



Three-Year Strathcona County Engagement

French Immersion Engagement No. 1

What We Heard Report

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For:
Elk Island Public Schools

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Table of Contents

French Immersion Engagement No. 1 Executive Summary	3
Engagement No. 1	5
Engagement Feedback	7
Summary of Participant Responses and Key Themes	8
Summary of Feedback.....	17
Appendix 1	18
What We Heard Report Dotmocracy and Let's Talk Charts	18

French Immersion Engagement No. 1: Executive Summary



This high-level summary is designed to provide key information about French Immersion Engagement No. 1 and what was heard from participants. For more in-depth information, refer to the full report.

Focus

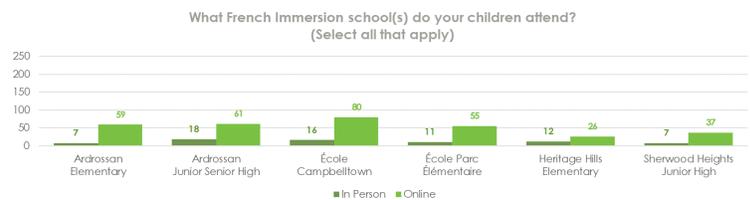
The focus of French Immersion Engagement No. 1 was to validate the themes that emerged during the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey. EIPS wanted to determine if those themes were still reflected in the values of the families, students and community members participating in the French Immersion program in 2022-23. To do this, the engagement activities were based on questions from the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey. Respondents were also asked to comment on the answers provided in the original survey, and to add to the responses.

Process Overview

French Immersion program families, students and community members were invited to attend a public engagement session at Heritage Hills Elementary on Oct. 26, 2022—between 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. The focus: To review the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey results, offer additional feedback and ask questions. Upon arrival, participants were welcomed and given a Wayfinder explaining the process. Participants also had an opportunity to access EIPS-prepared background information about the French Immersion program and the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey results—using a QR code. WMC team members were available to guide participants through the process and answer any questions. Also in attendance to answer participants' questions: EIPS trustees, EIPS senior leadership representatives, administrators from each EIPS French Immersion school and Division staff.

Who Participated?

In total, 46 participants took part in the in-person drop-in session. For the survey, 279 people started the online survey, and 236 completed the last mandatory question, meaning some questions were skipped or missed. All submitted responses are included in the analysis even if the respondent did not complete the entire survey. The breakdown of numbers by in-person and survey processes is also noted in the full report.



French Immersion Engagement No. 1 Executive Summary

Findings

Overall, the themes in the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey were validated by the feedback received through the Fall 2022 French Immersion engagement. An exception to this validation is found in Question 3 and is specific to respondents' support for keeping the French Immersion program in Ardrossan. Respondents in the 2022 engagement noted support for the Ardrossan location was not identified as a theme in the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey. Respondents were concerned this left them without the option to validate their support through the dotmocracy process. For this reason, they expressed their support through the open-ended feedback process.

For more in-depth information about the validation, including an analysis of the feedback gathered during French Immersion Engagement No. 1, refer to the full report.

Next Steps

A number of big ideas emerged that WMC suggests EIPS consider moving forward. These include:



Time and Distance

Regardless of the location of the French Immersion program, time and distance are factors for families. The theme is connected to some feedback, across the questions, that respondents want EIPS to consider a K-12 French Immersion option in each of the three major locations—Ardrossan, Fort Saskatchewan and Sherwood Park.



Quality of Teaching

The general consensus is respondents are happy with the quality of teaching their child(ren) receives in the French Immersion program. There was a call by some respondents for more supports at the high school level, including the opportunity to take options within the French Immersion schedule, taking options in French, and added academic supports—particularly for mathematics and science. As well, respondents wanted the ability to take only one or two core academics versus having to take all four. A number of respondents also commented they would like to see more French-speaking teachers and administration in the French Immersion programs.



Support for English-Speaking Families

Some respondents indicated they felt supported by their child(ren)'s teachers and administration. A number of the comments suggest parents would benefit from clear communication about EIPS' expectations for families entering French Immersion—for example, the level of support they can expect across all the programs, which would have implications for consistency across all EIPS' French Immersion programs.

French Immersion Engagement No. 1

The results for the French Immersion Engagement No. 1 are reported below.

Engagement No. 1

Western Management Consultants (WMC) worked with EIPS staff to develop a series of tools to advertise the French Immersion Engagement No. 1. Two digital media pieces were designed and shared with EIPS to advertise the session. In addition, EIPS drafted a letter addressed to French Immersion program families informing them of the session and providing the date, time frame and information about the process. For those who couldn't attend the meeting, or who wanted to provide additional input, the Division also sent families a followup letter with a link to an online survey. Both letters were distributed through EIPS communications channels and posted on the EIPS Three-Year Strathcona County Engagement: French Immersion [web page](#).

The focus of the engagement was to validate the themes that emerged during the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey. EIPS wanted to determine if those themes were still reflected in the values of the families, students and community members participating in the French Immersion program in 2022-23. To do this, the engagement activities were based on questions from the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey. Respondents were also asked to comment on the answers provided in the original survey, and to add to the responses.

Process Overview

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French Immersion Engagement No. 1 Wayfinder

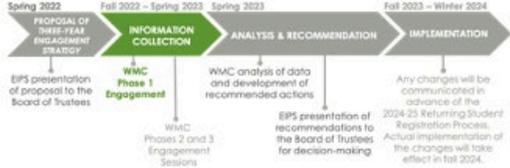


Three-Year Strathcona County Engagement
Let's Talk About French Immersion

What is the goal of this session?
To learn more about EIPS' junior high and senior high French immersion program and review feedback from previous consultation efforts.

What is the proposed change?
EIPS is looking at ways to improve French immersion retention at the junior high and senior high levels. Before any decisions are made about French Immersion, EIPS wants to hear from you – school families, students and community stakeholders.

Where are we in the process?



Your voice matters!
During this session, you will have an opportunity to learn more about EIPS' junior high and senior high French immersion program and review feedback from previous consultation efforts. Attendees will also have a chance to ask questions and offer feedback.

Please start at station _____



Three-Year Strathcona County Engagement
Let's Talk About French Immersion

Tonight's engagement session will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. You will have six opportunities to provide your feedback. Make sure to provide your feedback at each opportunity. WMC consultants are available at the stations to answer your questions.

FRENCH IMMERSION ENGAGEMENT 2018: HIGHLIGHT SUMMARY PROCESS

At each of the six stations:

- Which two key findings resonate most with you? (Dots)
- What additional comments, feedback or questions would you like WMC to consider when drafting the report? (Sticky notes)

SIGN-UP FOR EIPS EMAIL UPDATES
To receive updates from EIPS about the proposed change, visit: bit.ly/3NafLku

Following the session, WMC launched a Let's Talk French Immersion survey, designed to mirror the in-person drop-in public consultation session. The survey was shared by EIPS on Oct. 27, 2022—through the French Immersion web page and as a direct email to all French Immersion families and interested community members. The survey closed on Nov. 14, 2022, at 11:59 p.m.

Engagement Feedback

It is important for the integrity of the consultation process that consistent data is collected from all engagement forums. Therefore, the same questions were used for the in-person sessions and the online survey. There were, however, a few minor changes in the process and presentation of the online survey to help participants answer the questions consistently. For example, in both the in-person event and the online survey, the dotmocracy process was a required step. However, the dotmocracy process was slightly amended in the online survey to ensure participants could place dots on the same item, should they choose. Meanwhile, the Let's Talk open-ended responses were optional for participants—whether they participated in-person or online.

In total, 46 participants took part in the in-person drop-in session. For the survey, 279 people started the online survey, and 236 completed the last mandatory question, meaning some questions were skipped or missed. All submitted responses are included in the analysis even if the respondent did not complete the entire survey. The breakdown of numbers by in-person and survey processes are also noted.

A detailed summary of responses starts at page 8, "Summary of Participant Responses and Key Themes."

Feedback Processes: At stations 1 through 4, participants were given two dots and invited to read key themes from the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey results. They then placed their dots next to the two themes that resonated most. Participants had the option to distribute their dots in any way they wished—for example, both dots by one theme important to them, or one dot by one theme and one by another. For the online survey, participants chose from two drop-down menus and were required to select one theme from each. The two menus allowed participants to select two different themes or the same theme twice.

Station 5 and Station 6 did not include themes. Instead, the stations provided the opportunity for open-ended feedback about:

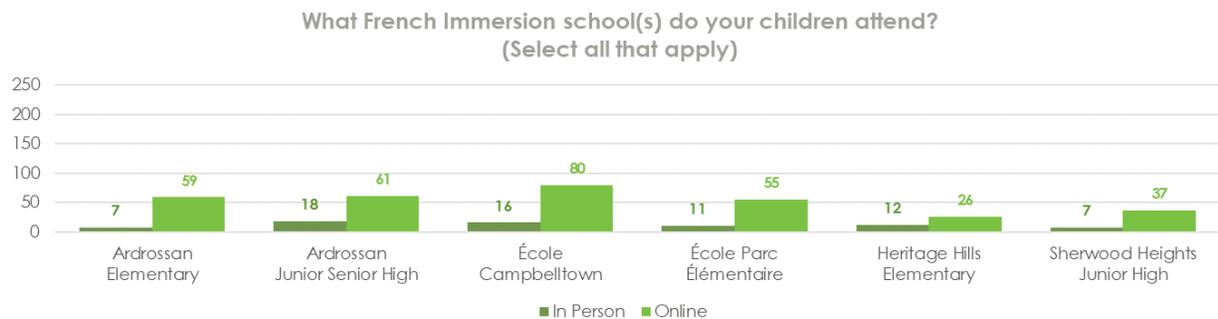
- how their child's French Immersion experience matched the expectations they had before enrolling their child; and
- how satisfied they are with EIPS' overall French Immersion program.

At each station, participants were invited to share final comments or questions they wanted EIPS to consider as the Division determines next steps for French Immersion programming (see pg. 18, "Appendix 1").

Summary of Participant Responses and Key Themes

What follows is a summary of the responses received through the engagement process. If three or more similar responses were received, it was identified as a key theme. It's important to note, several participants used each question to communicate their view(s) on one aspect of the process—for example, the location of the French Immersion program in Ardrossan. For this reason, the program's location shows up as a theme in several questions, regardless of whether it reflects a response to the question.

Demographic Data



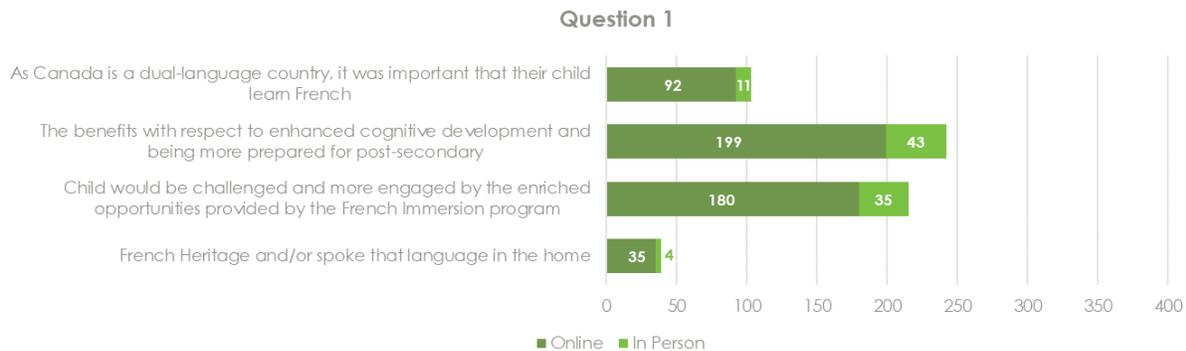
Analysis

- Overall, École Campbelltown had the highest representation with 96 responses, or 26% of its French Immersion enrolment, while Heritage Hills was the lowest with 38 responses, or 8% of its French Immersion enrolment. Similarly, if you consider the breakdown of the survey versus in-person responses for each school, École Campbelltown had the highest survey response rate at 83% and matched by a 17% rate for in-person responses. Meanwhile, Heritage Hills had the lowest survey response rate, 68%, but the corresponding in-person response rate was high, at 32%.
- NOTE:** École Campbelltown and École Parc Élémentaire are single-track French Immersion schools.

Question 1

The 2017-18 survey asked respondents to indicate the reasons for enrolling their child in the French Immersion program. In October 2022, respondents ranked those reasons. The following were noted as very important or important:

Dotmocracy Data: October 2022 engagement and survey



NOTE: The key themes were generated based on feedback from the 2017-18 parent engagement survey.

Open-Ended Response Key Themes

From the October 2022 French Immersion engagement efforts, the key themes that emerged from the open-ended feedback, include:

- Eleven respondents, 24%, noted the benefits of knowing a second language later in life.
- Six respondents, 13%, mentioned the fact Canada is a dual-language country.
- Five respondents, 11%, indicated they felt their child would be challenged and more engaged in the French Immersion program.
- Three respondents, 7%, indicated the benefits of enhanced cognitive development are important to them.
- Three respondents, 7%, noted learning multiple languages is easier when a child learns French.
- Three respondents, 7%, indicated the location of the French Immersion program in Ardrossan was important to them.

Other responses did not create a theme, but individually spoke to their strong desire to have French Immersion continue or be established in their communities. One noted they had moved school divisions to obtain French Immersion in high school, and two commented on the excellent reputation of teachers and support in the French Immersion program. One mentioned it was important school administrators or administration be fluent in French.

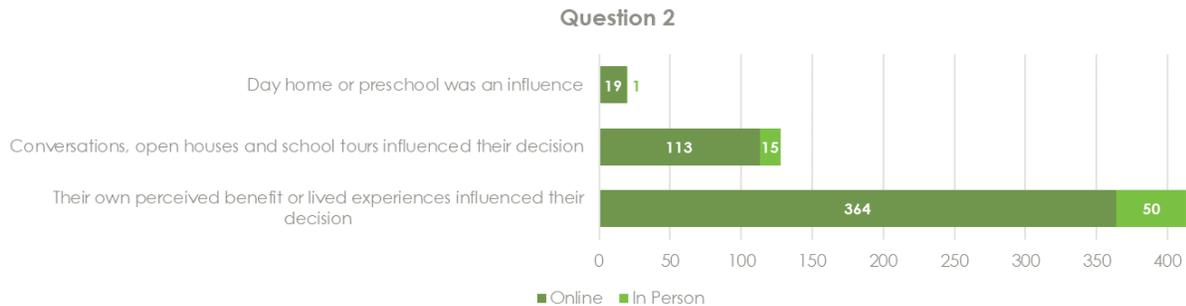
Analysis

- Overall, the four key themes from the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey were largely verified, with only one respondent's response indicating the four themes were not meaningful to them.

Question 2

The 2017-18 survey asked respondents to indicate the source of information that influenced their decision to enrol their child in the French Immersion program. Responses from October 2022 respondents are noted in the graphic below.

Dotmocracy Data: October 2022 engagement and survey



NOTE: The key themes were generated based on feedback from the 2017-18 parent engagement survey.

Open-Ended Response Themes

Thirty-six respondents provided comments in the open-ended session. Some respondents provided more than one comment, so 44 comments were recorded in total. From the participants' responses to the in-person open-ended feedback, the following themes emerged:

- Seventeen respondents, 47%, noted their perceived benefits or lived experience influenced their decision.
- Six respondents, 17%, indicated research into the benefits of speaking two languages informed their decision. It is important to note that, during the in-person engagement, 15 dots were added to this comment, indicating broad support for it. The flip chart pages for all questions are found in "Appendix 1."
- Five respondents, 14%, noted the French preschool program their child(ren) participated in was the reason for continuing in the French Immersion program.
- Three respondents, 8%, referenced discussions with family and friends as important to their decision to enrol their child(ren) in the French Immersion program.
- Three respondents, 8%, stated the location of the French Immersion program in Ardrossan was their reason for enrolling their child(ren) in the French Immersion program.

Other responses did not create a theme, but the location of French Immersion programs in the community and the quality of French Immersion staff were noted.

Analysis

Survey responses comprised 86% of the total, while in-person responses made up the remaining 14%. In Question 2, participants were asked to comment on the three items identified in the 2017–18 French Immersion Survey as having influenced a decision to participate in French Immersion programs. They placed dots on the items that were meaningful to them.

For two of the three responses, the survey to in-person ratio was like the overall survey breakdown noted above. However, the breakdown for “day home or preschool was an influence” differed with 95% of the responses coming from the survey, and only 5% from in-person contributions. It is not clear why so few of those who attended in person selected day home or preschool as an influence.

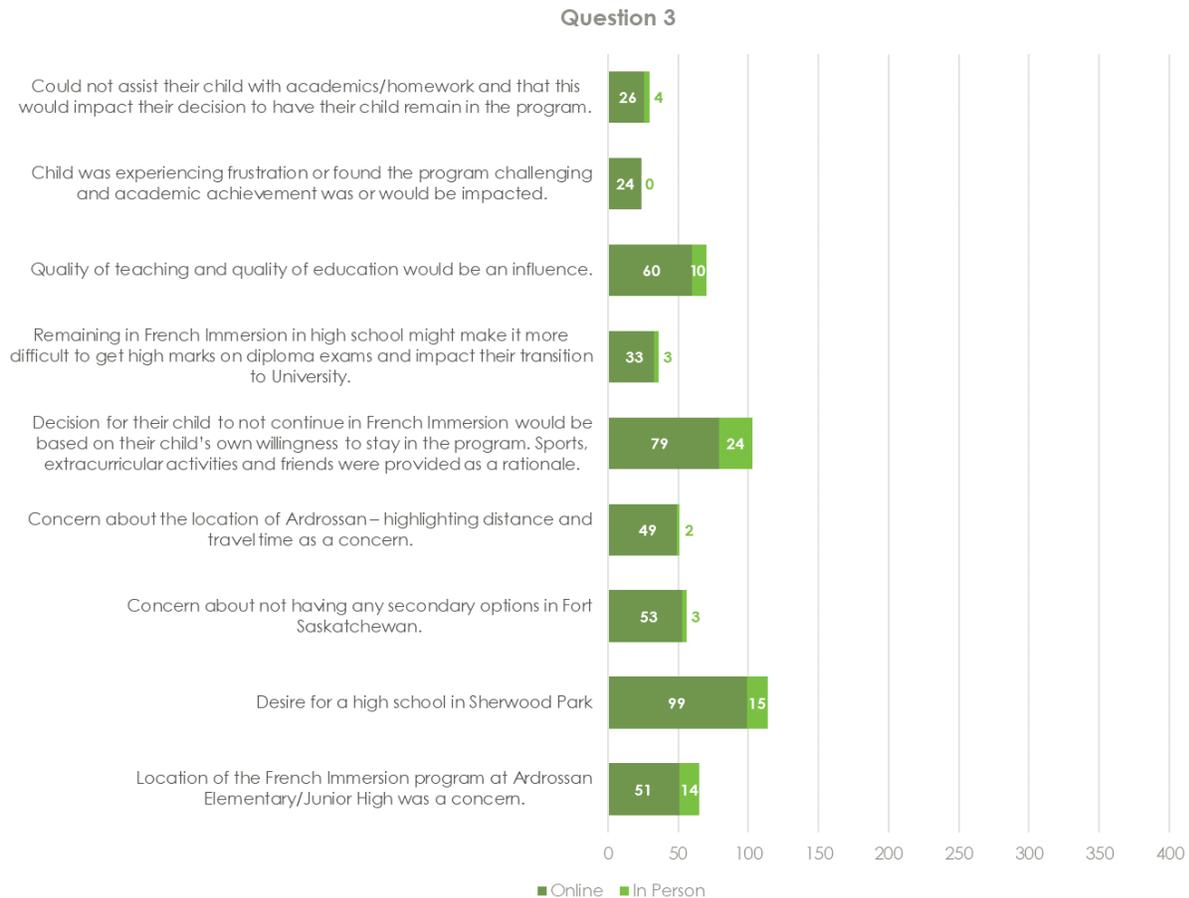
In both the response to the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey themes and the open-ended questions, personal experience and research into the benefits of speaking two languages were the major reasons for choosing French Immersion programs.

The 2017-18 French Immersion Survey themes were largely verified by the results of the 2022 survey with only minor deviations in levels of support.

Question 3

For respondents who indicated their child would not continue in the French Immersion program through to Grade 12, October 2022 respondents ranked the following reasons in order of their level of importance:

Dotmocracy Data: October 2022 engagement and survey



NOTE: The key themes were generated based on feedback from the 2017-18 parent engagement survey.

Open-Ended Response Themes

A total of 109 responses were received to the French Immersion Engagement No. 1 open-ended portion of Question 3, as part of the 2022 consultation process.

- Seventy respondents, 64%, offered feedback suggesting location was important.
 - Thirty respondents, 28%, said the location of the French Immersion program at Ardrossan Elementary and Ardrossan Junior Senior High was positive.
 - Thirteen respondents, 12%, indicated their support for a French Immersion high school program in Sherwood Park.

- Ten respondents, 9%, expressed their desire to have a junior high and senior high school French Immersion program in Fort Saskatchewan.
- Eight respondents, 7%, noted time and distance are a factor, regardless of the location of the French Immersion program.
- Five respondents, 5%, indicated they would move their child(ren) to Elk Island Catholic Schools if a Sherwood Park-based French Immersion high school option wasn't available.
- Four respondents, 4%, indicated the location of the French Immersion program at Ardrossan Elementary and Ardrossan Junior Senior High was a concern.
- Four respondents, 4%, expressed concern about the lack of support for high school French Immersion academics, including the lack of French-speaking teachers for some subjects.
- Four respondents, 4%, indicated the quality of teaching in the French Immersion program, across all grades, is a determining factor.
- Four respondents, 4%, noted their child's willingness to remain in the program will inform their decision.

Other responses did not create a theme, but comments included a child experiencing challenges in academic achievement, intent to move to Elk Island Catholic Schools if the Ardrossan program was not available, keeping a cohort together, previous failure of French Immersion programming in Sherwood Park, difficulty in accessing options or English classes in high school, and the negative impact of Grade 6 class size in future academic achievements.

Open-ended feedback highlights are noted below:

- The most significant feedback theme was about program location, which received 70 comments, 64%. The next most prominent theme was a lack of support for French Immersion academics in high school, and the quality of teaching in the French Immersion program, which each garnered four comments, 4%.
- Thirty comments indicated the location of Ardrossan Elementary and Ardrossan Junior Senior High was a positive—the majority of comments came from parents of children in Ardrossan Elementary, Ardrossan Junior Senior High and École Parc Élémentaire. There were no comments from École Campbelltown, Heritage Hills Elementary or Sherwood Heights Junior High in the survey responses. *NOTE:* It's impossible to determine school allocation from the in-person contributors, which totalled nine comments for the overall 30 for this theme.
- Four comments indicated the location of the Ardrossan Elementary and Ardrossan Junior Senior High was negative—three were from Ardrossan Elementary or Ardrossan Junior Senior High, and one from Sherwood Heights Junior High.

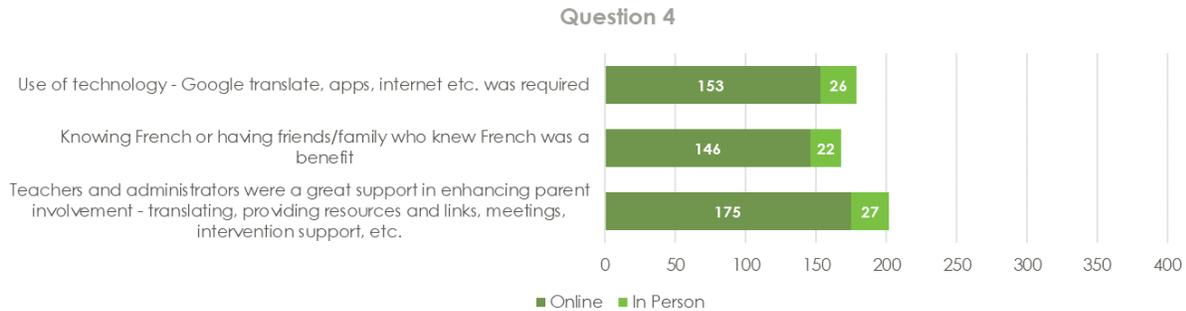
Analysis

Overall, feedback from the French Immersion Engagement No. 1 efforts verified the themes from the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey.

Question 4

Respondents were asked if they felt they have the support they need to engage in their child's learning even though the language of instruction was in French. Responses from the October 2022 respondents are as follows:

Dotmocracy Data: October 2022 engagement and survey



NOTE: The key themes were generated based on feedback from the 2017-18 parent engagement survey.

Open-Ended Response Themes

- Eleven respondents, 27%, reported the need for more support for parents—for example, three participants cited homework resources in English.
- Ten respondents, 24%, indicated they value the support they received from teachers and administration.
- Five respondents, 12%, indicated they know French or had family members who know French.
- Four respondents, 10%, noted they rely on technology, specifically Google Translate, to be able to help their child(ren).

Other responses did not create a theme, but included a comment on the difference between French Immersion programming and a francophone school, and a reference to teacher quality.

Analysis

Question 4 gathered the most consistent responses to both the dotmocracy data and open-ended sections. The percentage of in-person data was consistent at 15%, and there were fewer single-response answers.

Overall, the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey themes were largely verified with positive responses in excess of 150 dots each.

Question 5

When October 2022 respondents were asked to indicate how their child's French Immersion program experience matched the expectations they had before enrolling their child:

- Seventy-eight respondents, 45%, indicated the program met their expectations. Nine respondents, 5%, reported the program had not met expectations.
- Twenty-three respondents, 13%, listed the quality of teachers and staff as excellent.
- Twelve respondents, 7%, identified a French Immersion high school in Sherwood Park as highly desirable.
- Eleven respondents, 6%, commented better supports were needed for non-French speaking parents if they were to assist their child(ren) in the way they thought was necessary.
- Six respondents, 3%, stated they would prefer having a French Immersion program available in most or all communities.
- Six respondents, 3%, noted not all teachers and administrative staff are fluent in French.
- Four respondents, 2%, commented split grades were detrimental to the success of immersion outcomes.
- Three respondents, 2%, felt classroom sizes were too large.
- Three respondents, 2%, stated the Heritage Hills Elementary French Immersion program was less successful than other schools.

While items are only identified as a key theme if there are three or more responses, it is important to also recognize the individual responses that were submitted. These included a comment that support was lacking for senior high students wanting academic courses and a criticism that learning essentials were sometimes ignored.

Analysis

Only respondents who specifically said the French Immersion program had met their expectations were recorded as part of the 45% who indicated the program was a success. There was other responses supportive of the program, even if they were not specific enough to appear in this category.

Question 6

When October 2022 respondents were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with the overall French Immersion program:

- Eighty-five respondents, 56%, were satisfied with the overall French Immersion program. Nine respondents, 6%, were not satisfied.
- Twenty respondents, 13%, identified the location of the French Immersion program at Ardrossan Elementary and Ardrossan Junior Senior High as positive. Four respondents, 3%, identified the location of the French Immersion program at Ardrossan Elementary and Ardrossan Junior Senior High as negative.
- Nine respondents, 6%, referenced the need for a French Immersion senior high school in Sherwood Park.
- Five respondents, 3%, identified the location of the French Immersion junior high and senior high program as an important influence on their family's decision to remain in the French Immersion program.
- Four respondents, 3%, thought French Immersion programming should be available in most or all communities.

Other responses did not create a theme, but individual comments included the need for transition supports and continuity in learning environments, concern that English reading and writing skills were not up to par, and a comment that class sizes are too large.

Analysis

Many comments tied success of French Immersion to its presence in a community school. Generally, respondents are happy with the program, but want delivery to be at the local level.

Summary of Feedback

Overall, the themes in the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey were validated by the feedback received through the Fall 2022 French Immersion Engagement No.1. The exception to this validation is found in Question 3 and is specific to support for keeping the French Immersion program in Ardrossan. Respondents in the 2022 engagement noted support for the Ardrossan location was not identified as a theme in the 2017-18 French Immersion Survey. Therefore, they were concerned this left them without the option to validate their support through the dotmocracy process. For this reason, they expressed their support through the open-ended feedback process.

A number of big ideas emerged that WMC suggests EIPS consider moving forward. These include:

- **Time and distance** – Regardless of the location of the French Immersion program, time and distance are factors for families. The theme is connected to some feedback, across the questions, that respondents want EIPS to consider a K-12 French Immersion option in each of the three major locations—Ardrossan, Fort Saskatchewan and Sherwood Park.
- **Quality of teaching** – The general consensus is respondents are happy with the quality of teaching their child(ren) receives in the French Immersion program. There was a call, by some respondents, for more supports at the high school level, including the opportunity to take options within the French Immersion schedule, taking options in French, and added academic supports—particularly for mathematics and science. A number of respondents also commented they would like to see more French-speaking teachers and administration in the French Immersion programs.
- **Support for English-speaking families** - Some respondents indicated they felt supported by their child(ren)'s teachers and administration. A number of the comments suggest parents would benefit from clear communication about EIPS' expectations for families entering French Immersion—for example, the level of support they can expect across all the programs, which would have implications for consistency across all EIPS' French Immersion programs.

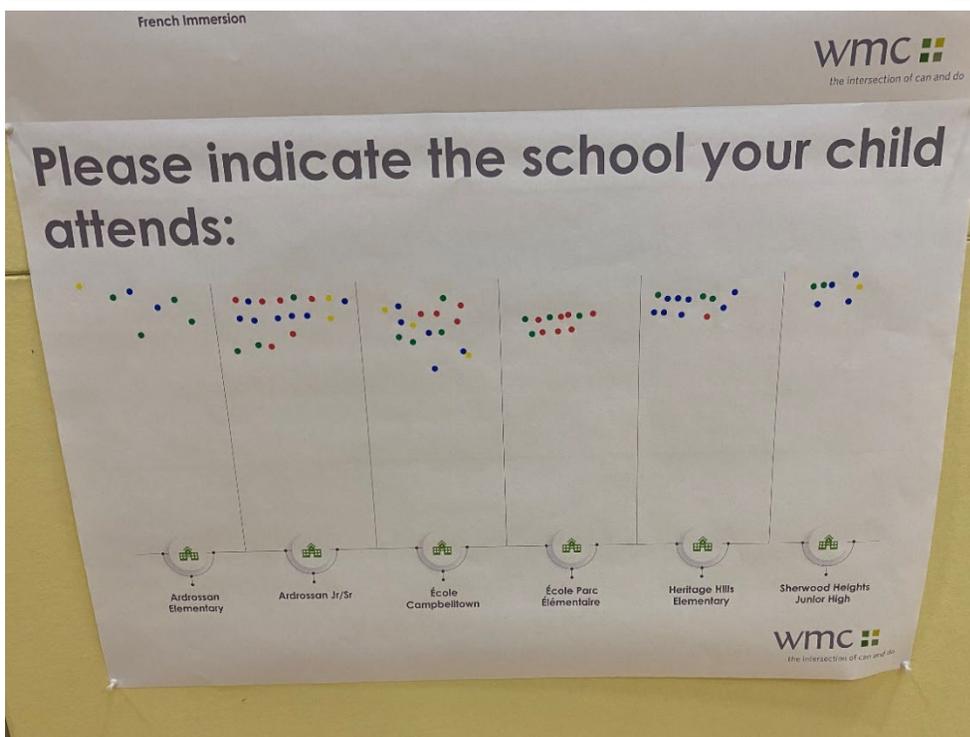
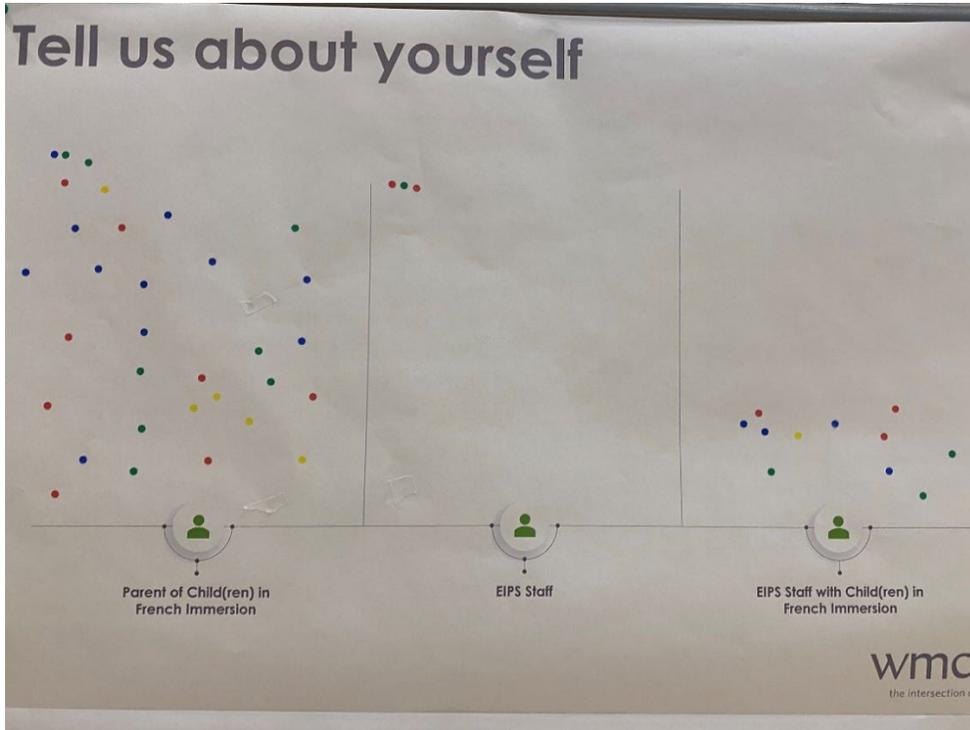
While there were many comments that didn't create a theme within a question, there was some feedback that emerged across questions and should be taken into consideration:

- Some respondents don't see Heritage Hills Elementary as a valued French Immersion program—they expressed worry about the balance between the English and French programs, with French Immersion students being in the minority. Tied to this are comments the school's administrators, and many teachers do not speak French.
- There is uncertainty about what immersion means—a few respondents offered feedback suggesting some confusion between French Immersion and francophone programming, including comments their child's program is missing a language and culture focus.

Appendix 1

What We Heard Report Dotmocracy and Let's Talk Charts

Demographics



Question 1

Feedback

Question 1

Embedded within the open-ended comments for this question, the following themes emerged:

- French Heritage and/or spoke that language in the home
- Child would be challenged and more engaged by the enriched opportunities provided by the French Immersion program
- The benefits with respect to enhanced cognitive development and being more prepared for post-secondary
- As Canada is a dual-language country, it was important that their child learn French

Let's Talk!

wmc

Question 2

Feedback

Question 2

Embedded within the open-ended comments for this question, the following themes emerged:

- Their own perceived benefit or lived experiences influenced their decision 
- Conversations, open houses and school tours influenced their decision 
- Day home or preschool was an influence 

Let's Talk!

wmc 
www.wmccanada.ca

Quality of education provided in the school itself. of non-FIL schools

Working within a dual-track School.

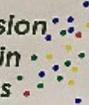
Research led findings into the benefits of speaking 2+ languages

Question 3

Feedback

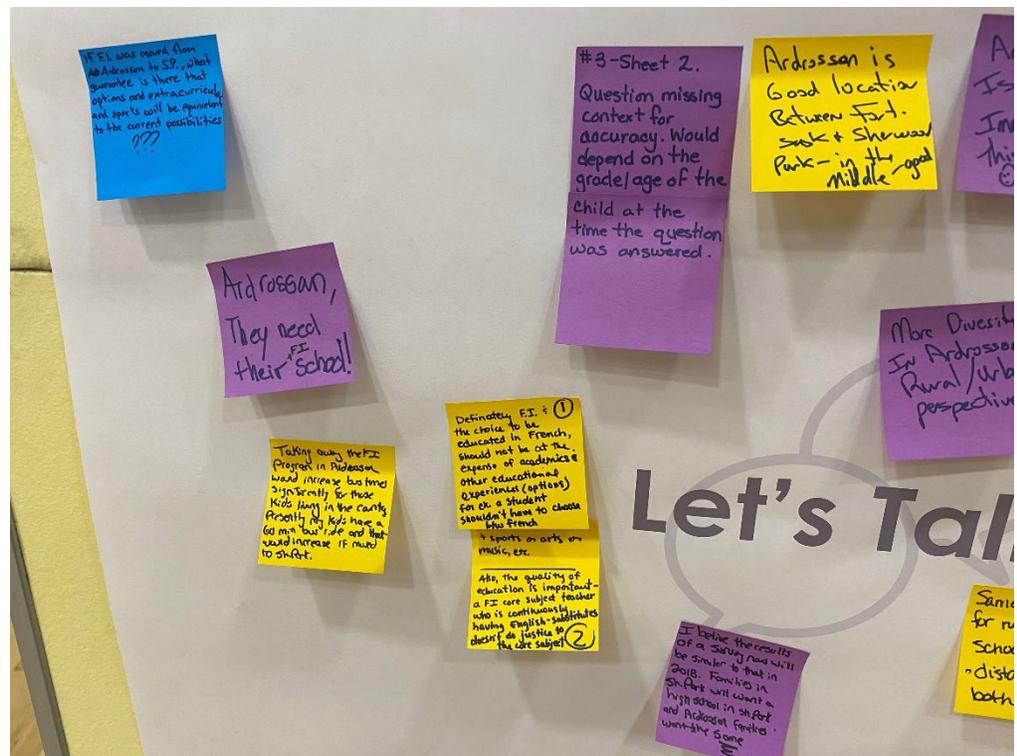
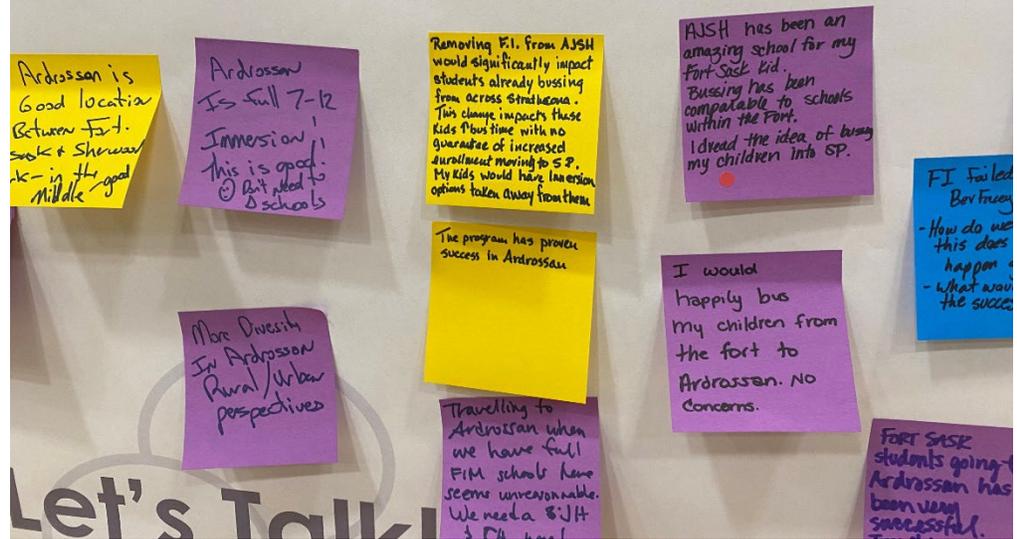
Question 3

Embedded within the open-ended comments for this question, the following themes emerged:

- Location of the French Immersion program at Ardrossan ~~Elementary~~ Junior High ^{SR. HIGH} was a concern. 
 - Desire for a high school in Sherwood Park. 
 - Concern about not having any secondary options in Fort Saskatchewan. 
 - Concern about the location of Ardrossan – highlighting distance and travel time as a concern. 
- Decision for their child to not continue in French Immersion would be based on their child's own willingness to stay in the program. Sports, extracurricular activities and friends were provided as a rationale. 
- Remaining in French Immersion in high school might make it more difficult to get high marks on diploma exams and impact their transition to University. 
- Quality of teaching and quality of education would be an influence. 

Question 3 (Continued)

d with academics/homework o
eir decision to have their child



Question 4

Feedback

Question 4

Embedded within the open-ended comments for this question, the following themes emerged:

- Teachers and administrators were a great support in enhancing parent involvement - translating, providing resources and links, meetings, intervention support, etc.
- Knowing French or having friends/family who knew French was a benefit
- Use of technology - Google translate, apps, internet etc. was required.

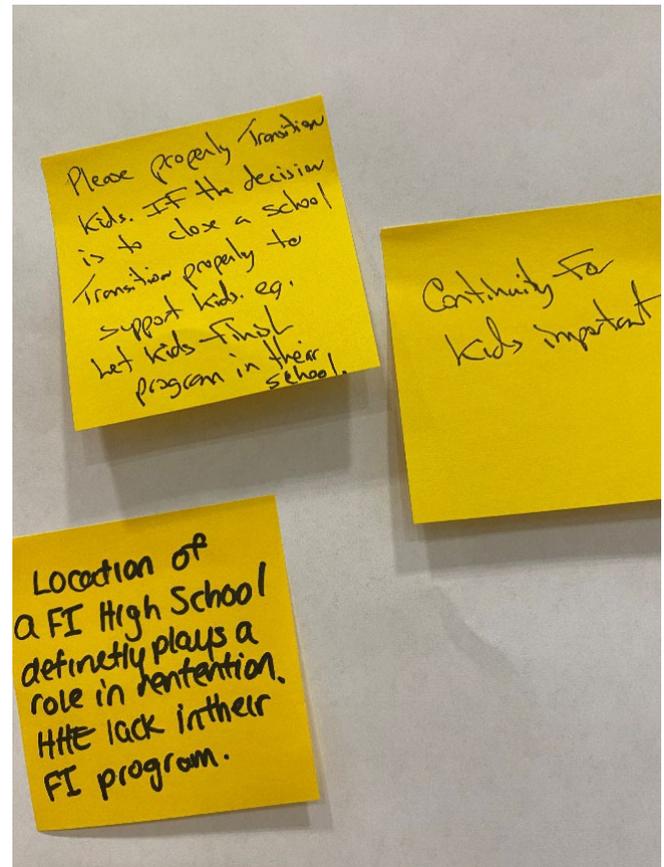
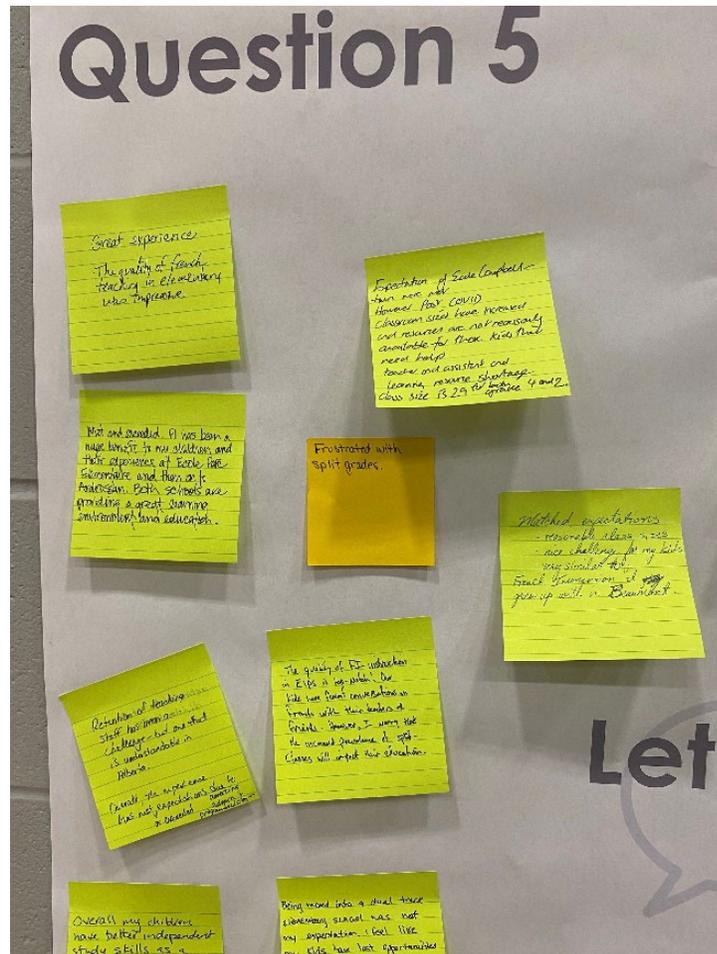
Feedback from parents
concerned the lack of
resources and support
for parents.

The point
parents were
not given
enough info.

It is important
that parents
are given the
resources and
support that
they need to
be successful.

Let's Talk!

Question 5



Question 6

