The former female student responses indicated that they believed they would be better prepared for university in an English school. Furthermore, the same percentage of former female students (57.14%) agreed that they would be better prepared in English as agreed that

they were academically strong students, indicating that those students likely intended to pursue post-secondary studies.

Among males, both current and former students' responses to this statement were neutral ($M = 2.86$ and $M = 3.18$). Therefore, it appears that, for females, a belief that they would be better prepared for university in an English school may have been a motivating factor in their decision to transfer to the English program.

Personal Endorsement of the Immersion Program

Students and teachers were asked if they would personally endorse the immersion program by recommending it to others or, for students, if they would choose immersion if they could start over again. The differences in perceptions of current and former students may show how negatively or positively any group may view the immersion program based on their experiences.

Student responses to the question of choosing French immersion again if they had the opportunity were inconsistent. For example, 80.82% of current students agreed that they would choose education in French immersion again if given a choice; however, only 38.89% of former students so agreed. The difference of opinion demonstrates that former students did not appreciate the program and likely did not find the benefit of becoming bilingual worth the challenges that they may have faced, while current students appeared to be quite satisfied.

Interestingly, over one-third (38.89%) of the former students agreed that they would choose to repeat the immersion experience. In fact, 42.86% of former female students were in agreement and only 14.29% disagreed. For former male students, the responses were more evenly split, with 36.36% in agreement and 45.45% in

disagreement. Thus, former female students were more likely than former male students to be willing to repeat the immersion experience.

Compared to the current students, teachers gave the program a somewhat lower endorsement; 74.29% of the teachers stated that they would send their own child to a French immersion school. However, it should be noted that many immersion teachers are Francophones and would likely send their children to a Francophone school. Consequently, this number may not accurately reflect their level of endorsement.

A better reflection of the teachers' endorsement was found in their responses to the statement "I would encourage other parents to send their children to a French immersion school." Showing a high level of endorsement, 97.14% of the teachers agreed with this statement.

For the statement "I would encourage other students to go to a French immersion school," 61.11% of former students and 75.34% of current students agreed, again showing a relatively high level of endorsement. Interestingly, many more former students recommended the program for others than would have chosen it again for themselves. This may indicate that they found some value in the immersion experience even though it may not have met their needs. It is also interesting to note that almost one-quarter of current students did not respond "agree" or "strongly agree" to the statement, and therefore did not endorse the immersion program for others.

This level of current student satisfaction is inconsistent with the literature. Specifically, according to the study by Manitoba Education, Youth and Training (2002b), 90.3% of graduates of French immersion centre high schools in Manitoba were either satisfied or very satisfied with their French immersion experience. Given the difference

between this result and the findings in the current study, it appears that there may be less satisfaction among the students currently in the program than among the immersion graduates of the late 1990s.

Parental Influence

Students were asked to provide their view of their parents' perceptions of the immersion program. Previous research (Halsall, 1991; Hayden, 1988; Obadia & Thériault, 1995) indicated that parental influence has played a role in students' decisions to transfer out of French immersion programs. The statements presented to students sought to find out if parents influenced their child's decision to transfer and what the parents liked or disliked about the program.

Two statements were designed to elicit how much input parents had into students' decisions to either stay or transfer out of French immersion: "Staying/Leaving French immersion was my decision" and "Staying/Leaving French immersion was my parents' decision." Responses to those statements indicated that students are very involved in making the decision: 79.45% of current students and 83.33% of former students agreed that staying or leaving was their own decision. Meanwhile, only 38.36% of current students and 38.89% of former students agreed that it was their parents' decision. Obviously, some students agreed with both statements, showing that both they and their parents were involved in making the final decision.

A closer look at the data reveals that former male students were more likely than former female students to be influenced by their parents. In fact, 100% of former female students agreed that the transfer was their decision, and only 14.29% agreed that it was their parents' decision. However, only 72.73% of former male students stated that the

transfer was their own decision, and 54.55% agreed that it was their parents' decision. Parents seemed to have little influence on the female students' decision to move to an English school, but among the former male students, the parents' influence was much more evident.

There was little discrepancy between the responses of current male and female students. Among current students, 38.36% agreed that remaining in immersion was their parents' decision. However, the data also show that, among current students, more than twice as many claimed that remaining in immersion was their decision. Thus, while current students take ownership of their decision, their parents seem to have been somewhat involved.

Halsall (1991) and Hayden (1988) both recognized the impact of parental influence on the elementary school students who left immersion programs. However, even though Halsall's study also covered high school, she did not mention parental influence as a factor in student attrition. Obadia and Thériault (1995) found that 35% of district French coordinators, 32% of principals, and 16% of teachers believe that parental influence is one of the main reasons for students leaving French immersion programs in high school (p. 11).

The findings of the current study are not consistent with the past research, as parents seem to have less influence on the decision to stay or leave the French immersion program. The exception to this finding is the former male student group, who appear to have been most influenced by their parents but still seemed to maintain their own input into the decision. The former female student group did not seem to be influenced in their decision by their parents.

The reasons for parental dissatisfaction with the immersion program were explored through three statements that addressed student achievement and overall satisfaction with the school. Current students were given the statement “My parents believe I would do better in an English school.” Current students were asked directly if that parental belief was a reason for their transfer to the English program. Note that student perceptions in this area have already been explored. Interestingly, their perceptions of their parents’ beliefs show that the parents would not have responded in the same way as their child. Whereas 61.11% of former students believed that they would get better grades in an English school, only 38.89% believed that their parents felt the same way. The situation was similar for current students, as 47% believed that they would attain higher grades in an English school, while only 11.93% believed that their parents felt the same way.

Considering these results, parents do not seem to feel that learning in French has an impact on their child’s achievement. This was especially true among the parents of current students, and current female students in particular, as only 7.52% of the girls thought that their parents believed they would do better in an English school.

Parents of former students, especially boys, were apparently much more convinced that the language of instruction was a problem. Of the former male students, 45.45% thought that their parents believed they would do better in an English school. Only 28.57% of former female students responded similarly. Therefore, it seems that the belief by parents of former male students that their child would perform better in an English school may have been a motivating factor in their decision to influence their sons to transfer out of French immersion.

To follow up on the idea that students might achieve better success out of French immersion, current students were asked if they thought their parents were satisfied with their academic success. For former students, this statement focused specifically on parental satisfaction prior to their transfer. Among current students, 73.52% felt that their parents were satisfied with their academic progress, while only 50% of former students felt the same way. Within those results, a discrepancy between male and female responses was found among both groups of students. For both groups, it seems that parental satisfaction with grades is lower among males than females. For example, 63.95% of current male students, compared with 79.70% of current female students, felt that their parents were satisfied with their academic results. Similar results (71.43%) were found among the former female students, while much lower results (36.36%) were found among former male students. This suggests that parents of former female students were relatively satisfied with their daughters' achievement, while parents of former male students tended to be less satisfied with their sons' achievement.

Finally, students were presented with the statement "Overall, my parents are/were satisfied with my [French immersion] high school." Responses from current students indicated that parents were satisfied with the program, as 79.91% agreed with the statement, with males and females providing similar levels of agreement (77.91% and 81.20% respectively). Parents of former students seemed to be less satisfied; only 55.56% agreed with the statement. Again, the responses were quite evenly split between males (54.55%) and females (57.14%).

The results show that parents of former students, whether their child is academically successful or not, tend to be less satisfied with immersion schools than

parents of students currently in the program. However, based on the student responses, this dissatisfaction was not a major influence on the students' decision to leave.

To summarize, parents seem to have played only a small role in the decision of students to remain in or transfer out of the immersion program. The former male students were the group apparently most influenced by their parents. Former female students seem to have been least influenced by their parents in making their decision. Current students seem to have decided to remain in the program on their own, but with some input from their parents. Parents of former male students seem to have been more dissatisfied with their sons' progress at school, and perhaps this contributed to their decision to encourage their sons to transfer.

The findings from the current study are not totally consistent with the literature (Halsall, 1991; Hayden, 1988; Obadia & Thériault, 1995) because parents seem to have had an influence on some former male students but very little influence on former female students in the decision to leave immersion. Furthermore, they seem to have had only a minor influence on the decision of current students to stay in the program.

Other Areas of Concern

Three statements from the surveys did not fit into any category but are still worthy of discussion as they may offer further insight into the reasons for student attrition. These statements address how students view themselves academically and behaviourally, and they examine the impact of peer influence on the decision to leave French immersion.

The statement "I consider myself an academically strong student" has been mentioned earlier in the sections discussing the quality of school programs and general perceptions about the French immersion program. A more detailed look at the results for

this statement shows that current students tended to look more favourably upon their academic success than did former students. Specifically, 68.64% of current students agreed with the statement, while only 38.89% of former students agreed. The difference was even greater for former males, of whom only 27.27% agreed with the statement.

However, only 18.18% of the former male students disagreed with the statement, indicating that they did not necessarily view themselves as academically weak. Instead the males appeared to be neutral on this point, possibly indicating that they are neither strong nor weak students, but simply average. Similar conclusions may be reached about former female students. Not one disagreed with the statement, indicating that they too did not view themselves as academically weak; in fact, a majority (57.14%) agreed that they were academically strong. While this figure was lower than the current student response, it was much higher than the former male response. Thus, the female transfer students may be typically academically stronger than the former male students, but not necessarily as strong as the current female students.

Several studies on French immersion attrition (Adiv, 1979; Alberta Education, 1985; Duhamel, 1985; Halsall, 1991; Hayden, 1988; Lewis & Shapson, 1989; Obadia & Thériault, 1995; Parkin et al., 1987) have concluded that academic challenges are a major contributing factor to student attrition. Those challenges have already been explored in terms of various aspects of learning, such as linguistic challenges, teacher quality, support services, and perceived benefits of attending an English school. When students are asked how they view their academic potential, a clearer picture of former immersion students emerges.

Based on the results of the current study, it appears that academic challenges continue to be a contributing factor to student attrition in French immersion schools. This seems to be especially true for former male students; far fewer males from this group (27.27%) perceived themselves as academically strong than males from the current student group (64.37%). The results also indicate that former female students are less likely than current female students to consider themselves academically strong. That said, very few students from either group disagreed with the statement, meaning that very few considered themselves academically weak students.

This result is contrary to the opinions expressed by teachers, of whom 71.43% agreed that transfer students are typically academically weak. Based on the students' responses, former students were neutral about their academic ability, while current students expressed the belief that they are academically strong. If this perceived difference is real, it may explain the teachers' perception that transfer students are academically weak. It may also indicate that immersion students who do not perform as well as their peers may be more likely to transfer to an English school during high school, which is consistent with the findings of past research (Adiv, 1979; Alberta Education, 1985; Duhamel, 1985; Halsall, 1991; Hayden, 1988; Lewis & Shapson, 1989; Obadia & Thériault, 1995; Parkin et al., 1987).

Behavioural problems are another challenge faced by students who transfer, according to the literature (Halsall, 1991; Hayden, 1988, Parkin, et al., 1987). However, all of the studies that mention behaviour as a contributing factor to attrition focus on elementary school attrition. None of the high school studies mention behavioural problems among transferring students.

The current study provided students with the statement “I am/was often in trouble for behavioural issues.” Both current and former students disagreed with the statement ($M = 4.36$ and $M = 3.61$). Interestingly, 60% of the teachers agreed with the statement suggesting that former students were frequently in trouble for behavioural issues. As with the previous question about academic strength, the teachers’ perspective is not consistent with the students’.

However, among former students, 27.78% agreed that they were in trouble frequently, with more males (36.36%) responding positively than females (14.29%). This shows that some males who left the program had behavioural issues. This problem did not seem to be prominent among former female students. Interestingly, only 5.05% of current students agreed with the statement. Thus, very few students in the current sample groups reported being frequently in trouble for behavioural issues. The difference between the current and former student responses suggests that students with behavioural issues are not common in French immersion programs, and that those with such issues are more likely to leave the program.

Therefore, the literature (Halsall, 1991; Hayden, 1988, Parkin et al., 1987) that concludes that students who leave French immersion may have experienced behavioural challenges in elementary school holds somewhat true for high school students in the current study. Most former students (55.56%) did not agree that they were often in trouble for behavioural issues. A much higher percentage (83.94%) of current students did not agree that they were frequently in such trouble. Thus there is a difference between the two groups: the former students may have experienced more behavioural problems than the current students. Specifically, some former male students may have had

behavioural problems. Those issues may have led, at least in part, to these students' decision to leave the program. However, the number of former male students to whom this applies is relatively small. Behaviour does not appear to be an influencing factor in the decision of former female students to transfer out of immersion.

Earlier, the influence of parents and teachers was explored to determine their impact on student attrition. Although peer influence is not mentioned in the literature, adding it to this study allows all personal influences in the students' daily lives to be assessed to see how each contributes to the attrition problem.

Former students were asked if they left immersion because a friend had done so. Current students were asked if they felt that students transferred because one of their friends had transferred. Current students were uncertain ($M = 3.04$), while former students disagreed ($M = 3.67$). Thus, according to the former students, they did not transfer out of French immersion because one of their friends had done so. In fact, 61.11% of former students disagreed with the statement. Interestingly, more females (28.57%) responded positively to the statement than males (9.09%). Thus it appears that female students are more likely than male students to have left the program, at least in part, because of a friend's decision to do so. However, overall results indicated that most students do not transfer because of a peer.

Summary and Conclusions

Based on the survey data, conclusions can be reached about the attrition problem as it relates to the three sample schools. An examination of the results has provided several reasons for student attrition and a clearer definition of both former and current students. Following are a summary of the reasons for attrition, a summary of the

characteristics of transfer students as defined by the data, and observations about the characteristics of current students.

It has been determined that male and female students transfer out of French immersion for different reasons. For females, the motivation for transfer appears to be related to academic achievement. While the former female students in this study did not give the impression that they were academically challenged, they appeared to value their marks highly and to believe that they would achieve better marks in an English school. They also mentioned difficulty learning in French, likely the source of their belief that they would do better in English. Overall, the females seemed quite satisfied with all aspects of the immersion program and were not influenced in their decision by their parents. Thus, most of the females in this study decided to transfer because of a desire to attain higher grades.

For male students, the decision to transfer also seems to be related to grades. However, the male students in this study seemed to be less confident about their academic abilities than the females, and so their motivation to transfer was not necessarily based on the same academic reasons as the females. For example, the males did not seem to have a problem learning in French, as the females did. Some males, although not the majority, felt that support services were lacking at the immersion school, that there were insufficient option choices, and that their parents were not satisfied with their grades. Those students may have been influenced by a lack of academic success and may have felt that the programming they received was not appropriate for their abilities, interest, or needs. While this possibility was not specifically examined, it can certainly be inferred from the results.

Some males also indicated problems with behavioural issues at the immersion school, and unlike the females, many indicated that they had been encouraged to transfer by a teacher. Therefore, academic challenges, potential behavioural problems, along with parental and teacher influence seem to form the basis for male student attrition.

Former students appear to possess some characteristics that differ from those of current students. Those differences are more evident among males than among females. Weaker academic results, academic difficulty, language obstacles, and behavioural challenges were all documented among the former student group. However, not all of these challenges apply to all of the former students. It is not possible to define the specific characteristics of former students because no single characteristic applies to them all. Still, it can be concluded that most, if not all, former students experienced at least one of the previously mentioned challenges while in French immersion and that those challenges influenced their decision to transfer.

Current students were relatively satisfied with the immersion program, as were their parents. It is interesting to note that the current students' responses give the impression that this is a rather elite group. Almost 70% indicated that they were academically strong, only 5% indicated that they were in trouble frequently for behavioural issues, over 70% felt that they received the necessary support to succeed, and almost 20% reported practising their second language outside of school. Thus, the generalization in the literature (Carey, 1984; Clift, 1984; Genesee, 1987; Hart & Lapkin, 1998; Krashen, 1996; Parkin et al., 1987) that immersion is elitist continues to apply, at least for the S3 and S4 students surveyed in this study.

This is contrary to the conclusion reached by Obadia (1996): “This criticism [of elitism] may have been valid when the French immersion program began. However, with hundreds of thousands of students in the program, if this were ever true, it is not the case today” (p. 4). More students are accommodated in the immersion program today than in its earlier years, and perhaps a less homogeneous group may be found at the early elementary level. However, with an attrition rate of over 40% from kindergarten to S4, it is clear that the immersion program is not meeting the needs of all students at the high school level. Furthermore, the data collected in this study indicate that the current high school immersion students are a very homogeneous group at the S3 and S4 level. They are likely less challenged academically, and less challenging for teachers to deal with, than a typical English school population.

Chapter 6: Recommendations

This study has implications for French immersion schools and educators across Canada. It offers insight into the well documented problem of attrition and provides a basis from which schools can explore some new solutions to that problem. As a researcher and as an immersion high school administrator, I have several suggestions that I believe will help those involved in French immersion education better understand, and eventually reduce, the problem of attrition from immersion programs.

My recommendations for addressing the attrition problem can be broken down into six areas: 1) profile of former students, 2) reasons for student transfer, 3) collection of student population data, 4) targeting levels of attrition, 5) profile of English school students, and 6) former student performance in English schools.

Profile of Former Students

One of the best ways for educators to address a problem with a student, whether academic, social, or other, is to get to know as much as possible about the student and his or her circumstances that relate to the problem. Attrition is no different. In order to address the problem of attrition, educators must learn as much as possible about the students who transfer out of the immersion program and their reasons for transferring. Once a profile of these students has been established, educators can target specific problem areas and address them.

Educators do not need an unlimited amount of detailed information about each student. Instead, they need consistent and concise data that can be easily collected and compared. Information about student grade level, age, sex, marks, course option choices, and behavioural records is essential. While I recommend an exit survey for transfer

students, most of this basic information is currently available in school databases and would not require a survey. Instead, it would require consistent collation of data by school administrators.

All of that information could prove to be very useful in addressing the attrition problem. For example, recording the grade level of each student who transfers to an English school will provide a very accurate picture of when students leave the program. Furthermore, recording only the students who transfer to an English school and not those who move to another area and continue in immersion will show exactly how many students have transferred. Age and sex information would enhance the data, providing specific information about transfer students' characteristics.

Student marks or grades are a very simple form of data that can offer insight into a student's strengths and weaknesses. If transfer students are typically academically weaker than non-transfer students, as teachers in this study seemed to believe, then their marks should confirm that belief. In the struggle to reduce attrition, the certain knowledge that transfer students are typically academically weak, for example, would allow for a more strategic focus on the elements causing the academic concerns. However, if academic weakness is not a common trait of transfer students, the approach to the problem would be completely different. It would have to be based on whatever problem areas were identified by the transfer students.

It would also be important to track the course options taken by transfer students, since it may be that transfer students follow similar academic paths. For example, students who take applied math in S2 may be more likely to transfer than pre-calculus students. Having such information would allow educators to target specific students who

are at risk of transferring in order to better address their needs and to maintain them in the immersion setting.

Behavioural records including, for example, suspensions would allow schools to track more accurately how behavioural issues impact students who transfer, along with the other data. All of this information is readily available and would take little time to compile. A compilation of this kind of data would provide a long-term benefit as a resource that could continually be monitored, updated, and compared, allowing educators continually to adjust their approaches to dealing with the problem of attrition.

Reasons for Student Transfer

As mentioned earlier, I advocate the use of an exit survey to better inform educators of the reasons for student attrition. The exit survey for transfer students need only include questions that specifically ask why they are leaving. Rather than pre-determining reasons for student attrition from a series of pre-defined answers, as was done in the surveys for this study, only two open-ended question need to be asked: 1) Why are you leaving?, and 2) What could we have done that would have encouraged you to remain in the French immersion program? Answers to those two questions will likely result in a set of varied responses that, over time, will evolve into clearly definable categories. Until this body of data is obtained, educators cannot efficiently address specific problems in order to reduce attrition levels. Asking these questions would put the immersion program in a constant state of self-reflection and improvement, doubtless strengthening the program.

Collection of Student Population Data

This study involved relatively few former students, compared to the average S1 to S4 attrition rate of 13.25%. This occurred because more students could not be found. There were certainly more students who left the three sample schools, but for many, their current school was unknown. It is essential that a more systematic approach to tracking former students be established.

Accurate student population statistics are essential at all levels so that cohorts of students can be tracked from kindergarten to see how many transfer, and when. Furthermore, attrition by grade 8 was over 30% in the three sample school communities. Thus, attrition in high school represents only a small part of the problem. The varied levels of attrition among the three school communities show that each school's attrition problem is unique; there are different points where attrition is greatest in each community. This is likely true for schools across Canada. Accurate and consistent population statistics will allow attrition peaks to be documented and will allow schools to work together within their communities to combat the attrition problem on both a school and a community level.

The campaign against attrition should include more interaction between high school and elementary feeder schools, better communication with parents, and more opportunities for younger students to work with high school immersion students in order to build a significant connection with the school. That connection could serve as a motivation for students to remain in the program. However, none of these measures will make a significant difference unless specific audiences can be targeted based on population data. Thus, the collection and maintenance of that data are essential.

Targeting Levels of Attrition

Once levels of attrition are determined and peak points are established, school plans need to focus on reducing those levels and identifying how and when that should happen. For example, school A's level of attrition is highest after S2. Their school plan could set the attrition level target as a 2% reduction every year for five years. However, just setting a target is not going to bring about the change. All of the previously discussed data must first be collected from the S2 students who transfer, and then it must be analyzed. Based on that data, a target can be set and the means of arriving at the targeted level can be detailed. A systematic approach to dealing with attrition is needed, and a systematic approach involves using all available data to attain the identified goal.

Profile of English School Students

How different is an immersion student from a non-immersion student? There has long been a perception that the immersion program caters to elite students. Because immersion has changed so much and has opened to a much larger population over the last 30 years, immersion teachers do not perceive the program to be as it was even a decade ago. For them, immersion is not an elite but rather a mainstream program.

Results from this study show that immersion students tend to be academically strong, very few frequently face disciplinary problems, and they are relatively satisfied with their teachers and their school. Would English students share similar perceptions about themselves, their teachers, and their school? In order to measure elitism, a comparative sample is needed from an English school. Such a sample should come from the English school in the catchment area of the immersion school, in other words, the school to which immersion students would transfer if they left immersion. Relevant

background information should be collected from students in the English school, such as marks, age, sex, grade level, number of suspensions, and failure rates. Comparison with similar data from immersion schools would determine if there is a difference between immersion and non-immersion students in those areas.

If any differences can be determined between the two groups, they will better inform immersion educators about what type of clientele they are working with. For example, knowing whether or not immersion schools are catering to the elite would help to focus the school in its mission. Is the focus of the school on learning the language, or on learning the content of the subjects taught? A focus on the language caters to the elite learners; a focus on the subject caters to all learners. Ideally, in an immersion school, the language and course content would share the focus, but as challenged learners enter the system, teachers will inevitably put aside some of the language in order to cover course content and to assist struggling learners in comprehending the content.

Even more importantly, a comparative sample of English school students would allow a comparison with immersion transfer students. How do those students who leave the immersion program compare to English program students? For example, if transfer students' characteristics align more with those of English students than with those of immersion students, then one could conclude that immersion caters to a different and perhaps more elite population. If so, the immersion school would have to change its strategies in dealing with students with identified problems in order to maintain and support them in the immersion program.

Performance of Former Students in English Schools

Students who transfer out of immersion into an English school must be tracked whenever possible. Specifically, their grades need to be tracked to see if there is any difference in performance from one system to the next. If there is an improvement after transfer, is the improvement sustained or temporary? Students should be tracked for a minimum of two years. Once enough data are collected, conclusions can be reached.

The benefit of this information is that it can be shared with parents, enabling them to make more informed decisions. If students are found to perform better over the long-term in an English school, then parents should know this before putting their children in immersion. If the difference is temporary or non-existent, as I have come to believe based on my experiences, then parents need to know this before deciding to transfer their son or daughter in an attempt to improve the child's grades. If my belief is proven to be correct, then informing parents and students of this fact would make transfer a less appealing option to those who seek to improve student achievement.

Summary

Educators need to become very familiar with the reasons for student attrition from immersion programs. In the three sample school communities, almost one out of every two students who starts kindergarten does not remain in immersion until S4. However, the high school attrition rate in the three sample schools is the lowest of all of the immersion schools in the province and lower than the attrition rates recorded in the literature. That said, a kindergarten to S4 attrition rate of over 40% and an average S1 to S4 attrition rate of 13.25% are still unacceptable. If immersion programs are to continue and grow, they must retain more students. To do this, schools and school divisions must

seek out answers as to why students transfer out of the immersion program. They must also set annual targets that reduce attrition to a more reasonable level through the implementation of measures that address identified problem areas.

Structurally, schools can be organized in ways that may assist them in retaining students. The fact that these three sample schools achieved the lowest attrition rates in the province may also suggest that a totally French milieu is preferable to a dual-track school for students. The constant presence of French and the lack of attachment to an English school may make the typical immersion student's transfer to the English program a little more difficult and less desirable than it would be for students in dual-track schools. The immersion centre results in students who are more satisfied with their linguistic experience in immersion and more likely to remain in the program until they graduate. The immersion centre model should be maintained for immersion programs wherever possible, in order to reduce attrition and to improve the overall immersion experience.

Maintaining the French immersion population until high school will also help to alleviate the frequently mentioned problem of too few course options. Most immersion schools do not offer the same options as English schools because they do not have as many students. The number of students determines the number of teachers, which determines the number of classes that can be offered. A decrease of even 10% in the kindergarten to S4 attrition rate would result in at least an extra 15 to 20 students per grade in each of the three high schools in this survey. That would be a substantial increase in student population and would make more options viable.

More programming directed to challenged learners, such as alternative programs that focus on non-academic areas such as vocational training and cooperative education,

would make the immersion program more appealing to a broader spectrum of student interests and abilities. Addressing the needs of challenged learners should be a long-term goal of all French immersion high schools. Creating programs that cater to all types of learners, as the English program does, is essential to reducing student attrition. If more students are to continue in French immersion, the available programming and services must reflect more of their needs and interests.

The message that clearly comes from this study is that attrition continues, even in the most supportive immersion learning environments. Transferring out from any of the three schools in this study means that the student must leave the daily contact of his or her peers to go and study in an English school situated in a different building. Surely the immersion program can be adjusted to meet the needs of these students, so that such a drastic move would not seem a reasonable solution for so many.

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Appendix A: Comparison of Attrition Rates for Cohorts from the Three Sample High
Schools, 1990 to 2005 (%)

S1-S4 Years	School A	School B	School C	<i>M</i>
1990-1993	-24.47	-25.88	-15.28	-21.88
1991-1994	-39.13	-4.04	-8.51	-17.23
1992-1995	-30.61	-17.06	-12.09	-19.92
1993-1996	-27.78	-11.89	-9.18	-16.28
1994-1997	-29.07	-12.84	1.72	-13.39
1995-1998	-26.19	-9.46	-2.70	-12.78
1996-1999	-29.27	-7.88	-0.91	-12.69
1997-2000	-26.80	-10.00	-9.18	-15.33
1998-2001	-26.67	-7.10	3.54	-10.08
1999-2002	-13.59	-8.81	0.90	-7.17
2000-2003	-12.24	1.40	-1.14	-3.99
2001-2004	-22.45	-5.69	3.33	-8.27
2002-2005	-12.87	-1.39	-23.23	-12.50
Average: 1990-2005	-24.70	-9.28	-5.59	-13.19
Average: 1998-2005	-17.56	-4.32	-3.32	-8.40

Note. Attrition percentages for all three schools were calculated by determining the difference between the number of students registered in S4 and the number of students from the same cohort that were registered in S1 four years earlier. The difference was divided by the number of students that were registered in S1 for that cohort.

Appendix B: Kindergarten to S4 Attrition Rates for Cohorts of students from the Three
Sample School Communities (%), 1990 to 2005

K Year - S4 Year	School A	School B	School C	<i>M</i>
1990-2002	-46.71	-43.14	-46.41	-45.42
1991-2003	-44.87	-26.40	-37.41	-36.23
1992-2004	-46.85	-34.09	-41.14	-40.69
1993-2005	-46.85	-34.09	-41.14	-40.69
Annual Average: 1990-2005	-46.32	-34.43	-41.53	-40.76

Note. Attrition rates were calculated by subtracting the number of students in S4 from the number of students from the cohort that were originally registered in kindergarten in all of the feeder schools for each high school. The difference was then divided by the number of students who were registered in kindergarten for that cohort.

Appendix C: Average Annual Change in Student Enrolments for the Three Sample
School Communities. Consecutive Grades from 1990 to 2004 (%)

Grades	School A	School B	School C	<i>M</i>
K-1	-2.61	-2.54	2.06	-1.03
1-2	-4.11	-4.69	-7.85	-5.55
2-3	-3.10	-7.59	-7.07	-5.92
3-4	-3.11	-5.21	-6.51	-4.94
4-5	-3.14	-5.93	-6.13	-5.07
5-6	-4.31	-4.80	-4.77	-4.63
6-7	-7.95	-5.95	-7.29	-7.06
7-8	-4.71	-4.60	-5.12	-4.81
8-S1	-8.31	2.65	-5.96	-3.87
S1-S2	-9.54	-4.17	-8.88	-7.53
S2-S3	-10.59	-3.40	-4.18	-6.06
S3-S4	-7.66	-3.75	11.36	-0.02

Note. The number of students in each grade for all feeder schools was combined by community for each year from 1990 to 2004. The latter grade population was subtracted from the former grade population and the difference was divided by the former grade population. The percentages listed in this table are an average of those percentages over the 15 year period.

Appendix D: Survey for Teachers

Background Information

1) Please check off all of the grade levels that you currently teach:

S-1 _____ S-2 _____ S-3 _____ S-4 _____

2) Please check the appropriate response.

Sex: Male _____ Female _____

3) I have taught in French immersion for:

1 year or less _____

2 to 5 years _____

6 to 10 years _____

more than 10 years _____

Put a check in the box under the best description of your feeling towards each statement.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Students who left my school to go to an English school are typically academically weak students.					
2. Students who left my school to go to an English school tended to experience difficulty learning in French.					
3. Students who left my school to go to an English school tended to experience difficulty in English.					
4. Students who left my school to go to an English school tended to frequently get in trouble for behavioural issues.					
5. My school offers students the support that they need to succeed.					
6. The teachers at my school are excellent.					
7. I think the immersion program is very difficult for students.					
8. The immersion program is too demanding for students.					
9. Most students would be able to get better grades at an English school.					
10. Students' abilities in English are diminished because of their time in French immersion.					
11. There are too few course options available for students at my school.					

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12. I believe that the expectations of immersion teachers are higher than those of the teachers in English schools.					
13. There is ample opportunity in my school for students to practice their French.					
14. Students in my school speak French outside of school.					
15. Cultural activities are organized in my school to promote the use of the French language on an ongoing basis.					
16. I would send my own children to a French immersion school.					
17. I would encourage other parents to send their children to a French immersion school.					
18. Many students believe that if they attended English schools they would be better prepared for university.					
19. Of the students who have left my school for an English school, many did so because one or more of their friends had also left.					
20. I have encouraged a student to leave my school to go to an English school on at least one occasion.					

Appendix E: Survey for Students Who Have Left the Immersion Program

Background Information

Please check the appropriate responses.

1) I am currently in: S-2 _____ S-3 _____ S-4 _____

2) I left the immersion program after:

S-1 _____

S-2 _____

S-3 _____

3) Sex: Male _____ Female _____

4) Someone in my immediate family (parent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, or grandparent) can speak French fluently.

Yes _____ No _____

5) I started French immersion schooling in:

Kindergarten _____

Grade 1 _____

Grade 4 _____

Grade 7 _____

Other _____

Put a check in the box under the best description of your feeling towards each statement based on your experiences from your years as a student in a French immersion school. All references to your past immersion schools or immersion programs refer to the last French immersion high school that you attended.

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I consider myself an academically strong student.					
2. I experienced difficulty learning subjects in French.					
3. I experienced difficulty in English.					
4. I was often in trouble for behavioural issues.					
5. The immersion school offered me the support that I needed to succeed.					
6. The teachers at the immersion school were excellent.					
7. The immersion program was very difficult.					
8. The immersion program was too demanding.					
9. While I was in immersion, I thought that I would be able to get better grades if I was attending an English school.					
10. My abilities in English have been diminished because of my time in French immersion.					
11. There were too few options available at my French immersion school.					
12. The expectations of immersion teachers are higher than those of the teachers in my English school.					

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13. There was ample opportunity in the immersion school for students to practice their French.					
14. When I was attending immersion school, I spoke French outside of school.					
15. Cultural activities were organized in the immersion school to promote the use of the French language on an ongoing basis.					
16. If I had to start my education again, I would choose to go to a French immersion school.					
17. I would encourage other students to go to a French immersion school.					
18. I left French immersion for an English school to better prepare for university.					
19. I left the immersion school because one or more of my friends had left for an English school.					
20. An immersion teacher(s) encouraged me to go to an English school.					
21. Leaving French immersion was my decision.					
22. Leaving French immersion was my parents' decision.					
23. I left the immersion school because my parents believed I would do better academically in an English school.					

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
24. My parents were satisfied with my academic progress while I was in French immersion.					
25. Overall, my parents were satisfied with the French immersion high school.					

Appendix F: Survey for Current Students

Background Information

Please check the appropriate responses.

- 1) I am currently in: S-1_____ S-2_____ S-3_____ S-4_____
- 2) Sex: Male_____ Female_____
- 3) Someone in my immediate family (parent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, or grandparent) can speak French fluently.
Yes_____ No_____
- 4) I started French immersion schooling in:
Kindergarten_____
- Grade 1_____
- Grade 4_____
- Grade 7_____
- Other_____

Put a check in the box under the best description of your feeling towards each statement based on your experiences from your years as a student in a French immersion school.

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I consider myself an academically strong student.					
2. I experience difficulty learning in French.					
3. I experience difficulty in English.					
4. I am often in trouble for behavioural issues.					
5. My school offers me the support that I need to succeed.					
6. The teachers at my school are excellent.					
7. I think the immersion program is very difficult.					
8. The immersion program is too demanding.					
9. I would be able to get better grades at an English school.					
10. My abilities in English have been diminished because of my time in French immersion.					
11. There are too few options available at my school.					
12. I believe that the expectations of immersion teachers are higher than those of the teachers in English schools.					
13. There is ample opportunity in my school for students to practice their French.					

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14. I currently speak French outside of school.					
15. Cultural activities are organized in my school to promote the use of the French language on an ongoing basis.					
16. If I had to start my education again, I would choose to go to a French immersion school.					
17. I would encourage other students to go to a French immersion school.					
18. If I went to an English school I would be better prepared for university.					
19. Some students have left my school because one or more of their friends left.					
20. Teachers in my immersion school will sometimes encourage students to go to an English school.					
21. Staying in French immersion is my decision.					
22. Staying in French immersion is my parents' decision.					
23. My parents believe I would do better in an English school.					
24. My parents are satisfied with my academic progress.					
25. Overall, my parents are satisfied with my high school.					

Appendix G: School Division Consent Form

Student Attrition in Specialized High School Programs: An Examination of Three French Immersion Centres in Manitoba

Your school division is being invited to participate in a study titled Student Attrition In Specialized High School Programs: An Examination Of Three French Immersion Centres In Manitoba that is being conducted by me, Ron Cadez. Ron Cadez is a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge and you may contact him if you have further questions by calling him at home at 257-4055, at work at 255-3205, or by e-mail at ronald.cadez@uleth.ca. The chair of the Human Subject Research Committee, Dr. Rick Mrazek, may be reached at (403) 329-2425.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Education. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Kas Mazurek. You may contact my supervisor at (403) 329-2462.

The purpose of this study is to document the perceptions of three groups associated with the three French Immersion Center high schools located in the city of Winnipeg: French immersion high school students who left the program; high school French immersion teachers who are currently teaching at the three schools; and high school French immersion students currently in the French immersion program. The data gathered will be used to identify factors that account for attrition or retention within the two samples of students; teacher statements will supplement and enhance student-generated data.

Although a small body of research exists in this area, most of it was done over a decade ago. An update is essential since the French immersion programs and clientele have changed during that time. Also, the Winnipeg schools represent a unique situation in that they are French immersion centres that exist entirely on their own with no affiliation to an English school. This setting will provide an opportunity to study the impact that such an environment and the constant exposure to French have on student attrition.

Your school division is being asked to participate in this study because at least one of three French immersion centre high schools in Winnipeg – Collège Béliveau, Collège Jeanne Sauvé, and Collège Pierre Elliott-Trudeau – is situated in your division. There are only three high schools like this in Manitoba. The perceptions of teachers as well as current and former students are an essential part of addressing the attrition issue.

If your school division agrees to participate voluntarily in this research, selected teachers and students will be asked to complete a brief, on-line questionnaire. Your permission also gives the researcher permission to access school student population records and to track students who have left the immersion program. A group of approximately ten students who have left the program from each of the three schools in the last three years to transfer to an English school will be selected to complete a questionnaire. The names of these students, their current schools and contact information will have to be obtained from their current school or the school division. Also, one class of students will be

selected to complete the questionnaire in each of the three immersion centre schools included in the survey. All students selected for this study will be senior 4 students. All students and teachers must sign a consent form similar to this one in order to participate in the study.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you in that school division staff may be contacted to access school population records. Be assured that this inconvenience will be kept to an absolute minimum. There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include an opportunity for data to be gathered both to celebrate the French immersion program and to find ways to improve it to better address the needs of all students.

Your school division's participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study, the data gathered from your school division will be retained.

The researcher may have a relationship to potential participants as he is a vice principal in one of the schools. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, you should note that all data gathered in the surveys are completely anonymous and the researcher will not know who has or has not submitted their survey.

In terms of protecting anonymity, no individual's responses or participation will be identifiable as results will be reported as a group. However, the description of the schools in the thesis will make it clear to those who know the schools in the city that the study focuses on these three schools, even though they will not be named specifically. Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected as names will not be used in the research paper, nor will the results be identifiable on an individual basis.

The data collected will be retained, analyzed, and published in my thesis. Thus, the data collected will be retained forever. However, the participants' anonymity in completing the survey will be preserved and nobody will have a record of any individual's responses.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others. Specifically, the final thesis will include the results of the surveys. Once completed and approved, the thesis will be published. The findings may also be presented at scholarly meetings, published in journals, and published on the internet. The final document and the agreement to participate will also mean an agreement to disseminate the findings to the various sources indicated.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and the supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Chair of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee at the University of Lethbridge (403-329-2425).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

Name of School Division	Signature	Date
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A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix H: Teacher Consent Form

Student Attrition in Specialized High School Programs: An Examination of Three French Immersion Centres in Manitoba

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled Student Attrition In Specialized High School Programs: An Examination Of Three French Immersion Centres In Manitoba that is being conducted by me, Ron Cadez. Ron Cadez is a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge and you may contact him if you have further questions by calling him at home at 257-4055, at work at 255-3205, or by e-mail at ronald.cadez@uleth.ca. The chair of the Human Subject Research Committee, Dr. Rick Mrazek, may be reached at (403) 329-2425.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Education. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Kas Mazurek. You may contact my supervisor at (403) 329-2462.

The purpose of this study is to document the perceptions of three groups associated with the three French Immersion Center high schools located in the city of Winnipeg: French immersion high school students who left the program; high school French immersion teachers who are currently teaching at the three schools; and high school French immersion students currently in the French immersion program. The data gathered will be used to identify factors that account for attrition or retention within the two samples of students; teacher statements will supplement and enhance student-generated data.

Although a small body of research exists in this area, most of it was done over a decade ago. An update is essential since the French immersion programs and clientele have changed during that time. Also, the Winnipeg schools represent a unique situation in that they are French immersion centres that exist entirely on their own with no affiliation to an English school. This setting will provide an opportunity to study the impact that such an environment and the constant exposure to French have on student attrition.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a teacher in one of three French immersion centre high schools in Winnipeg. There are only three high schools like this in Manitoba. Your perceptions of what you see is happening in your school are an essential part of addressing the attrition issue.

If you agree to participate voluntarily in this research, your participation will include completion of an on-line questionnaire. An e-mail will be sent to you with a web address and a password to enter the survey. Once completed, your data is automatically collected. Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you in that it will take approximately 5 minutes of your time.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. In terms of protecting your anonymity, no individual's responses or participation will be identifiable, as results will be reported as a group.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include an opportunity to reflect on your profession and to see the benefits and the negatives of the French immersion program.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study, your data will be retained.

The researcher may have a relationship to potential participants as a vice principal in one of the schools. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, you should note that all data gathered in the surveys are completely anonymous and the researcher will not know who has or has not submitted their survey. Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected; names will not be used in the research paper nor will the results be identifiable on an individual basis.

The data collected will be retained, analyzed, and published in my thesis. Thus, the data collected will be retained forever. However, the participants' anonymity in completing the survey will be preserved and nobody will have a record of any individual's responses.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others. Specifically, the final thesis will include the results of the surveys. Once completed and approved, the thesis will be published. The findings may also be presented at scholarly meetings, published in journals, and published on the internet. The final document and the agreement to participate will also mean an agreement to disseminate the findings to the various sources indicated.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and the supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Chair of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee at the University of Lethbridge (403-329-2425).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher. Please note that your e-mail address will only be used once, to send you the web-survey information.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
e-mail address where passcode for survey can be sent		

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix I: Instructions for Teacher Survey

The following was sent to the respondents by e-mail:

Hello,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my survey on high school student attrition in French immersion programs. Please read the instructions carefully before proceeding to the survey.

1. Go to the following address to complete the survey:

http://www.uleth.ca/edu/surveys/french_immersion/

2. On that site, there is a space to enter your survey code. Please type this code:

[Enter Personal Code] and press continue.

3. After entering the code, you will be brought to the teacher survey. Please read the directions and the questions carefully before responding and submitting the answers.

4. Once you have completed and submitted the survey, a screen will appear thanking you for your participation. When you arrive there, you are finished and no further action is required.

I have also attached a copy of the consent form that you signed, to provide you with the details of the study. Please keep that document for your own records. Once again, thank you for your participation in this survey.

Ron Cadez

M. Ed. Student

University of Lethbridge

Appendix J: Former Student Consent Form

Student Attrition in Specialized High School Programs: An Examination of Three French Immersion Centres in Manitoba

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled Student Attrition In Specialized High School Programs: An Examination Of Three French Immersion Centres In Manitoba that is being conducted by me, Ron Cadez. Ron Cadez is a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge and you may contact him if you have further questions by calling him at work at 255-3205, or by e-mail at ronald.cadez@uleth.ca.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Education. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Kas Mazurek. You may contact my supervisor at (403) 329-2462.

The purpose of this study is to document the perceptions of three groups associated with the three French Immersion Center high schools located in the city of Winnipeg: French immersion high school students who left the program; high school French immersion teachers who are currently teaching at the three schools; and high school French immersion students currently in the French immersion program. The data gathered will be used to identify factors that account for attrition or retention within the two samples of students; teacher statements will supplement and enhance student-generated data.

Although a small body of research exists in this area, most of it was done over a decade ago. An update is essential since the French immersion programs and clientele have changed during that time. Also, the Winnipeg schools represent a unique situation in that they are French immersion centres that exist entirely on their own with no affiliation to an English school. This setting will provide an opportunity to study the impact that such an environment and the constant exposure to French have on student attrition.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a former student from one of three French immersion centre high schools in Winnipeg and you have left that program in the last three years. There are only three high schools like this in Manitoba. Your perceptions of your experiences in your former school are an essential part of addressing the attrition issue.

If you agree to participate voluntarily in this research, your participation will include completion of an on-line questionnaire. This will take place during class time at your current school and will be arranged by Ron Cadez through the school's administration.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you in that it will take approximately 5 minutes of your time. All details will be finalized by Ron Cadez through consultation with the school administration.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. In terms of protecting your anonymity, no individual's responses or participation will be identifiable, as results will be reported as a group.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include an opportunity to reflect on why you have decided to leave the French immersion program, which may help the program better meet the needs of other students in the future.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study, your data will be retained.

The researcher may have a relationship to potential participants as a vice principal in one of the schools. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, you should note that all data gathered in the surveys are completely anonymous, and the researcher will not know who has or has not submitted their survey. Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected, as names will not be used in the research paper nor will the results be identifiable on an individual basis.

The data collected will be retained, analyzed, and published in my thesis. Thus, the data collected will be retained forever. However, the participants' anonymity in completing the survey will be preserved and nobody will have a record of any individual's responses.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others. Specifically, the final thesis will include the results of the surveys. Once completed and approved, the thesis will be published. The findings may also be presented at scholarly meetings, published in journals, and published on the internet. The final document and the agreement to participate will also mean an agreement to disseminate the findings to the various sources indicated.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and the supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Chair of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee at the University of Lethbridge (403-329-2425).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
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A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix K: Instructions for Former Student Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my survey on high school student attrition in French immersion programs. Please have all students who are willing to participate in the survey sign and submit to you the consent form. They should keep one copy of this form for their own records. Next, distribute the code tags to all students who have signed and submitted the consent form. Parent/guardian signatures are not required.

If a survey code does not work or a student encounters an error while submitting the survey, please note the code that you gave that student and then give him/her another code to do the survey again. Once the class has completed the survey, please note which code tags were not used and return that information to me.

Please read the following instructions to your students prior to having them complete the survey:

1. Go to the survey website indicated on your code tag that your teacher has given you. (http://www.uleth.ca/edu/surveys/french_immersion/)
2. On that site, there is a space to enter your survey code. Please type in your code and press continue.
3. After entering the code, you will be brought to the "Former Student Survey." Please read the directions and the questions carefully before responding and submitting the answers.
4. Once you have completed and submitted the survey, a screen will appear thanking you for your participation. When you arrive there, you are finished and no further action is required.

Thank you for your support.

Appendix L: Current Student Consent Form

Student Attrition in Specialized High School Programs: An Examination of Three French Immersion Centres in Manitoba

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled Student Attrition In Specialized High School Programs: An Examination Of Three French Immersion Centres In Manitoba that is being conducted by me, Ron Cadez. Ron Cadez is a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge and you may contact him if you have further questions by calling him at work at 255-3205, or by e-mail at ronald.cadez@uleth.ca. The chair of the Human Subject Research Committee, Dr. Rick Mrazek, may be reached at (403) 329-2425.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Education. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Kas Mazurek. You may contact my supervisor at (403) 329-2462.

The purpose of this study is to document the perceptions of three groups associated with the three French Immersion Center high schools located in the city of Winnipeg: French immersion high school students who left the program; high school French immersion teachers who are currently teaching at the three schools; and high school French immersion students currently in the French immersion program. The data gathered will be used to identify factors that account for attrition or retention within the two samples of students; teacher statements will supplement and enhance student-generated data.

Although a small body of research exists in this area, most of it was done over a decade ago. An update is essential since the French immersion programs and clientele have changed during that time. Also, the Winnipeg schools represent a unique situation in that they are French immersion centres that exist entirely on their own with no affiliation to an English school. This setting will provide an opportunity to study the impact that such an environment and the constant exposure to French have on student attrition.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are currently a student in one of three French immersion centre high schools in Winnipeg. There are only three high schools like this in Manitoba. Your perceptions of what you see is happening in your school are an essential part of addressing the attrition issue.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include completion of an on-line questionnaire. This will be administered at school at a mutually agreed upon time and location. All details will be finalized by Ron Cadez through consultation with the school administration. Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you in that it will take approximately 5 minutes of your time.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. In terms of protecting your anonymity, no individual's responses or participation will be identifiable, as results will be reported as a group.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include an opportunity to reflect on why you have decided to remain in the French immersion program and to better appreciate its benefits.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study, your data will be retained.

The researcher may have a relationship to potential participants as a vice principal in one of the schools. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, you should note that all data gathered in the surveys are completely anonymous, and the researcher will not know who has or has not submitted their survey. Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected, as names will not be used in the research paper, nor will the results be identifiable on an individual basis.

The data collected will be retained, analyzed, and published in my thesis. Thus, the data collected will be retained forever. However, the participants' anonymity in completing the survey will be preserved and nobody will have a record of any individual's responses.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others. Specifically, the final thesis will include the results of the surveys. Once completed and approved, the thesis will be published. The findings may also be presented at scholarly meetings, published in journals, and published on the internet. The final document and the agreement to participate will also mean an agreement to disseminate the findings to the various sources indicated.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and the supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Chair of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee at the University of Lethbridge (403-329-2425).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
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A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix M: Instructions for Current Student Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my survey on high school student attrition in French immersion programs. Please have all students who are willing to participate in the survey sign and submit to you the consent form. They should keep one copy of this form for their own records. Next, distribute the code tags to all students who have signed and submitted the consent form. Parent/guardian signatures are not required.

If a survey code does not work or a student encounters an error while submitting the survey, please note the code that you gave that student and then give him/her another code to do the survey again. Once the class has completed the survey, please note which code tags were not used and return that information to me.

Please read the following instructions to your students prior to having them complete the survey:

1. Go to the survey website indicated on your code tag that your teacher has given you. (http://www.uleth.ca/edu/surveys/french_immersion/)
2. On that site, there is a space to enter your survey code. Please type in your code and press continue.
3. After entering the code, you will be brought to the “Current Student Survey.” Please read the directions and the questions carefully before responding and submitting the answers.
4. Once you have completed and submitted the survey, a screen will appear thanking you for your participation. When you arrive there, you are finished and no further action is required.

Thank you for your support.