

REVIEW OF
OPTIONAL FRENCH SECOND
LANGUAGE PROGRAMS
for
CHIGNECTO-CENTRAL
REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD

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MAY 2011

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AVANT PROPOS

At the Board Meeting held on June 16, 2009, the Chignecto Central Regional School Board decided to hire an outside agent to do a review of its optional French Second Language (FSL) Programs. I was hired in July of 2010 to begin the review process in November. I am a retired French Second Language teacher who ended his career as a French Second Language consultant with the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board. I served as President of the Nova Scotia Language Teachers' Association for two years. I am currently the Nova Scotia Representative on the National Council of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, a position I have held for six years.

The review process initially took the form of fact finding and information gathering. It was multifaceted. Many of the activities were conducted simultaneously. Here is a brief outline of the work I conducted.

1. I conducted interviews with the teachers offering the optional programs.
2. I interviewed school administrators where the optional programs were housed.
3. Informal classroom visits were conducted when possible.
4. I reviewed enrolment figures and other statistics relevant to optional programs in order to bring forth any pertinent information.
5. Students in all optional programs were interviewed in French. I was able to talk with 54 students from all of the programs in grades 11 and 12 and students in the early immersion lead class at Amherst Regional High in Grade 9.
6. A small sampling of graduate students and students who withdrew from optional programs were interviewed
7. A parent meeting was held in each of the family of schools to allow parents an opportunity to give input into the review process. Subsequent to these meetings, I received input via e-mails from many parents.
8. School Board personnel responsible for optional programs, (i.e. the two consultants and the coordinator) were interviewed and consulted regularly.
9. School Board officials were interviewed: The Superintendent, The Director of Programs and all four Family of Schools Supervisors.
10. It was difficult to consult with Canadian Parents for French (CPF) as, unfortunately, no chapters were still in existence. However, a few former CPF members attended the parent meetings. I was also able to attend the founding meeting of the Chignecto Chapter prior to Christmas break at Spring Street Academy.

INTRODUCTION

The review process of the optional French Second Language (FSL) programs offered in the schools of the Chignecto Central School Board began at Spring Street Academy on November 06, 2010. I conducted my first interview at 8:00 am. It was with the resource teacher and the interview was supposed to take about 15 to 20 minutes. As it turned out, it took a bit longer than the time allotted as the resource teacher had so much that he wanted to tell me and I, of course, wanted to hear what he had to say. So, I was late for my next appointment. In fact, I was late for every one of my interviews as invariably teachers wanted to talk and the time allotted was never long enough, even though we were now allotting half an hour. Teachers wanted to tell me their concerns about the programs in the schools, but even more so, they wanted me to know how well their students were doing, how successful their programs were, how proud and happy they were and how concerned they were that their programs might be cut. This very first experience with the teaching staff set the tone for the entire review process. To put it simply, I got an earful. I was warmly received by all, everywhere I went. I had access to students and classrooms. I saw classes in action. I interviewed students in their second language. I heard from parents. I talked at length with administrators who are always straight shooters and who shared with me their opinions and concerns. I certainly gained an insight into the world of optional second language programs in the CCRSB. I was able to put my finger on the pulse.

Optional French Second Language programs are fragile. They require constant nurturing and promotion. In an area where French is actually a fact of everyday life, such as in and around Moncton, the parents and children in the Amherst area see almost daily the French reality. They know the value and importance of French as a second language. In areas far removed from this, it is a very difficult thing to convince everyone that a second language is necessary. That is why it is necessary to constantly show parents and students the value and importance of learning a second language. As we live in an officially bilingual country, it behoves us to promote French. As optional FSL programs are relatively new in comparison to our core curriculum, i.e. Math, English Language Arts and Social Studies, optional programs take some time before they are completely implemented as an integral part of school programs. In a system such as the CCRSB where it appears to me that the optional programs are highly successful, promoting and showcasing the successes of these programs would go a long way to increasing inscription in the program and letting students know of these options.

Optional programs are also effective. They produce results. At the end of any optional program students are able to carry on a conversation in their second language for thirty minutes with a total stranger. Of course they will always demonstrate varying degrees of proficiency, but they can communicate, oft times very effectively. These students are able to move on to a work or secondary study situation in their second language anywhere French is spoken: Université Sainte-Anne, Montréal or Paris. If we are serious about affording our children an opportunity to

actually acquire French as a second language, optional programs are the way to go; especially Immersion programs. Core French programs can be effective but there is not enough time spent in the target language to allow a significant degree of language acquisition.

But, optional programs always come at a price. They may self stream, which means students in optional programs often come from homes where education is valued and French as a second language is perceived as an asset. Students in optional FSL programs are generally highly motivated, successful academically, enjoy school and are involved in many aspects of school life. They are leaders in many ways. However, I must state here, that these optional programs are certainly no longer elitist, as we once thought they were. We know that virtually any student can succeed in an optional program and acquire the language. Therefore, and correctly so, our programs are open to any student. Nonetheless, this self streaming impacts upon any school that houses an optional program. What is even more impactful is class size. Optional FSL classes tend to be smaller once the students advance beyond the entry points, i.e. Primary or Grade 7. Small class sizes in the optional programs may mean larger classes in the English stream. There is always the question of being able to hire qualified staff. Housing an optional program increases pressure on schools and their administrators. At high school scheduling becomes more difficult in order to provide all the options for students. However, if one is aware of these phenomena, measures can be taken to mitigate the negative impacts on schools. This report will hopefully shed more light on this issue.

If I were to address the question: “Is it worth it?” I would have no hesitation in answering: “Yes, absolutely!” I am aware of the concerns surrounding optional programs and I myself have lived through many of the experiences associated with many of the aspects of the impacts. Teachers and administrators have shared with me their concerns. But they have also shared with me their enthusiasm for the optional programs and they have told me many good things about them. I have also been privileged to speak in French with many youth who have gone through optional programs in six of the high schools in the CCRSB and I know the success these students have had in acquiring French as their second language.

The provincial government, through its department of education and in conjunction with the federal government’s Road Map to Linguistic Duality endeavour, has entered into a five year agreement to promote and enhance FSL acquisition in the public school system. To support this endeavour, the federal government will provide funding in excess of 15 million dollars and the province is obligated to make a contribution as well. This funding ends in 2013. This year alone there will be \$1,235,812.00 allocated simply to maintain early, late and middle immersion programs from kindergarten to Grade 12 in 140 of the province’s 409 schools. With this kind of financial commitment to optional programs from our Federal and Provincial Governments, it is every Board’s responsibility to make every effort to maintain and support optional programs to the best of its ability.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

While I was conducting the review, gathering information and input from as many stakeholders as possible, I informally identified what I called indicators of success that would guide my review and keep me focused. It soon became apparent that even though there were certain areas of concern, overall the optional programs are successful and are achieving the results that one would want and expect. However, as most of the information garnered is empirical and not always based on facts and statistics, these indicators of success played an important role. Indicators of success will do just that; indicate to the reviewer whether or not the system under review is actually producing successful results. The indicators I chose were: teacher job satisfaction, student performance, parent satisfaction, administrative support and board support. Allow me deal briefly with each of the indicators.

1. **Teacher job satisfaction:** Almost to a person, teachers are highly satisfied with their jobs and often were insistent about how much they liked their jobs. They certainly liked their students and constantly bragged about their performance. It would be great to be able to say that this was universal, but as one might expect, there are some teachers who, usually for professional reasons, are not satisfied with their current assignment or placement in a particular school. But overall, this is exceptional. Unfortunately, the atmosphere in the schools at the time of the interviews was one coloured by the Minister's announcement about the 22% trimming exercise. Of course, many teachers thought my review was all about cuts. As such, one might expect this negativity to therefore colour the interviews. Such was not the case. Teachers were enthusiastic and regaled me with anecdotes about student performance. They also identified areas of concern which soon became commonalities in all schools. I will deal with these later. None of this was ever presented or perceived as complaining. It was more so a statement of the "status quo" and suggestions for improvements. Yes, the teachers are satisfied and happy with their jobs. This does not preclude that improvements or changes could not be made to enhance student success.
2. **Student performance:** One of the most revealing indicators is student language proficiency. I have been trained in conducting the oral proficiency interview that is part of the evaluation process of all students in Grade 12 in New Brunswick. I have conducted many interviews with students in the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board. I have a very informed idea of where students in optional programs should be at the end of their program in Grade 12. I, therefore, conducted interviews in high schools across the Board and I can say with assurance that students are achieving at the levels of language proficiency that one would expect if the programs in schools were working as they should. Students in the integrated program achieved at the level expected for students in that program. Those in the Immersion program achieved at the levels anticipated. There were few surprises. Very few students seemed to underachieve. Several students were performing at levels above expectations. All of these results indicate clearly that the optional programs are achieving the results desired. I can say they are working because the students exiting from these programs are performing at

the levels of proficiency that are normal for the program or they are exceeding them. This is a huge indicator of success.

3. **Parent Satisfaction:** Parents are very concerned that the board is using the review as a way to recommend cuts to optional programs. They were adamant that the board needs to increase access to optional programs. They expressed their concerns about the lack of course options within the optional programs at the secondary level. They voiced the need for more professionals to be hired who not only speak the language but are trained in specific subject areas. I took all of this to be positive. To me, these comments are indicators of a high degree of parent involvement in the programs. It also indicates a degree of satisfaction with the programs. When asked what they thought of the current programs in their schools, they were quick to praise them. In fact, the impression I got after the four meetings with parents was that they are so satisfied with the programs that they want to protect them and see them grow. They perceive them as a very good thing that must be kept in their local schools. They want their children to be able to continue to access them. In fact, parents see them as an essential part of their children's education.

4. **Administrative support:** The administrators accept optional programs as a fact of life and as an integral part of their school's curriculum. And without question! Yes, there are problems that always come along with any optional FSL program, but not one administrator admitted or said to me that it was not worth the effort to maintain them as options for their students. Administrators identified two major areas of concern; class size and the sustainability of programs. These issues are not uncommon and, in fact, are seemingly attached to any optional FSL program clear across the country! What I found refreshing and encouraging was the commitment of administrators to the optional program in their schools. Not only did they see them as an essential feature of any public school system in an officially bilingual country, they also saw them as an effective way to offer strong options to students seeking to enhance their language and employable skills. I saw again and again a willingness on the part of administrators to seek solutions to problems arising as a result of small class sizes or course conflicts. Administrators play a crucial role in the success of optional FSL programs. In schools where there is strong administrative support, these programs succeed and students have access to the courses necessary to complete their language acquisition. This does not occur without a great deal of good will and hard work. I was impressed by the high degree of support for and the high degree of the understanding of the particular needs of these optional programs from administrators.

As I stated, there appears to be very strong administrative support for optional programs. The importance of this fact cannot be stressed enough. CCRSB principals are compliant and give their support and understanding to the particular needs of the optional programs housed in their individual schools. This is not to say that they did not express frustrations at the difficulty often engendered by declining enrolments in these programs.

It is a phenomenon that in schools where there is little administrative support for optional programs or there is even open opposition to them that programs fail. FSL staff members are unhappy and students suffer as professional energy is wasted by staff in simply keeping the program alive. In schools where the administration is supportive and understanding, staffs are able to offer a program that allows students to succeed and acquire a much better degree of linguistic proficiency and competency. Also, in schools where FSL programs are successful, guidance or program advisors do not suggest that students drop out of optional programs in order to pursue studies in maths and sciences. Administrative support of optional programs is crucial and all members of the administrative team play a role. This can be accomplished by openly supporting FSL teachers and their programs, in timetabling, in the advice they give to students and in showing an understanding of the particular needs of FSL programs, such as field trips. “Timetablers” have to be aware of the need to avoid course conflicts. Students often seek to enrol in many courses and when this creates a conflict, they may drop out of the optional program. Students may feel that they have no choice but to drop out of the FSL program so that they can get a credit that is a requirement for a program in university. When these conflicts arise it is often the case that the “timetabler” will make the necessary adjustments that will remove the conflict. This does not happen all the time and unfortunately there are times when it is impossible to remove the conflict. Nonetheless, it is indicative of administrative support for optional programs that it occurs at all and that it occurs often.

5. Board support: I want to deal this in two parts. First of all, there is the board support that is offered by the services of the two consultants, Jana Oldreive and Cheryl Anne LeLièvre, and the coordinator, Velma LeBlanc-Dunn. The feedback I received from teachers and administrators was extremely positive. What I heard time and time again was that a teacher would ask for materials or ask for an answer to a pedagogical question and they would have a response by no later than the next day. Service to teachers appears to be not only timely but effective and pertinent. Although this degree of satisfaction was not always evident in the Celtic Family; overall, teacher’s needs are being addressed. Material supplies are delivered when requested. Professional development is of good quality and timely, although there appears to be a need or a desire for a change in direction, moving away from literacy to more grade level and subject area PD and networking. The two consultants and the coordinator offer invaluable support to teachers and administrators. Their value to the optional programs and service to teachers cannot be underestimated. I will suggest to you that they are all three of them, overworked.

Secondly, there is the support offered to optional programs by the Board itself. Although the public may sometimes challenge the Board’s support offered to optional programs, there is little doubt of their support amongst those involved in the delivery of the programs. There appears to be clear indications of the Board’s intent to offer and support optional FSL programs to the best of its ability. Decisions made by the Board in

support of optional FSL programs indicate willingness and a conviction on their part to continue to support those programs in place. In light of current decisions being made at the Department level, it is incumbent on all to realize that Boards are often faced with making extremely difficult decisions. It would appear that the Chignecto Central Regional School Board weighs as many factors as it can obtain in order to make informed decisions and act in an equitable and responsible way with the public's money.

These, I feel, are very good indications of success. This educated opinion is, of course, based on many hours of interviews conducted with those who are the closest to the action. Not once did I ever have a red flag raised. The "feeling" I received was consistent and it was overwhelmingly positive. One cannot rely solely on "feelings" which is why I used these five indicators of success to organize my review and guide it. I can say with confidence that, although there are areas of concern that need to be addressed, overall, the optional programs offered in the schools of the CCRSB are strong, viable and effective. As they say, the proof of the pudding is in the tasting. In this case, it is in the proficiency of the students at the end of their programs. The CCRSB has every right to be satisfied and proud of its programs because the students leaving the optional programs at the end of Grade 12 are able to communicate effectively in French. The programs are working.

AREAS OF CONCERN

The optional FSL programs are successful. But, does this success come at a price that the Board cannot afford to pay? Is it, in the long run, worth it?

Let us now look at the issues that arose as areas of concern from the review. I have identified four:

1. Class size and sustainability
2. Middle Immersion in the Celtic Family of Schools
3. Increased access to programs
4. Program promotion

1. CLASS SIZE and SUSTAINABILITY

This is without a doubt the number one issue in schools. It is, unfortunately an issue with any optional FSL program in every educational jurisdiction across Canada. It is not unique to the CCRSB. Class enrolment figures for elementary and junior high/middle level attached to this review report indicate that there is a significant decline in student participation in optional programs. It is difficult to get figures for high school but, it would appear that declining enrolments are an issue, particularly in Grade 12.

There are many factors that bring about this decline in enrolment. I will mention the more significant ones and refer to my recommendations for ways to alleviate or decrease this decline.

There appear to be points in the continuum where there are significant declines in enrolment. Any time there is a change such as from one school site to another or from elementary to middle level/junior high to high school and especially entry into Grade 12; many students seem to seize this opportunity to withdraw from the program. There are some indications as to why students will take advantage of this opportunity. I would suggest that there are often students enrolled in optional programs who are there for the wrong reasons. On another note, because they are encountering difficulties and there is no support for them, students feel it necessary to withdraw from the program. When a major change occurs such as moving from one building to the next or from one level to the next, it seems to provide these students with the opportunity to make the difficult choice of withdrawing.

What do I mean when I suggest that there are students who are in an optional program for the wrong reason? The perception exists that optional programs are self streaming and as such provide a better academic atmosphere for learning. Because of this perception, that only good students are enrolled in these programs, some parents will enrol their children in the program for this reason only. At the Grade 7 level, they will sometimes oblige their children to enrol in an optional program even against the wishes of their children. These children are often very unhappy in the program and will look for the first opportunity to withdraw. This is unfortunate and will account for why students may withdraw from a program. Happily, it is not widespread. There are many parents who enrol their children in an early immersion program in Primary and they may as yet be unaware of any learning difficulties their children may have. When a learning difficulty is diagnosed, it is assumed that the child will receive remediation and possibly resource. However, this does not always happen. Help is first sought from the teacher delivering the program to that student. This happens because there is, more often than not, no one else in the school who can offer help in the target language. If it is not possible to help the student with a learning disability, it is often difficult for the student to experience success in all aspects of school. If this continues, the student will more than likely withdraw from the program at the first opportunity, often from Grade 6 to Grade 7, or when moving from one school to the next. This phenomenon will also occur for students who enrol in the integrated program in Grade 7 where any remediation falls on the shoulders of the teacher. Differentiation does not always help all students so once again, the easiest solution is, for the student to withdraw from the program, usually in Grade 9.

There is a serious roadblock for students once they enter high school and the credit system takes effect. Students in an integrated program are required to have six credits in the target language. Students in any immersion program are required to have nine. This is often a very difficult thing to do. Scheduling and time tabling often make course selection a very onerous task for students trying to get all their credits. Often, they have to make difficult decisions as many of their FSL courses are backed with credits they either want or need. There is still the perception that students need to take all the Math and Science courses that they possibly can so that they do not close any doors of opportunity. Therefore, many students will opt out of or they will have no choice but to withdraw from a full slate of FSL courses. This impacts upon class size and often accounts for why FSL classes are so small. Small class size makes time

tabling and scheduling more difficult and many high schools have little choice but to limit the possible number of options. Many administrators are aware of this dilemma and take steps to alleviate the problems as much as they are able. Nonetheless, this continues to be a problem and accounts for smaller class sizes at high school. This is reflected in declining enrolments.

It has been suggested that there are too many options for students at high school. Parents would disagree and say that there are not enough. There is of course a middle ground. If students knew that by taking as many Maths and Sciences as possible, they were actually closing doors instead of opening more, they might take a closer look at course selection. Once students were enrolled in any optional program, they need to be convinced that it is worthwhile continuing. The promotion that occurred when they were considering entry into a program should not let up. Teachers need to promote their programs and show students the benefits to be derived from remaining in them. Students are very aware of the value of programs and will not make decisions lightly. If a program is of value, they will stick with it. If high schools offer a quality program, many, but not all students, will sacrifice other courses to remain in the optional program. Or so they told me!

There are no easy solutions to declining enrolments in optional programs. Perhaps the best way to do it is to once again do a promotional campaign that showcases student success in language acquisition. They need to be convinced that it is possible to gain enough language skills to be able to communicate effectively with Francophones and to be able to function effectively in a Francophone environment, be that work or study at the university level and that they are able to do all this in the schools of the CRSBB!

However, there comes a time when a critical point has been reached. Let's make a hypothetical case that there is a Grade 5 early immersion class of 12 students at a school. The English class has 29. There are 8 students in the Grade 4 Immersion class. Projected enrolments for the next year show that maybe there will be five students enrolled in the Grade 4 Immersion program. Let's look at another scenario. It is Grade 7 and there are 31 students in the English stream and only 10 in the integrated program, and only two full time equivalents (FTE's) to deliver the programs. At a local high school there are five students in Grade 12 Géo-Planétaire. These hypothetical problems are more often than not realities that administrators have to deal with. What do they do?

To cut the program for any given year makes a huge hole in the entire program that will only exacerbate the problems. To maintain them with these student numbers and class size impacts very negatively on students in other classes. I feel that administrators need guidelines. It would be a very good idea for the CCRSB to develop a set of procedures or policy that would guide administrators in making such difficult decisions. If numbers were healthier, bigger, these problems would not exist and administrators would not always have to be coming up with, on their own, innovative and creative ways to protect and preserve programs that have proven themselves to be of great value, to be assets to their schools.

When talking about sustainability and the retention of students in optional programs, it cannot help but be a numbers game. This is an administrator's reality. I have every reason to believe that administrators and Board staff, i.e. the Family of Schools Supervisors, the Director of Programs and the Superintendent, believe in and support the optional FSL programs. However, these optional programs are only a part of the responsibilities of the CCRSB and given the current atmosphere in which the Department of Education has mandated a 2% cut in funding to Boards; it is obvious that cuts have to be made. It is in times like this, that decisions have to be made in consultation with all the stake holders and that cuts, when they are made, are cuts made where there are no other options and where every effort has been made to make informed decisions based on due consideration. To make any cuts in the optional FSL programs is not a recommendation as most of the programs are effective and viable. There may need to be consideration made for restructuring or consolidating programs. However, there are schools where optional programs do not impact on staffing or class size, where the programs are healthy and growing. To cut them would be a grave error. Optional FSL programs need to be protected. If the cuts in funding necessitate cuts to these programs, it will decrease parent confidence in them and they will not enrol their children. If a program is cut for a year or two, it acerbates the problem of sustainability. It creates holes in the continuum, making course offerings even more difficult. Once cut, it is very difficult to bring them back and to cut any support to these programs, such as the consultants and the coordinator, would be ill conceived as they are not a huge cost item to the Board because of the federal and provincial funding available. The support they offer the teachers delivering the programs, be it professional development or supplying materials or being a pedagogical resource, is absolutely essential.

These problems are not unique to the schools in the CCRSB. As far as I have been able to ascertain, they exist in all systems, not only across the province but also across the nation. However, these problems are not insurmountable. Solutions can be found, either in creative timetabling or in making accommodations that allow students to continue in the optional program. The fact that optional programs exist through to Grade 12 in almost every one of the schools housing optional FSL programs in the CCRSB is an indication of the commitment in schools to see the programs stay as options for students who wish to complete their FSL programs.

2. MIDDLE IMMERSION IN THE CELTIC FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

Enrolment figures indicate that there is a significant decline in student numbers in the middle immersion programs in the Celtic Family of Schools. There are several factors at play here. First is the general decline in overall enrolment across the family. This would have to show up as a proportionate figure for students in the immersion program. Secondly, the recruitment of students for these programs in the feeder schools may not be as effective as it was. Moving their children away from a community school where transportation is not provided is a huge deterrent to parents. Do the feeder schools encourage or discourage their students from enrolling in the immersion program at West Pictou Consolidated, A. G. Baillie Memorial, or F.H. MacDonald Elementary? The question certainly needs to be asked. Next, uncertainty as to the sustainability of the program in high school may also be factor and as such would discourage

parents from enrolling their children in the program. Another factor is course conflicts and course selection. This is a very serious issue in the two high schools. The fact that there are two programs competing for the same number of students at Northumberland Regional High School translates itself in to small classes. The International Baccalaureate (IB) program and the immersion program appeal to the same students and it is difficult to do both. Small class sizes in both of these programs means larger classes elsewhere. It also puts further strain on the ability of the school to offer its core program, not to mention any enrichment.

In the spring of 2009 the decision was made to cancel the Grade 4 middle immersion class at West Pictou Consolidated as there were not enough children enrolled to offer a viable class. At a later date, the Board reversed its decision and allowed a combined class to be created, therefore, reinstating the Grade 4 class. The Board is to be lauded for this reversal as it allowed a body of students entry into West Pictou's successful immersion program. However, promising it may appear that combined classes can offer solutions to administrators who want their students to have access to immersion programs, the fact remains that not enough students are enrolling in the middle immersion program to make it sustainable later on in high school.

The evident solution is to increase the number of students who enrol in the program. It might also be advisable to increase access to the optional programs. If numbers do not increase and if the enrolment figures continue to decline, there may be no choice but to discontinue an optional program. It might also be advisable to decrease the number of sites and the number of optional programs. Although this is seen as being deleterious to the program, it could nonetheless allow enhanced success and consolidation of the programs that remain. They might end up being more sustainable. However, there are measures that can be taken to address the matter in a more positive and proactive way. These are presented in my recommendations.

3. INCREASED ACCESS TO PROGRAMS

This is an issue of grave concern to parents. They want increased access to optional programs which means that they would like to see more schools offering programs. It was even suggested that there should be access to optional programs at all schools in the CCRSB. Many parents also suggested that it would be good to have easier access to the programs that exist.

In order to increase this access, it would have to be shown that the programs that would be put in place would have enough student inscription to make them sustainable. As the sustainability of current programs is in question, it does not make a great deal of success at this time for the CCRSB to look at increasing access to programs. It is the Board's responsibility at this point in time to find ways to strengthen the programs they currently are able to offer. If this cannot happen, the Board will most likely have to be faced with making the difficult decision to cut programs because there are not enough students in the programs for them to be sustained. Declining enrolment has created concerns about the number of students who both enter the programs and who decide to continue with them in high school. I feel this problem supersedes

the idea of looking now at increasing access to programs, notwithstanding my recommendations for the programs in the Celtic Family.

Many parents were concerned that the Board was not providing transportation for students to immersion programs. Unfortunately, for some parents, that as much as they would like to enrol their children in an optional program, they are unable to do so because they cannot get their child to a school site where a program is housed. This is an issue that any board finds difficult to deal with to the satisfaction of parents because it is a cost issue. The CCRSB does allow for some courtesy bussing where it is effective and doable. However, to look at increasing bussing for students to be able to access immersion programs at this point in time is not something I would recommend. The CCRSB bussing policy for its optional French programs is not at all out of line with what is common practise in the province of Nova Scotia.

In the future, if the funds are there, if parent demand is great enough and current programs are more sustainable, the CCRSB may certainly want to look at enlarging its optional FSL programs and thereby increasing access to them.

4. PROGRAM PROMOTION

The CCRSB provides parents with information and description of its optional FSL programs and the location of the school sites where these programs are offered on its website. In January, the consultants, administrators and teachers start their visits to schools to inform children about the optional FSL programs. There is often information sessions held in the evenings for parents, especially if it is about an early or middle immersion program. Announcements about these meetings are often published in local newspapers and are sometimes posted in day cares. It is in this way that the CCRSB officially and in a structured way informs parents and students about the options available for enriched French language acquisition. I might suggest to you that this is not enough.

Let's look at what also happens.

Placing a child in an immersion or integrated program is to take a risk with your son or daughter's education. Let me present a perception that exists in the minds of many parents who decide not to enrol their child in an optional program. At any entry point, but certainly at the primary level, parents worry about abnegating their duties and responsibilities as "co-educator" to a teacher who speaks a different language. While they are in this fragile state, feeling vulnerable, they are prone to rumours and stories from acquaintances about the optional programs. More often than not, they hear about that one teacher who.....or even more scarier, about what happens at high school. The program will be cut or phased out by the time their child gets in Grade 7. There are no choices at senior high. Why would anyone put their child in a **French** program? Don't send a child to that school! The Math they learn is no good! Their English will suffer big time!

This may seem like raves and rants, but I can assure you that this kind of rumour mill is very much in operation. This scares parents and is often a deciding factor in not enrolling their children in optional programs.

If you look carefully at the attached statistics that deal with the performance of Grade 6 immersion students on Elementary Literacy Assessment (ELA) and Elementary Mathematical Literacy Assessment (EMLA), it is clear that these students out-perform their colleagues in the English stream. This, categorically, puts to rest any of the rumours about students not performing as well in Math and Language arts. Much of the fodder used in the rumour mills is based on fear and misunderstanding and yes, occasionally bigotry. Nonetheless, it needs to be contradicted. Parents need to be assured that their children will not be lost to them and that they will receive every bit as good an education as everyone else, but with a bonus; they will be able to communicate in French.

The question of promotion may seem to be unnecessary. Parents will figure things out for themselves. However, if the information is on the website, why are parents not better informed? Why is there declining enrolment in the programs at West Pictou Consolidated and F.H. MacDonald Elementary? Why are students no longer moving from G.R. Saunders Elementary to A.G. Baillie Memorial for the middle immersion program? Why are the numbers of enrolments not as high as they used to be? Is it due to a general decline in enrolments? Why are class sizes so small in high schools?

I am bringing this to you as a major area of concern. As I have suggested elsewhere in this report, optional programs need to be constantly and effectively promoted.

It seems to be relatively easy to implement optional French Second Language (FSL) programs. This is because of the hype caused by the promotion that goes on at the time of implementation. Usually a program is implemented because there is pressure from the parent community to see a program put in place. Federal monies are usually available making staffing easier and minimalizing negative impact on the school that will house the program. It is after this initial blush that the problem of maintenance comes into play. Enrolment numbers decline and administrators are faced with making difficult decisions: do they or do they not continue a program where enrolment numbers do not justify another class starting in September at the school's entry point?

I would suggest to you that a way to alleviate this is with a promotional campaign that showcases results, promotes the positive and counteracts the negative. Recreate that buzz that was so exciting when these programs were first implemented. The Board cannot afford to think that well, our programs are implemented and now they can take care of themselves. Enrolment figures might indicate otherwise.

By Way of Concluding

So, is it worth it?

Yes, there are concerns that need to be addressed. Some of them are urgent. In times of cuts to board budgets, all programs come under the gun. Tough decisions have to be made. With this in mind, I urge the Board to proceed with caution when it comes to making decisions that will impact on FSL programs. Yes, optional FSL programs appear to be fraught with problems that put pressure on schools and the systems that support them. This cannot be denied. Nor, is it abnormal or exceptional. I have been careful to point out that what is happening here is happening right across the country. So, when one looks at the product that is being turned out, if I dare to use that metaphor, no one should deny that it is worth it. The contention is made that students in optional FSL programs become better students. The results from provincial standardized testing bear this out. They are better problem solvers. They like a challenge. They are better learners. They are independent learners who, very early in the game, find ways to figure things out for themselves, to become self reliant. The enhanced development of critical thinking skills is yet another “bonus” of an optional FSL program.

I would venture to suggest that the programs offered in the Board’s schools compare favourably with programs anywhere else in the province. I have no facts to back this up, but my 38 years of experience with FSL and my intensive look into your system, lead me to believe that the CCRSB has optional French programs that are worth both nurturing and preserving. Where the good will and conviction exist to offer and maintain optional programs for students who will take an active role in the future of our bilingual country, ways are found to solve the problems. In our continually shrinking global village, a second language is no longer a necessity. Now, it is not good enough. But it would be, perhaps, frivolous to consider a third language option at this time. Go with what is already good and strengthen and nurture it. Your students will thank you as they will be much better equipped to face a future full of languages, both here in Canada and across the World. Students equipped with a second language are very employable and much sought after.

Yes, it is worth it.

WHAT TEACHERS HAD TO SAY

This is a summary of comments and other feedback garnered from over 100 interviews with the NSTU staff delivering the optional programs in the schools of the CCRSB. The interviews were conducted in schools. A common set of questions was asked to all teachers so that there would be some commonalities and consistency in the procedure. The first time a teacher saw or heard the questions was during the interview. At first 15 to 20 minutes was allotted for the interview. As every interview far exceeded the time allotted, the period for each interview was extended to one half hour. Teachers were very appreciative of being included in the review and expressed their gratitude for being consulted, for being given an opportunity to provide input and feedback; for being given a voice.

The professional staffs offering the programs in schools are of high quality and competency. There is no doubt that this is the result of high standards implemented in the hiring process. Teachers are motivated, enthusiastic and happy. Many teachers stated time and again how very satisfying they found their work and that they were very happy in their jobs. Job satisfaction is very high.

1. There is very little communication with other schools in the same system. There is virtually no consultation between the teachers of the students who move from one building at the end of Grade 6 to another building to continue their studies in Grade 7. It would appear that the only time student progress and programs are discussed is at transition meetings that occur usually once a year, in June.
2. There is strong support from the Board staff responsible for the optional FSL programs. The consultants and coordinator are said to be visible and helpful. "They are only a phone call away". "I call one day for resources and the resources are here the next day". Such comments are indicative of the high level of support provided to the NSTU staff by central office staff. A need, however, was expressed for more intense support and closed attention paid to programs in the Celtic Family.
3. There is also a high level of administrative support for both the optional programs and for the individual teachers who are delivering the program. Teachers were intentionally asked to comment on this point as administrative support is critical in the delivery of successful optional FSL programs. Teachers are satisfied with the support they receive from the administration in their school.
4. Teachers are looking for a change in the focus of their Professional Development (PD). While they are appreciative of the PD they are receiving for literacy, the need is now for both peer consultations and subject/content specific PD. Often a grade level teacher in an optional program is the only one at that level in that school. This teacher has no one

other than his/her English colleague with whom to consult. While this is very much appreciated, the need was expressed for the FSL staff to be able to consult and confer on a regular basis (at least twice a year) with their peers/colleagues from other schools. FSL teachers often feel isolated and feel they are not able to benefit from the collegiality that English teacher enjoy. Once again, this is no to say that they do not benefit from the collegiality with their English colleagues. What is at issue here is that there are issues peculiar to FSL programs that can only be understood and discussed by and with other FSL colleagues. When these teachers do get the opportunity to get together, the results is an enriching of teaching strategies and eventually an increase in student achievement. What I am hearing is the desire to create FSL Professional Learning Communities (PLC's).

Further to this request, teachers again and again requested that some PD time be devoted to specific subject areas. Once again, optional FSL teachers are often isolated in schools across the region. Teachers of specific subject areas such as social studies at all levels or science or drama requested that time be set aside for them to receive Professional Development. Math does not appear to be an issue here as this area is well covered by the math mentor.

5. Notwithstanding the comments in number 4, it should be noted that there is a significant number of elementary teachers who make the time on weekends and afterschool times to meet with their colleagues from other schools to talk, compare notes, plan and share. Although this is of great benefit to the programs, teachers feel they should not have to always be doing this on their own time, as they often have young families and other obligations to attend to. There is never enough time in the school day to do it. Any teacher having to offer any kind of remediation during recess, noon hour, before and after school because there is no program support available feels very strongly the need for organized PD to be offered them during the school day that allows them to meet with their peers from other schools.
6. The Math Mentor Project has been hugely successful. I heard repeatedly how much Stéphane Duguay was appreciated and I heard stories of the effectiveness of his work with teachers at all levels. Because of the success of this project, teachers expressed the need to have something similar in literacy. Time and again I heard that after all the in-servicing that has been done and that after so many wonderful resources have been distributed, it is now time to implement. Many, many a teacher told me they need to see "what it looks like". In other words, they need someone who can show them in their own classroom how to put these strategies and resources into action. Mentors are invaluable as they work one on one with a teacher in his/her classroom. We cannot underestimate the effectiveness of the modeling that could be done by a mentor in literacy.
7. Teachers at the secondary level identified a serious problem caused by scheduling and course backings. As course selection and course offerings do not always work out, more often than enough students in optional programs are faced with making extremely

difficult decisions. Too often in order to get the courses they need for university, students are obliged to withdraw from the optional program because of course conflicts. Perhaps they must withdraw from a program because they cannot fit all the required courses into their schedules. For many students this is a heart wrenching decision as they have already dedicated many years to studies in their second language and now they may have no choice but to withdraw from the program. It is felt that guidance has a huge role to play here in advising students as they make their choice whether or not to continue in the optional program. It is important to note that this is not as bad as one might think as there are schools that are aware of the dilemma and take measures to mitigate as much as possible this very negative impact on optional programs. Nonetheless, it was a very common remark made to me at all secondary schools. Statistical reports about student enrolment in optional courses show declining numbers of students in optional programs in high school but at Grade 12 there is an alarming drop off. It is a serious and very real concern.

8. There is a wide spread feeling that many of the resources available as curriculum materials for students are not age appropriate. Many of the resources and materials distributed to teachers are intended for francophone students. Therefore, many of these resources and materials are beyond the ability of many students, in particular those students in the entry point grades. This was identified often as a concern by many teachers in middle immersion, late immersion and in the integrated program. Granted, there are literacy strategies that can give students access to this print matter, teachers nonetheless, observed that often many of the strategies have to be used over a lengthy period of time in order to be able to access the information in a very simple piece of print. Often, as a result due to curriculum pressures, these materials stay on shelves and are never used. Teachers are looking for print material that is easier for their students to access.
9. Many teachers in the early immersion programs in elementary schools wanted me to know that their classes are no longer composed of what was thought to be “la crème de la crème”. Their class makeup reflects a broad spectrum of students, from gifted, focused children to children with learning difficulties who may also have behavioural problems. No one anywhere throughout the system thinks that they have an elite class. Those days are gone. As all optional programs are open to any student, and as there is no screening process, the makeup of any optional class reflects a school’s reality of a wide range of abilities.
10. When asked about the progress being made by students in their classes, teachers almost to a person, reported that they used French exclusively as the sole language of communication and instruction in their classrooms and that their students had no difficulty at all to follow what they were saying. They rightly took this as an indicator of success. However, this is not the case in entry point classes because students have not yet had the time to acquire enough language for teachers to be able to use French only.

But, this period of time is very brief, sometimes lasting only a matter of a very few weeks.

As far as student oral production goes, the indication that I got from teachers is that after an initial period of grace, all students will communicate with them in some form of French in a relatively short period of time. In early immersion, this may take a full year, sometimes well into Grade 1. This is a very difficult thing to accurately describe as so much of it depends on individual student ability.

Actually, I saw nothing unusual or untoward here. The classes that I visited either arranged or as an unannounced drop in, indicated to me that most of the professional staff is in earnest and that their students use French at all times!

11. Teachers who deal with students in entry point classes sometimes expressed the need to put in place some kind of a screening process. There are always students who are enrolled or who enrol in an optional program who should not. The reasons stated were two: either the student was never motivated to learn the language but his/her parents want their child in the program, or the student does not have the ability to be successful in the program without intensive program support. Some teachers feel that the previous FSL teacher should be allowed to make recommendations and flag certain students.
12. Teachers need qualified substitutes. It is too often the case that they have to prepare extensive lesson plans in English for the substitute who cannot speak French. If a teacher has to be out for a long term leave, such as a maternity leave, this can and does have a very negative impact on their program if a qualified substitute cannot be found.
13. In elementary programs, a number of teachers expressed the concern about the development of the oral language skills of their students. There is a great deal of emphasis on communication and literacy skills, but how does one make the transfer from this to the introduction of the language code in such a way as to increase and enhance oral production. Otherwise, there is a real fear of fossilization (a point reached in oral language production that a student never surpasses) and the perpetuation of error.

Teachers would also like some kind of guidance as to how to increase student vocabulary. I got the feeling that somehow, despite all the emphasis on literacy, there is some kind of a disconnect. Teachers want to increase student vocabulary and language structures. They also want to be shown how to go from oral work in early elementary work to reading and writing.

14. Many teachers reported to me how happy they were that their administrators go out of their way to make French visible in their school. School assemblies are conducted in both languages. Students in optional programs participate in school concerts and perform in French. The National Anthem is presented in both languages, and often Mi'kmaq is heard as well. Signage is in two, if not three languages. When a stranger

enters their schools, it is evident from the get go that there is an optional FSL program in the school. It is so important that the FSL presence be celebrated and visible. It means that the program is an integral part of the school. It also demonstrates that French is real and recognized.

Unfortunately, this is not the case in all schools. Some administrators are taking measures to make improvements in this area. Some schools do not reflect this reality.

WHAT PARENTS HAD TO SAY

Parents in each of the four Families of Schools were consulted. A notice/ invitation was sent out in advance and in hind-sight we now realize that perhaps the notices of meeting were distributed too close to the event date. There was a common complaint that there was not enough lead time to enable parents to make plans for attending the meetings. Nonetheless, I felt there was always a very good cross section of parents who gave me a good representation of many points of view. I was pleased with the number of parents who attended each session. Often the weather was inclement, in fact pouring rain. Parents who could not attend the meetings were encouraged to send me their comments electronically and I received a good number of e-mails.

The same procedure was used in each of the four meetings to provide commonalities in procedure and consistency. After introductory remarks were made, I explained to parents the procedure to be followed, a procedure I thought would allow for maximum input in a short period of time. A think/pair/share activity was used. Parents were given a sheet of five questions that they were to answer individually in writing on a question sheet provided. Then, each parent was invited to share his/her responses with a partner. Next, in groups of three or four, the answers were shared again. This time, a scribe recorded the responses and commentaries on the comment sheets provided. At that time, in the whole group, the reporters from each group shared the responses and comments for all to hear. At the end of the evening all the comment sheets were collected for further study.

Here is a summary of the comments and feedback provided by parents.

1. The use of the word optional to describe the FSL programs in question was a hot item. It was felt that this terminology made it too easy for school officials to look at these “optional” programs when the time comes to make cutbacks in education. Parents would prefer some kind of nomenclature that would reflect rather the importance of FSL programs, rather than one that suggests that they are somehow ephemeral or expendable. The implication is that the program is always at risk.
2. There was universal praise for the optional programs that currently exist in the schools that house these programs in all families. Parents indicated a high degree of satisfaction with their children’s progress and they often reported how they marvelled at the ease

and facility with which their children used their acquired language. Parents are satisfied with the teaching staff and the programs. They reported that generally their children were happy in school.

3. There are many benefits to be derived from participation in an optional FSL program. Many times parents reported first and foremost, how thrilled they were with the language abilities that their children have acquired in school. They were happy that their children would be able to function in a bilingual country and be able to take advantage of the opportunities that will await them in the future, living and working in Canada.

They also stated that, after language acquisition, what impressed and pleased them was the development of critical thinking skills and problem solving skills. They were also happy that their children were becoming independent learners.

4. There was a very serious concern expressed about the lack of resource, educational assistants, and program support for students in the optional programs. They feel a need for much more program assistance. Many parents were concerned about the apparent loss of reading recovery in Grade 1. They were adamant that they wanted it back.
5. At all meetings, there was a demand that the CCRSB increase access to optional programs, especially for those parents who live in areas where transportation to a program at a site is not possible. Parents want the Board to provide transportation for students to sites that are currently inaccessible. Many parents cannot provide transportation as they work or do not have a second vehicle. They felt deprived of the opportunity to enrol their child in an optional program. Bussing is seen as a way to provide equitable access to optional programs. Not living in a school's catchment should not deprive parents of access to that school's optional program.

It was further suggested that optional programs should be available at all schools.

6. The selection process for entry into a program drew a little fire. If there is an oversubscription at any given year for an entry point, the policy is to do a draw or a lottery. This is perceived as being very unfair. What parents fear is that their child may not be selected but another child whose parents only want their child to be "in the right class" and who are not motivated by language would be chosen. Parents seem to prefer entry criteria and screening.
7. There were concerns expressed about what happens to the quality of the program once students arrive in high school. There is not a great deal of confidence in the ability of high schools to offer quality courses with qualified teachers. Parents are concerned that course selection becomes problematic as there are not enough options, there are too many course conflicts and/or there are not enough qualified personnel.
8. Parents do not like the uncertainty that surrounds the optional programs. They want guarantees that the programs will be there for their children when they reach high

school. Parents fear that the optional programs will be cut. They hear “stories” or rumours about what happens in high school. They want reassurance. They want accurate information. They want quality and consistent programs with qualified professionals all the way through to Grade 12. Often, this insecurity means that parents will not enrol their children in the programs.

9. Parents would like to see more opportunities for their children to use French outside of the classroom. They would like to see extra- curricular activities available to their children.
10. Parents think that there needs to be more accessible resources. In some cases, parents simply want more access to materials. This appears to be an issue when it comes to reading material being sent home or being available in the school’s library.
11. Parents expressed a concern about merging students from different streams into the same class in high school. For instance, they do not feel it is fair to put integrated students in the same class with late immersion students.
12. Parents would like to see more integration of their children with the rest of the children in their school. It is sometimes felt that immersion students spend too much time together and that they need exposure to other students. Avoid too much segregation.
13. A few parents attended these meetings as they mistook them for information sessions. They have found it very frustrating getting accurate information about the optional programs. It is a concern amongst all parents that there is not enough promotion being done. They want better access to information about the programs. No one said they found anything on the CCRSB website.
14. There would appear to be a concern about class size in elementary schools where there has been oversubscription on an annual basis. Large class sizes have resulted and parents do not like that immersion classes can be so large whereas the cap kicks in at a lower number for English classes. These parents seem to prefer a better pupil/teacher ratio (PTR) than what their children are currently experiencing.
15. There are not enough qualified substitutes, that is, trained professionals who can speak French.
16. When asked what parents could do to help support the optional programs, they seemed to be at a loss for how to respond. Here is a chance for CPF to play a role. Local chapters of CPF can help parents and organize them in ways that provide very good support for teachers and the optional programs.
17. There are many reasons why parents will enrol their children in the optional programs. Here are a few of them:
 - a. Improved opportunities for employment

- b. Exposure to cultural enrichment
- c. Appreciation of a different culture, increased tolerance and promoting multiculturalism
- d. Family heritage
- e. Neural pathway development
- f. An academic challenge for their children
- g. Being together with higher achievers
- h. The opportunity to work towards becoming bilingual
- i. At primary, it is the easiest way for an English child to learn a second language
- j. Other ways of knowing and learning
- k. Skills are transferable. Children become better learners.

WHAT ADMINISTRATORS HAD TO SAY

As stated elsewhere in this report, administrators play a very important role in the delivery of the optional FSL programs. As the chief educational officer in a school, they are ultimately responsible for the programs. If they believe in them and they actively work to support and nurture the programs in their schools, the optional programs have a much better chance of success.

I was able to interview an administrator in every school that houses an optional program. I am convinced that there exists a very high degree of support from administrators for the programs in their schools. If they were not supportive it was because there are factors such as enrolment figures that do not allow the program to be offered in that school. Administrators shared with me their concerns. They had concerns as no optional program seems to come without increased workload and inherent problems typical of any optional FSL program. But, I never encountered from an administrator any unreasonable opinions or unfounded negativity. In fact, I found the level of support for the programs to be very high and there was a great deal of good faith and enthusiasm expressed. Many administrators told me how proud they were of their programs. They also stated that these programs were an asset to their school. Some even suggested that they were a drawing card for their school.

The following is a summary of what administrators had to say. My comments are based upon what I found to be the commonalities in their comments.

1. There was almost universal high praise for the commitment and the professionalism of their FSL staff. Yes, here and there, due to either methodology or language proficiency there may be problems with some staff members that deliver the program. But basically and happily, administrators are more than pleased with their FSL staff. If there was a real concern here it would be to have more numbers of qualified staff and greater access to qualified substitutes.
2. Administrators are aware that there is a real concern around program support for students in difficulty. There is inadequate support for learners in optional programs who have learning difficulties. Yes, there are programs such as Reading Recovery and there are here and there resource teachers either part time or full time. Often teachers are obliged to offer resource and program support, either as a part of their assignment or on their own time. Even so, there is not enough support. I was told that even though there may be sufficient allocation for resource at a school there are not qualified professionals available. So, there cannot always be provision for resource time for students in optional programs in all schools. It is simply not possible to offer the same support in FSL optional programs as it is in the English programs.
3. Administrators in three of the Families of Schools were very satisfied with the services offered to them and to their teachers, themselves and their programs by the consultants/coordinator. A degree of concern expressed within the Celtic Family. It was felt that there could be more attention paid to their schools.
4. Enrolment figures are a concern in many schools as these figures are declining. This makes the task of sustaining optional programs an ongoing problem. The major impact is reflected in class sizes. Declining enrolments mean small class sizes in many optional programs, especially in middle level/junior high and high school. This, unfortunately, impacts on class size in the English programs and often means much larger classes. There is also the impact of streaming and the subsequent makeup or composition of classes, a direct result of optional programs. Staffing becomes a concern as well. Administrators have to deal with these issues as their job is to staff all programs in their schools. Sometimes there are no solutions and administrators must make difficult decisions about offering fewer courses and even about discontinuing programs. Even though these comments are a reflection of an administrator's reality, there was rarely any negativity. Administrators wanted me to know what they were faced with in housing an optional program and the difficulties that come along with sustaining it. Even so, there was still a high level of support for the programs. Administrators are willing to do the extra work that is required to sustain their programs. They believe in them.

Administrators in the Celtic Family are particularly concerned about enrolment figures in the middle immersion program. They see a real problem in sustaining a program that has fewer and fewer children in it every year. At this point in time it is sometimes a struggle to staff or maintain a program in their schools. As much as they like and

support the programs, they do not see a bright future for the middle immersion program if enrolment figures do not improve.

There is also concern expressed about the promotion process in this family. Feeder schools are sending fewer and fewer students to the middle immersion program. It was felt that perhaps improvements could be made in the promotion process. As enrolment figures are down in middle immersion in the Celtic Family, this is a concern that needs to be addressed. If improved promotion could lead to improved enrolment figures, the program would benefit.

5. Because of the pressures that optional programs put on schools, many administrators feel that too much is demanded of their FSL staff. In order to maintain programs, “creative” solutions have to be found. This sometimes means very large classes that are beyond acceptable pupil-teacher ratios (PTR). It sometimes means multiple grade levels in one class at high school. Teachers would rather do this than lose a program or see students denied access to courses. This increases the chances of either burn out or of teachers leaving FSL for English programs. Administrators are very appreciative of the extras their FSL staffs take on, but they are concerned about the stress it places on them.
6. When asked about PD, most administrators would welcome some kind of a session that would target what it means to have an optional FSL program in their school. What can an administrator do to better integrate the program in his/her school, to make the students feel that they are an integral part of the school? It may mean learning how an Anglophone administrator can enter a classroom and not compromise the French only rule. It may mean what can be done to make the school a bilingual one. There was interest expressed in this kind of PD.
7. In almost every case, administrators said that optional programs enriched their schools and provided valuable options for their students.
8. There were many other comments and suggestions made that were from individuals or a smaller group of individuals. Here are a some of them:
 - a. Hire itinerant program support professionals.
 - b. Decrease access to optional programs by reducing the number of sites and reduce the number of options.
 - c. Language proficiency or teaching competency: which is more important when it comes to hiring? Some would suggest that when it came right down to the wire, it would be better to ere on the side of competency.

- d. It is not good to have immersion students grouped together in the same class for so long. There is a concern that the immersion students should not be segregated, that they keep too much to themselves.
- e. Promote the optional programs more aggressively and celebrate more often the successes of the program and French culture.
- f. Middle immersion is preferable to early immersion as students have input in the decision to enrol or not. Also learning difficulties, if they exist, are usually identified by Grade 4.
- g. Take a closer look at courtesy bussing.
- h. Find ways to make the programs more appealing to boys.

INPUT FROM STUDENTS

Students are stakeholders. I have often found them to be blunt and honest whenever I ask them for their feedback or I seek their input. During the review, I was able to interview 54 students in all the high schools (7) that housed an optional FSL program. I hoped to accomplish two objectives. First of all I wanted to have a sampling of the language skills and abilities that they have been able to acquire in the schools of the CCRSB. In fact, this was essential to my review. If the students were not achieving acceptable levels of language proficiency, then there certainly are major problems in the system. I will say with assurance at this point that the students did demonstrate acceptable levels of language proficiency (see the table attached to this report in the addendum). Now, my second objective was to get again a sampling of student's opinions about the FSL optional programs in their schools. I was also very happy to have received input from a large number of students in the integrated program at Amherst High. When asked about student success in the optional programs, teachers felt that their students were achieving and meeting the outcomes prescribed by the Department of Education. Those students who successfully complete their optional programs are not huge in numbers. However, I can assure the Board that if there is not quantity, there is certainly, quality. The number of students who receive certificates indicating that they have successfully completed an optional program (integrated, early, middle and late immersion) may not be high. There are reasons for that. Often it is due to the fact that many students are not able to get all the necessary credits in order to receive their certificates because of course conflicts and or scheduling. Often they miss their certificate by one credit. Fortunately it is not an all or nothing situation. Students are able to continue in any of the optional programs even if they are unable to obtain all the credits necessary for a certificate.

Now, after having interviewed many students in French for a period of roughly twenty minutes, it is clear to me that they are able to communicate effectively in their second language, that the program is doing what it should. The CCRSB should know that their optional programs are producing students who are able to continue their studies at the university level in French

institutions; that they can communicate effectively with Francophones and that they are meeting the provincial outcomes.

The following is a summary of the comments gathered from student responses in the interviews.

1. On the whole, students are happy in their programs and were extremely appreciative of having had access to these optional programs.
2. There was a high level of enthusiasm demonstrated by the students for their programs.
3. Students are serious about language acquisition and because of this they are dedicated to completing their programs. When purposely asked about obstacles or road blocks to completing their programs, they admitted that these road blocks occurred mostly in high school and because of course conflicts. Most reported that they either sacrificed a course or in consultation with those responsible for the time tabling/scheduling in schools, a solution was found. Some were obliged to take courses on line. Others indicated that they were resentful that it was not always easy to get the credits they needed. They wondered why their credits had to be backed with advanced math or physics or advanced English. Some even suggested that many of their friends had dropped out of the program because of scheduling problems and course conflicts.
4. A few students pointed out to me one flaw in their programs. They were aware that their “grammar” was not what it should be. They would have liked to have had more of the linguistic code taught to them so that they would have been better able to speak and to write the language. Some students indicated to me that their teachers spent time on grammar in their classes and they seemed to suggest that it was time well spent.
5. When students in late immersion or in the integrated program were asked why they had enrolled in their program in Grade 7, just about all of them stated that it was important to be bilingual, and this for two reasons. First, they saw it as an asset for future employment. Second, they also stated that because they live in a bilingual country it is only natural that they should want to learn French. Just about all of them told me that it was their choice to enter the program.

When students in early immersion or middle immersion were asked why they remained in the program, they offered me the same answers.

6. All of the students that I interviewed that were not yet in Grade 12 clearly indicated to me that they had every intention of staying in their program of choice.
7. There was a high degree of satisfaction with their programs and with their teachers. Many teachers received high praise.

8. Many of the immersion students stated that they very much liked that they had been together in the same class since primary or since Grade 7. They said that that they were like a family. This is not surprising as these students learned quickly that they had to not only become self reliant, they also had to rely on each other for support and encouragement.
9. Many students reported on the role of cultural events. A trip to Quebec was often an incentive for students to enrol in an optional program. In some cases these trips cemented their commitment to learning French. There was no doubt in my mind after it came up again and again how important these cultural field trips are for students.
10. When I was able to talk with students who had withdrawn from an optional program, the reason cited was difficulty in subject areas that dealt specifically with content, such as Social Studies. These students felt they would receive a better education in English.

Let us now hear directly from students in an integrated program at a CCRSB high school. They wanted to actively participate in my review and in class one day their teacher allowed them to write me letters in which they stated their views about their program.

- a. At the end of six years of being in the program, Integrated French students are able to gain a better level of proficiency.
- b. I chose to remain in the integrated program by my own choice because not only had I learned a lot from it, but I actually enjoyed it.
- c. At my level, we don't have any frustrated students being forced to learn a language they don't want to, disrupting our learning.
- d. Since I have started this program I have been able to talk and carry on a conversation with a bilingual person.
- e. The money put into our French programs is worth it because it instilled in me and peers of mine a sense of accomplishment and determination to further my learning experience.
- f. I am in this program by choice and I am glad I decided to take it. I find you learn things so much faster.
- g. Next year I know I'm going to have a lot of schedule conflicts and I wish that they would resolve that.
- h. The integrated French program is a perfect example of how the country educates all patriots to be able to communicate and be successful.
- i. I myself have sacrificed things to be in the extended French program because I like it so much.

- j. I enjoy French not only because it's interesting but because it is a challenge and gives me a run for my money.
- k. It could be such a help and open up a lot more opportunities in my future, rather than not taking it and not getting those amazing choices.
- l. Having three languages or even two is the most helpful thing of life especially when you're in Canada.
- m. I think it is so cool to be able to speak a different language.
- n. Studies have shown that learning a second language correlates with higher academic achievement.
- o. Most of my classmates, like myself, understand the importance of an education and how well French can improve this education.
- p. If you cut this program, I'm going to be très fâché!
- q. Due to scheduling I was forced to choose between French and Physics. The only way I could do both was if I took Physics on line. Since I plan to use Physics for my career, I decided to not take Physics on line because I thought it would take away from me learning and understanding it properly. Therefore, I cannot continue the French program after this semester. Thanks to poor scheduling and the lack of importance placed on French, I am not getting the education and experience that I wanted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the insight gained through school visits and consultation with as many stakeholders as possible, I am making the following recommendations to the Chignecto Central Regional School Board for their consideration.

It is recommended that the following be **actioned immediately**:

1. Improvements need to be made to the CCRSB website so that parents can easily access information and description of optional programs, enrolment procedures and dates. It is a challenge to find information about the Board's optional FSL programs on the website.

By extension, I would also recommend that some form of print matter also be made available so that parents can have at their fingertips a description of the FSL options, enrolment procedures and dates. This print matter should then be distributed to all day cares and all elementary schools. It should also be included in all information packages distributed to parents who are enrolling their students in schools at any entry point where there exists an FSL optional program.

2. The full time and the part time consultants are not able to attend to all the needs of teachers delivering the optional programs because of the sheer geographical size of the Board. I strongly recommend that the part time position be increased to full time. The DoE continues to mandate initiatives and to offer quality PD. This increases the work load of consultants. As Federal and Provincial funds are allocated for these positions, the 30% of these salaries, which is the Board's obligation, is money well spent in support of optional programs. The work of the coordinator is invaluable in the support it gives to the consultants, to teachers and to optional programs. I also strongly recommend that this position be maintained. Contrary to what the Minister or some of the public might think, consultants work long and hard hours to provide services to teachers that ultimately impact upon student performance and success in a very positive way.
3. Keep the promise made to Spring Street Academy parents re: moving the early immersion students back from Cumberland North to Spring Street. This is especially important now with the boundary review for bussing having been completed. It is my considered opinion that parents understand that the solution of sending immersion students to Cumberland is only temporary. They also understand that the Board promised that once room was once again available at Spring Street that the students in Grades 5 and 6 would return to the school. This is an important issue with parents in Amherst. At the parent meeting held in Oxford, these parents made certain that I understood that though they were involved in the process of finding a solution to the overcrowding at Spring Street, the Board did not put one of their recommendations into effect.
4. Maintain the Math mentor and implement a mentor for literacy. There was such high praise and appreciation for Stéphane Duguay that it would be extremely demoralizing to see his services to teachers discontinued. Although teachers had praise also for their involvement with ELA Literacy consultants and mentors, they nonetheless expressed loudly and clearly that they need training and access to materials in French. After a time, exposure to materials and services in English no longer meet FSL teachers' needs. They want to be shown how to implement these great ideas into their classes. PD sessions can be impactful but they will be even more impactful if there is follow-up at the classroom level. Often, points raised in PD sessions are somehow forgotten once teachers return to their daily routine. It is a fact that often one day PD sessions are not as effective as one would hope. To get the maximum "bang for your buck", there must be follow-up support provided by trained professionals. It is strongly advised that a consultant or a mentor be put in place to assist FSL teachers with literacy in optional programs. Teachers want to be shown "what it looks like" in an immersion class room. This can be effectively done with the services of a French literacy mentor.

5. I strongly recommend that the CCRSB look into the implementation of the intensive French program at the Grade 6 level in any school where it could happen at no expense to the Board. The success of this program is twofold. Not only is it highly effective in FSL acquisition in the first place, it is also critical in increasing interest in FSL programs amongst students in Grade 6. It motivates students in the Core French program and, as a bonus, it has also proven itself to be effective in increasing literacy skills in English!

Although the program was not designed to be an entry point for optional programs, it certainly increases interest in them. As it is designed in such a way as to have minimum impact on the school in which it is offered, it is certainly worth implementing. One need only look at the success of the program at Uniacke School and at other schools throughout the province where it is still in the pilot stage to see what a gem of a program this is.

6. With the exception of the possible implementation of intensive French, integrated and or late immersion program in identified schools in the Celtic Family, and the possibility of changing middle immersion to early immersion programs in the Celtic Family, and notwithstanding recommendation #5, it is not recommended that the Board increase access to optional programs at this time in the other Family of Schools until all currently implemented programs are stable, sustainable and viable with healthy enrolment figures. Before the Board looks at expanding its optional programs, it must first consolidate and strengthen what it has in place.

I do not recommend that the Board look at supplying transportation to optional programs through bussing at this time. With the exception of recommendation #11, I feel that the Board cannot look at increasing its transportation budget in a time of budgetary cutbacks. Transportation costs would be prohibitive over the wide area that these services would have to be provided in order to allow for any kind of equity.

7. Reading Recovery® should at all costs be maintained as it provides an invaluable service to students at risk. It is recommended that Reading Recovery be implemented at the Grade 2 level. Intensive Short-Term Literacy Intervention (ISTLI) and Literacy 95 are very much valued by teachers in elementary optional FSL programs. As there are already concerns about the lack of support available to students experiencing learning difficulties, these two programs are viewed as essential. To cut Reading Recovery would be extremely demoralizing as teachers value it highly because of its impact on improving student performance. In a situation where there is little or insufficient program support/resource for students in optional programs, to cut Reading Recovery is unconscionable.

8. I recommend that the Board look into ways of accessing funds provided through the Five Year Plan to provide more support for its optional FSL programs. This is done through the Special Project procedure and through application for funding from the office of Marc Bannerman at the DoE. If the DoE through the Five Year Plan has access to these monies, the Board should seek out whatever “extras” it can get.
9. There needs to be an effort made to increase the number of cultural opportunities. Students in all optional programs at all levels need much more exposure to French culture. The Five Year Plan offers in excess of one million dollars from 2010 to 2013 for cultural exchanges between language groups for students in Nova Scotia. The reason for this is clear. When students are exposed to Francophones, especially to ones on their home turf, they become super motivated! The value of cultural experiences for our students cannot be underestimated as motivators. Students need to go on field trips to Louisburg or to Université Sainte-Anne so they can see firsthand that Francophones actually exist. Our students need to see that the language they are studying in school is something real and is used by other Canadians. It is also important for cultural groups such as Tintamarre from Sackville N.B. to be invited into schools.

When students in optional programs have the chance to interact with a native speaker, other than their teachers, their sense of accomplishment is absolutely remarkable. One brief little interchange of maybe fifteen seconds validates years of instruction in classrooms.

10. Course selection and scheduling at the Senior High Level often creates difficulty for students enrolled in the optional programs. It is strongly recommended that administrations in all secondary schools be aware of the impediments to student enrolment in optional programs caused by course selections/options and scheduling and that they take whatever measures possible to reduce this negative impact on student enrolment. It is also strongly recommended that the Board make access available to as many on-line immersion courses as possible. If a cost or fee is involved, this should not be the responsibility of the student, but the responsibility of the Board. In this way students who have difficulty obtaining the courses necessary to either obtain their immersion certificates or complete their language program are able to obtain what they need.

It is recommended that the following be **actioned in the 2011-2012 school year**:

11. I strongly recommend that the Board consider making changes to the optional programs offered in the Celtic Family of Schools.

In the Celtic Family of schools, there has been an identified problem for several years now around the issue of too many sites with declining enrolment figures and small class sizes at the high school level. At first glance it may appear that in 2010 there are too many sites and not enough students enrolled in the program to be able to sustain them.

In West Pictou there is only one school, West Pictou Consolidated that feeds its middle immersion program into Northumberland Regional High. Highland Consolidated Middle School sends students from an integrated program. As these students should not be placed in the same class until Senior High in content area, this often necessitates two streams. East Pictou has two sites (New Glasgow Junior High and East Pictou Middle School) sending students to North Nova Education Centre for one program only, middle immersion. There is no integrated program on this side of the county.

Both high schools are having difficulty maintaining the programs because the number of students in the programs is low and appears to be declining. It is somewhat easier at North Nova as there is only one program. At Northumberland, there are three optional programs, middle immersion, integrated and International Baccalaureate. There is also a late entry point of Grade 10 for the integrated program. These programs compete for enrolments from the same student pool. For this reason, there is more, often than not, small class sizes in all the programs, which puts a strain on staffing and course selection.

I suggest seven options for the Board to consider:

- (a) As there is a very strong integrated program at Highland Consolidated, it would make good sense to implement the integrated program at West Pictou Consolidated at Grade 7. In having the integrated program in both feeder schools this would send a stronger number of students to Northumberland Regional and provide greater equity.
- (b) It would also be advisable to look at implementing a late immersion program at West Pictou Consolidated, instead of an integrated program, if the demand were there. A second entry point is an excellent opportunity for parents to enrol their children in an optional program. Students in a late immersion program integrate very well with students in an early immersion program by Grade 10. For that matter, students in an integrated program can be included in classes that are content based with students in an immersion stream. This would not be advisable for language classes, although with proper and effective differentiation, it could work.

- (c) Another solution would be to implement an early immersion program to replace the middle immersion program at A.G. Baillie, West Pictou and F.H. MacDonald. The middle immersion program in the Celtic Family is effective but it is not recognized by the Department of Education. I would recommend to the Board that it consider looking at the change. This would provide a more equitable and consistent situation across the entire Board.
 - (d) Look into the possibility of implementing an early immersion program at G.R. Saunders as an additional site. At one time there was a significant demand from parents for a program at this school. As there is a high demand from parents to increase access to optional programs, it is advisable to look into this possibility once again.
 - (e) If the Board were to implement the intensive French program at G. R. Saunders and at West Pictou at Grade 6 in the Core French program, there would more than likely follow a significant increase in the number of students enrolled in optional programs at Grade 7. Any increase in numbers will help sustain the programs at high school.
 - (f) Implement a promotional campaign in this family to increase interest in the program and hopefully increase enrolment in the middle immersion program.
 - (g) If it is not possible to increase the number of students enrolling in the middle immersion program, it would be advisable to phase out the program at the site concerned and concentrate on optional programs at Grade 6 : intensive French and at Grade 7: late immersion and/or the integrated program. This however, would be very unfortunate as the middle immersion programs works and has produced students with strong French Second Language skills.
12. With the construction of a new school in New Glasgow, I recommend that the Board look at the possibility of Northumberland and North Nova High becoming magnet schools; Northumberland for IB and North Nova for immersion. Beginning in grade 9, students could be bussed between schools for the programs of their choice.

With the exception of the IB Program at Northumberland, there are parallel FSL optional programs at each of the two high schools. Each school has small numbers of students in their optional programs, especially at grades 11 and 12. Therefore, a possible solution for the problem caused by small class sizes would be to house all students in the immersion program at one school site. This would increase the number of students and increase class size, making staffing easier and make the program more sustainable. The distance between the two schools is not significant, so bussing the students to the program of their choice is not a big cost concern. It would also give students in the East Pictou side of this family easier access to the IB program.

13. Either find a way to house an integrated or enriched program at Oxford Regional Education Centre or gradually phase it out. The program has been phased out at the Grade 7 level this year due in part to declining enrolments which decreased the student pool. Enrolment numbers in all classes in the school are low. Yet, the program has been nurtured at the school and it has proven to be very effective. I recommend that a way be found to continue to house an integrated program at Oxford, possibly in an innovative way, to enable students to have access to this second language “option.” It would be very disappointing to lose this option at this school.

14. I recommend that FSL teachers receive in-servicing and Professional Development in the form of grade level meetings and in subject specific PD sessions with their peers from other schools. This will allow them to network. Although there was almost universal praise for current PD, teachers also strongly voiced their need to meet with their colleagues at their grade level or with subject specific colleagues. Understanding that a teacher is often the only one at a particular grade level in any given school, meeting with a grade level colleague cannot take place spontaneously as it often can with teachers in the English stream. The same phenomenon also occurs for subject specific teachers. As an example, the immersion Social Studies teacher at the Grade 9 level is often the only one in that school. Although these teachers and ones in similar situations always stated that they often met with their peers in the English stream, they still have a need to meet with other immersion/Integrated teachers to discuss and problem solve with their colleagues as they have particular needs and particular issues that do not exist in the English stream. Therefore, meetings for grade level teachers will have to be organized and facilitated by consultants and school administrators. The Oxford/Springhill/Parrsboro model is a great idea that could perhaps be duplicated elsewhere in the families of schools. Consideration should be given to the creation of PLC’s for FSL teachers at grade levels amongst schools and or in groups that are subject specific.

I also recommend that teachers make more effective use of PD funds available from the local NSTU and funds available through Family Networking Monies. Another possible way to augment this professional interfacing would be to establish an on-line communication forum to promote a French PLC.

15. Middle immersion teachers expressed a need for networking time that would allow them to consult at grade levels and in subject areas. They definitely need time together to review and assess materials available at the entry level, Grade 4. Middle immersion teachers feel that they are being neglected as it is not recognized by the Department. There is a perception that their needs are not being met. There is also a concern expressed by many teachers that resources are not age appropriate and that they need materials that their students, especially in Grade 4, are able to access. I recommend that the middle immersion program in the Celtic Family receive more services where possible. I again recommend that teachers make more effective use of the PD funds available from the local NSTU and funds available through Family Networking Monies.

16. The Board needs to find a more effective way of informing its public of the optional programs. It needs to find ways of encouraging parents to enrol their children in these programs. I would recommend a promotional campaign that showcases the successes of the program. This campaign should also be conceived in such a way as it dispels the fears that parents often have when considering enrolling their children in the optional programs. This campaign should also stress the benefits to be gained in taking these optional programs. The campaign should include testimonials of parents who have students in the programs. Student testimonials are even more important as they will help in convincing their peers of the value of learning a second language. The promotion of optional second language programs should not be perceived as preferential treatment of one program over many others. Optional FSL programs are exceptional in that they have not been mainstream courses or part of a core of essential courses such as Mathematics or ELA. The introduction and implementation of optional FSL programs has occurred relatively recently and they constantly need to be “sold” to parents and their children. Parents need to know of these options and they need as much information as possible in order to first of all be aware of the options and secondly be able to understand how they operate.

An effective promotional campaign and easily accessible information would encourage parents to enrol their children in the existing optional programs. Beefed up numbers of students in the program would go a long way to alleviating the problems now faced by secondary schools with small class sizes.

17. CCRSB needs to work closely with the Department of Education (DoE) when the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) are introduced. Other jurisdictions across Canada have been making attempts to implement some of the ideas of the CEFR and here in Atlantic Canada work is being done at Conseil atlantique des ministres de l'Éducation et de la Formation (CAMEF) to see what we will do in Nova Scotia. The CEFR will allow us to finally establish a common definition of levels of linguistic competence. As no official description exists in Canada of what bilingualism actually looks like, this is welcome. It is recommended that the CCRSB be proactive and find ways to prepare its FSL staff for the upcoming report of CAMEF re implementation of their version of the CEFR and ELP.

18. If time permits, the consultants and coordinator should obtain and record statistics from high schools that show student enrolment in all courses in all optional FSL programs.

APPENDICES

Optional French Second Language Programs

1. Integrated French
 - Starts in Grade 7
 - An enriched French language Arts component permits students to deal effectively with the Social Studies component
 - The Social Studies component parallels the English curriculum
 - In junior high/middle level, this program may be up to 30% of the students' time in class
 - In senior high, a total of six credits is necessary to complete the program and receive the certificate
 - In senior high, the content component parallels again what is offered in the English program. Course offerings may vary from school to school.

2. Middle Immersion
 - Starts in Grade 4
 - Approximately 80% of instructional time is in French in grades 4-6.
 - Until Grade 10 all subjects are taught in French, with the exception of English Language Arts, Music, Phys. Ed., (Family Studies and Tech. Ed. 7-9).
 - In junior high/middle level, instructional time is reduced to around 70%
 - In senior high, students are required to obtain nine credits in order to receive a certificate.
 - In senior high 50% of instructional time is in French

3. Late Immersion
 - Starts in Grade 7
 - 70% of instructional time is in French.
 - Until Grade 10 all subjects are taught in French, with the exception of English Language Arts, Music, Phys. Ed., (Family Studies and Tech. Ed. 7-9).
 - In senior high, students must take nine credits in order to qualify for their certificate
 - 50% of instructional time is in French in senior high

4. Early Immersion
 - Starts in primary
 - 90% of instructional time is in French till Grade 3
 - English Language Arts starts in Grade 3, reducing French instructional time to 80%
 - In junior high/middle level, the early immersion program is the same as late immersion
 - 70% of instructional time is in French for Grade 7 to Grade 9.
 - Until Grade 10 all subjects are taught in French, with the exception of English Language Arts, Music, Phys. Ed., (Family Studies and Tech. Ed. 7-9).
 - In senior high, the early immersion program is the same as late immersion
 - In senior high, students must take nine credits in order to qualify for their certificate

Enrolment Figures

CCRSB Early and Middle Immersion Enrolment Figures 2006 - 2010 West Pictou Consolidated to Northumberland Regional High Middle Immersion

Grade Level	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
4	14	25	16	12	23
5	25	13	21	17	7
6	18	15	14	17	14
7	21	19	16	13	17
8	19	20	19	15	13
9	19	17	14	16	15
10	21	21	23	18	NA
11	17	17	21	11	NA
12	18	15	20	10	NA
Totals	172	162	154	129	

A.G. Baillie to New Glasgow Junior High Middle Immersion

Grade Level	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
4	21	25	19	21	26
5	36	18	23	17	19
6	24	33	20	22	18
7	24	21	32	NA	19
8	22	20	17	NA	19
9	22	23	17	NA	21
Totals	149	140	128		122

F.H. MacDonald Elementary to East Pictou Middle School
Middle Immersion

Grade Level	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
4	26	23	21	24	17
5	20	26	21	21	27
6	24	24	24	21	20
7	21	23	16	19	18
8	16	20	19	15	17
9	17	17	18	19	14
Totals	124	133	119	119	113

Spring Street Academy to Cumberland North to
E. B. Chandler Junior High to Amherst Regional High
Early immersion

Grade Level	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Primary	NA	28	34	37	21
1	NA	28	28	30	35
2	NA	25	25	27	28
3	NA	23	23	24	26
4	NA	22	23	21	24
5	NA	19	21	22	21
6		15	19	21	20
7			14	20	21
8				14	20
9					15
Totals	Na	160	187	216	231

Truro Elementary to Truro Junior High to
Cobequid Educational Centre
Early Immersion

Grade Level	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Primary	25	28	40	28	21
1	27	23	27	45	29
2	25	26	23	25	46
3	17	23	26	23	26
4	19	16	22	28	21
5	26	15	15	20	22
6	23	27	NA	NA	18
7	23	22	NA	NA	16
8		25	NA	NA	13
9			NA	NA	23
10				26	NA
11					NA
Totals	185	205			

Elmsdale District Elementary to Riverside Education Centre
Early Immersion

Grade Level	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Primary	28	42	35	28	27
1	43	24	34	37	26
2	24	37	19	42	34
3	19	21	35	19	40
4	22	17	16	35	18
5		22	17	16	33
6			20	17	17
7				21	17
8					21
Totals	136	163	176	215	233

Commentary

1. Statistics can tell us many things at first glance. One must look more carefully at what they in fact do tell us.
2. It would appear that although there are schools suffering from declining enrolments, there are others experiencing growth.
3. To get a better picture of what is happening; one should take a primary class and trace the number of students in each succeeding year. One will notice declining numbers. This creates numerous problems for the school that houses the program, especially if the numbers of students in the English classes are significantly higher.
4. NA = not available. Notice the holes or missing statistics. It is important that the data obtained be up to date and complete. If figures are missing, it makes it very difficult to get a complete and accurate indication of what is actually going on in the schools.
5. We would have a clearer picture of declining enrolments if there were enrolment figures available for high school. However, once students enter the credit system, it is very difficult to track numbers.

School Based Results 2009 - 2010

Grade 6 Early and Middle Immersion School Based English Language Arts, Mathematics, and French Language Arts

Truro Junior High	Early Immersion	Meeting Expectations (3 – 4)	Exceeding Expectations (5)	Comments
School based results - final term	ELA			
	S&L	88%		
	R&V	94%		
	W&O	82%		
	Mathematics			
	NC	82%		
	PR	82%		
	SS	78%		
	DM	76%		
	FLA			
	Appr.	88%		
	R&V	77%		
	SL	95%		
	W&O	76%		

Key

ELA	English Language Arts
S&L	Speaking and Listening
R&V	Reading and Viewing
W&O	Writing and other ways of representing
NC	Number Concept
PR	Pattern and Relations
SS	Shape and Space
DM	Data Management and Probability
FLA	French Language Arts
Appr.	Appreciation of Language, Learning and Diversity

Provincial Elementary Literacy Assessment

Mathematics Literacy Assessment Results 2009 - 2010

Grade 6 Early and Middle Immersion Elementary Literacy Assessment (ELA) Elementary Mathematics Literacy Assessment Results (EMLA)

Truro Junior High	Early Immersion			Comments
ELA	Reading Overall	Cut Score 385		No data could be obtained for Truro Junior
EMLA		Cut Score 469		No data could be obtained for Truro Junior

School Based Results

2009 - 2010
Grade 6 Early and Middle Immersion
English Language Arts, Mathematics and French Language Arts

A.G. Baillie	Early Immersion	Meeting Expectations	Exceeding Expectations	Comments
School based results - final term	ELA			
	S&L	57%	29%	
	R&V	81%	14%	
	W&O	57%	29%	
	Mathematics			
	NC	91%	10%	
	PR	95%		
	SS	95%		
	DM	94%		
	FLA			
	Appr.	100%		
	R&V	91%		
	SL	100%		
	W&O	95%		

Key

ELA	English Language Arts
S&L	Speaking and Listening
R&V	Reading and Viewing
W&O	Writing and other ways of representing
NC	Number Concept
PR	Pattern and Relations
SS	Shape and Space
DM	Data Management and Probability
FLA	French Language Arts
Appr.	Appreciation of Language, Learning and Diversity

Provincial Elementary Literacy Assessment Elementary

Mathematics Literacy Assessment Results 2009 - 2010

Grade 6 Early and Middle Immersion Elementary Literacy Assessment (ELA)

Elementary Mathematics Literacy Assessment Results (EMLA)

A.G. Baillie	Early Immersion		Comments for students in the program	% of other students not meeting all the outcomes
ELA	Reading Overall	Cut Score 385		School Board Province
		35% 600 – 635 50% 504 – 588 5% 433 10% 349 - 361	All but 10% of students are meeting all the writing outcomes.	
EMLA	Math Scores	Cut Score 469 25% 617 – 691 40% 508 – 595 20% 460 – 491 15% 365 - 391	24% of students did not meet all the outcomes.	S 28% B 39% P 37%

School Based Results

2009 - 2010 Grade 6 Early and Middle Immersion English Language Arts, Mathematics and French Language Arts

Riverside	Early Immersion	Meeting Expectations (3 – 4)	Exceeding Expectations (5)	Comments
School based results - final term	ELA S&L R&V W&O	100% 88% 71%		
	Mathematics NC PR SS DM	71% 75% 95% 94%		
	FLA Appr. R&V SL W&O	94% 94% 100% 94%	6% 6%	

Key

ELA	English Language Arts
S&L	Speaking and Listening
R&V	Reading and Viewing
W&O	Writing and other ways of representing
NC	Number Concept
PR	Pattern and Relations
SS	Shape and Space
DM	Data Management and Probability
FLA	French Language Arts
Appr.	Appreciation of Language, Learning and Diversity

Provincial Elementary Literacy Assessment Elementary

Mathematics Literacy Assessment Results 2009 - 2010

Grade 6 Early and Middle Immersion Elementary Literacy Assessment (ELA)

Elementary Mathematics Literacy Assessment Results (EMLA)

Riverside	Early Immersion		Comments for students in the program	% of other students not meeting all the outcomes
ELA	Reading Overall	Cut Score 385		School Board Province
		12% 612 47% 504 – 588 29% 409 – 445 12% 325 - 361	All but 12% of students are meeting all the writing outcomes.	
EMLA	Math Scores	Cut Score 469 6% 608 12% 504 – 517 41% 404 – 460 24% 304 – 360 18% 256 - 295	82% of students did not meet all the outcomes.	S 49% B 39% P 37%

School Based Results

2009 - 2010
Grade 6 Early and Middle Immersion
School Based English Language Arts, Mathematics and
French Language Arts

F. H. MacDonald	Middle Immersion	Meeting Expectations (3 – 4)	Exceeding Expectations (5)	Comments
School based results - final term	ELA			
	S&L	100%		
	R&V	100%		
	W&O	95%		
	Mathematics			
	NC	90%		
	PR	80%		
	SS	90%		
	DM	75%		
	FLA			
	Appr.	80%		
	R&V	90%		
	SL	90%		
	W&O	90%		

Key

ELA	English Language Arts
S&L	Speaking and Listening
R&V	Reading and Viewing
W&O	Writing and other ways of representing
NC	Number Concept
PR	Pattern and Relations
SS	Shape and Space
DM	Data Management and Probability
FLA	French Language Arts
Appr.	Appreciation of Language, Learning and Diversity

Provincial Elementary Literacy Assessment Elementary

Mathematics Literacy Assessment Results 2009 - 2010

Grade 6 Early and Middle Immersion Elementary Literacy Assessment (ELA)

Elementary Mathematics Literacy Assessment Results (EMLA)

F. H. MacDonald	Middle Immersion		Comments for students in the program	% of other students not meeting all the outcomes
ELA	Reading Overall	Cut Score 385		School Board Province
		31% 600 - 612 63% 504 - 576 6% 277	All but 6% of students are meeting all the writing outcomes.	
EMLA	Math Scores	Cut Score 469 13% 617 - 621 31% 534 - 569 50% 434 - 495 6% 334	33% of students did not meet all the outcomes.	S 59% B 39% P 37%

School Based Results

2009 - 2010
Grade 6 Early and Middle Immersion
English Language Arts, Mathematics and French Language Arts

West Pictou	Middle Immersion	Meeting Expectations (3 – 4)	Exceeding Expectations (5)	Comments
School based results - final term	ELA			
	S&L	100%		
	R&V	100%		
	W&O	100%		
	Mathematics	100%		
	NC	99%		
	PR	95%		
	SS	94%		
	DM			
	FLA			
	Appr.	100%		
	R&V	100%		
	SL	100%		
	W&O	100%		

Key

ELA	English Language Arts
S&L	Speaking and Listening
R&V	Reading and Viewing
W&O	Writing and other ways of representing
NC	Number Concept
PR	Pattern and Relations
SS	Shape and Space
DM	Data Management and Probability
FLA	French Language Arts
Appr.	Appreciation of Language, Learning and Diversity

Provincial Elementary Literacy Assessment Elementary

Mathematics Literacy Assessment Results 2009 - 2010

Grade 6 Early and Middle Immersion Elementary Literacy Assessment (ELA)

Elementary Mathematics Literacy Assessment Results (EMLA)

West Pictou	Middle Immersion		Comments for students in the program	% of other students not meeting all the outcomes
ELA	Reading Overall	Cut Score 385		School Board Province
		50% 600 - 647 44% 540 - 588 6% 446	All students met all the writing outcomes.	
EMLA	Math Scores	Cut Score 469 6% 634 59% 504 - 595 35% 412 - 473	23% of students did not meet all the outcomes.	S 26% B 39% P 37%

School Based Results

2009 - 2010 Grade 6 Early and Middle Immersion English Language Arts, Mathematics and French Language Arts

Cumberland North	Early Immersion	Meeting Expectations (3 – 4)	Exceeding Expectations (5)	Comments
School based results - final term	ELA			
	S&L	100%		
	R&V	100%		
	W&O	100%		
Mathematics				
	NC	76%	14%	
	PR	91%		
	SS	91%		
	DM	86%	14%	
FLA				
	Appr.	72%	19%	
	R&V	95%		
	SL	100%		
	W&O	81%		

Key

ELA	English Language Arts
S&L	Speaking and Listening
R&V	Reading and Viewing
W&O	Writing and other ways of representing
NC	Number Concept
PR	Pattern and Relations
SS	Shape and Space
DM	Data Management and Probability
FLA	French Language Arts
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Provincial Elementary Literacy Assessment (ELA) and

Elementary Mathematical Literacy (EMLA) Assessment Results 2009 - 2010

Grade 6 Early and Middle Immersion

Cumberland North	Early Immersion		Comments for students in the program	% of other students not meeting all the outcomes:
ELA	Reading Overall	Cut Score 385		School Board Province
		24% 600 - 624 62% 516 – 588 14% 456 – 492	All students met all the writing outcomes.	
EMLA	Math Scores	Cut Score 469 5% 608 43% 512 – 591 43% 417 – 495 10% 395	33% of students did not meet all the outcomes.	S 41% B 39% P 37%

Language Proficiency Results

Program	Basic	Basic +	Intermediate	Intermediate +	Advanced	Advanced +	What one might expect
Integrated	3	15	12	2			Basic to Intermediate
Early Immersion Grade 9			1	1	3		Advanced to Advanced +
Early Immersion Grade 11					3		Advanced to Advanced +
Middle Immersion			3	2	4		Advanced to Advanced +
Late Immersion					5		Intermediate + to Advanced

Comments

1. On the whole, these are the results that one would hope for. They are satisfactory and indicate that the programs are working.
2. If any flags are to be raised at all, it might be in middle immersion where it appears that scores are not what one would like. In most cases here, these apparently low score results are due to student errors in the language code. By the time a student has achieved a proficiency level of intermediate, precision and accuracy in the language code and richness in vocabulary become critical factors. If a student cannot clearly distinguish between tenses in their discourse it impacts dramatically on communication. The structure of the language plays a very important role in communication. If I ask a question in the past and the student replies in the present, the correct message is not passed between the two speakers. If the student cannot use the correct subject pronoun with the verb, the results have to remain low. For instance, many times students will say “nous fait” and will also pronounce the s on nous. This is unacceptable for any placement beyond basic! However, one need not belabour this point as the goal is communication and all 54 of these students had no difficulty in conversing with me for an extended period of time, from 15 to 20 minutes.

A Look at Class Sizes in High Schools

SCHOOL	SUBJECT / PROGRAM	GRADE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
Northumberland	FLA Middle Immersion	10	16
Northumberland	FLA Integrated	11/12	30
Northumberland	Sciences Humaines Integrated	9	21
Northumberland	FLA Integrated	10	Two sections total of 46
Northumberland	Arts Dramatiques Immersion	10	16
North Nova	FLA Middle Immersion	10/11/12	19
North Nova	Géo Planétaire Middle Immersion	12	20
North Nova	Sciences Middle Immersion	10	19
North Nova	Arts Dramatiques Middle Immersion	10	24
North Nova	Histoire du Canada Middle Immersion	11	c20
CEC	Arts Dramatiques Integrated and Early Immersion	10	34
CEC	FLA Integrated	10	29
CEC	FLA Integrated and Late Immersion	12	8 Integrated 10 Immersion
CEC	FLA IB	11	22
CEC	FLA IB	12	6
CEC	FLA Integrated	10	28
CEC	Histoire Planétaire	12	5 Integrated 5 Immersion
CEC	Histoire du Canada	11	28
Hants East	Math Late Immersion	9	25
Hants East	Sciences Late Immersion	10	24
Hants East	Biologie Late Immersion	12	17
Hants East	Sciences Humaines Late Immersion	9	26
Hants East	Histoire du Canada Integrated and Late Immersion	11	13 Integrated 16 Late Immersion
Hants East	Arts Dramatiques Integrated and Late Immersion	10	30 no break down
South Colchester	FLA Integrated	9	20
South Colchester	FLA Integrated	10/11	16 no break down
Amherst	FLA Integrated	9	30
Amherst	Histoire du Canada	11	12 in grades 10 & 11 together
Oxford	Géo Planétaire Integrated	12	12 in grades 10/11/12 no break down
Springhill	FLA Integrated	10	12
Springhill	FLA Integrated	11/12	10 no break down
Springhill	Histoire du Canada	11	12
Springhill	Géo Planétaire Integrated	12	7

Comments

1. Unfortunately, I was unable to gather more information and statistics on class sizes in high school.
2. Although class sizes in FSL may appear to be smaller, it should be noted that there are classes as small or smaller in English programming. I was told that there is a class of two students in an IB class in one of the high schools. One needs to be careful about pointing fingers at what appear to be small classes in high school. In order to offer as many options as possible, schools are sometimes obliged to run smaller classes. In the long run, schools do the best they can to provide as many opportunities as they are reasonably able for their students. In a bilingual country, in a province which receives large amounts of federal monies to run FSL programs in our schools, it again behoves us to make every reasonable effort to maintain these optional programs for our students. More parents and students need to take advantage of these opportunities.
3. It should also be noted that, in some cases, there are no problems at all with the class size.
4. Note the number of combined classes. This is one “creative” or “innovative” way to solve the small class size dilemma. Actually, the school probably had no choice but to combine classes if the program was to be offered at all. This is a case in point of what it means to make difficult decisions.
5. It may appear as an anomaly that there are a few very big classes. Once again, there is little or no choice. This does not usually please parents. It certainly increases the work load of the teacher involved and decreases instructional effectiveness. In a course where French is a second language and the language of instruction, one on one interaction is essential. It is extremely difficult to do this when class sizes are big.