

# The French Immersion and English Programs in New Brunswick School Districts 17 and 18

*A Comparison of Family Background,  
Factors Influencing Choice of Program,  
Attitudes toward French Immersion,  
and Student Performance*

## FINAL REPORT

Joseph E. Dicks, Ph. D.  
Second Language Education Centre  
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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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This study was conducted during the 1999-2000 academic year in two adjacent school districts: School District 17 which serves students from the town of Oromocto and several rural communities and School District 18 which serves students from the city of Fredericton and its surrounding communities. The study was restricted to those schools that offer both French Immersion (FI) and English streams for students at grades 1, 4 and 6: five schools in School District 17 and sixteen schools in School District 18. A list of participating schools is provided in *Appendix A*.

### French Immersion Program Enrolment

4,443 students were enrolled in FI in School Districts 17 and 18 in 1999-2000: (1004/5991) in SD 17 and (3439/12,650) in SD 18. This represents 17% of SD 17's population and 27% of SD 18's population. This compares with a provincial FI enrolment of 23.6%. The percentage of students enrolled in FI in New Brunswick is considerable higher than the Canadian average and any other individual province in Canada with the exception of Quebec. **Table 1** summarizes the enrollment statistics according to Statistics Canada data (1998-99).

A major impetus for this study was a report released by the the New Brunswick Department of Education, containing results of provincial testing done at various grade levels in both English and FI programs (**Report Card '99**).

**Table 1**  
**FI Enrolment Statistics Nationally and by Province and**  
**Territory 98-99**

98-99	Total School Pop.	FI enrolment		
		FI pop.	%	Rank
CANADA	5,133,662	317,351	6.2	—
NFLD	97,926	4,332	4.4	11
N.S.	162,366	12,158	7.5	5
PEI	24,017	3,209	13.4	3
N.B.*	87,778	20,683	23.6	2
QUE	100,184	37,384	37.3	1
ONT.	2,123,100	155,178	7.3	6
MAN.	197,213	18,143	9.2	4
SASK.	194,779	9,400	4.8	9
ALB.	539,620	27,043	5.0	8
BC	621,788	28,928	4.7	10
YUKON	6,215	409	6.6	7
NWT	17,495	484	2.7	12

Source – Statistics Canada (estimated for 98-99)

#### Report Card 99 Results

During the 1998-99 academic year, students at grades 3, 5, and 8 in the English and FI programs in New Brunswick (N.B.) participated in a provincial assessment of English, Mathematics, and Science. The results indicated that a considerably higher percentage of FI program students attained the minimal level of success than did English program students in all areas except Science at Grade 3. Of particular concern is the discrepancy at the Grade 8 level in English and Mathematics where a 25% difference between the two programs is found. In N.B. as a whole, the majority of Grade 8 FI students enrolled in the program in Grade 1 Early French Immersion (EFI). Another smaller group of Grade 8 students enrolled in FI at Grade 6 in Intermediate French Immersion (IFI). While EFI is by far the most popular program provincially, there are some variations in specific school districts and communities. In School District 17, for example, IFI students who entered the program in Grade 6 comprise the vast majority of FI students.

23% or 20 683 students are enrolled in French Immersion in New Brunswick.



In School District 18, Grade 8 FI students either entered the program at Grade 4 in Middle French Immersion (MEI) or at Grade 6 in the Intermediate French Immersion (IMEI) program. Until 1995-96, MEI with its Grade 4 entry point was the earliest available option for FI in the Fredericton area, and this group constitutes the majority of Grade 8 FI students in this district. The Grade 4 MEI entry point was discontinued in 1995. All FI students currently below grade six entered the Early French Immersion (EFI) program at Grade 1. Consequently, the first group to reach Grade 8 from Early French Immersion (EFI) will be the 1995-96 Grade 1 entry point cohort. This will not occur until the 2002-2003 school year.

**Table 2** below presents the percentage of students achieving the acceptable or higher level in the English and FI programs for the three assessment areas – English Language, Mathematics, and Science – at grades 3, 5, and 8 for the province as a whole and for Districts 17 and 18 separately.

**Table 2**  
Percentage of Students Achieving at Least the  
Minimum Level of Acceptable in English, Mathematics and Science  
at Grades 3, 5, and 8 in English and FI Programs

	ENGLISH*		MATH		SCIENCE	
	Eng. Prog.	FI Prog.	Eng. Prog.	FI Prog.	Eng. Prog.	FI Prog.
<b>Grade 3</b>						
Province	70%	78%	66%	70%	77%	70%
Districts 17/18	71%	84%	69%	78%	82%	73%
District 17	67%	88%	58%	83%	76%	68%
District 18	74%	83%	75%	76%	84%	75%
<b>Grade 5</b>						
Province	64%	79%	N/A	N/A	71%	76%
Districts 17/18	70%	79%			75%	86%
District 17	--	--			76%	67%
District 18	76%	83%			75%	87%
<b>Grade 8</b>						
Province	64%	89%	49%	75%	N/A	N/A
Districts 17/18	63%	93%**	50%	76%**		
District 17	53%	82%***	46%	62%***		
District 18	68%	96%****	52%	80%****		

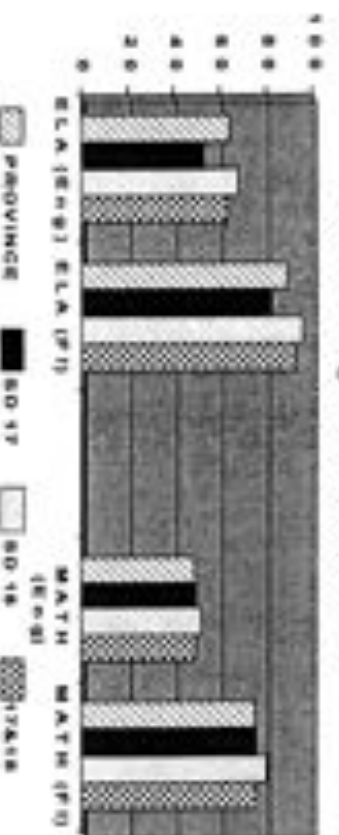
\* ENGLISH = Reading at Gr.3; Reading & Writing at Gr.5/8

\*\* MEI and/or FI students; \*\*\* FI students only; \*\*\*\* MEI and FI students

A 25% gap favouring FI program students is found at Grade 8 for Math and Science assessments.

**Graph 1** illustrates the discrepancy between FI and English program students in Math and English at Grade 8.

**GRAPH 1 Provincial Report Card 99  
Grade 8 English and Math Results**



#### **Research on Streaming and Effective Schools**

These discrepancies in performance between the FI and English programs, particularly the middle level results at Grade 8, have led some academics, school administrators, teachers, and parents to question whether FI is an elitist program that attracts pupils from advantaged backgrounds who are more likely to succeed in school.

(**Appendix B** contains a partial list of articles related to French Immersion, which appeared in the public press in New Brunswick and elsewhere over the past year.) Within the academic community, there is a body of literature, which maintains that segregation benefits the most advantaged children and harms the least advantaged. According to Williams (in press, p.19),

Schools or classrooms with high social-class or high ability intakes tend to have several advantages associated with their context. On average they are more likely to have greater support from parents, fewer disciplinary problems, and an atmosphere conducive to learning. They are more likely to attract and retain talented and motivated teachers. Usually there are peer effects when bright and motivated students work together. Consequently, when students are segregated, either between classes or tracks within schools, or between schools within a community, students from advantaged backgrounds do better, while those from disadvantaged backgrounds do worse.

Research in this area also recognizes the critical role of the school in determining student success. Goodlad (1984) carried out a wide-scale study of schools to determine if there was a relationship between socioeconomic background of a community and the effectiveness of that community's schools.

Goodlad found numerous examples of schools in low socioeconomic areas that were extremely effective. He also found other schools in the same areas that were ineffective. In effect, there was no direct correlation between the socioeconomic level of a community and the effectiveness of that community's schools. However, Goodlad did find that there was a strong correlation between attitudes of the administration and teachers and the effectiveness of schools. Effective schools typically had administrators and teachers who were aware of current trends in education, including knowledge into learning styles and how curriculum planning and teaching strategies could address these learning styles. Administrators in these schools had high standards and expectations for students and teachers, while providing a great deal of support for them.

Goodlad found there was no direct correlation between the socioeconomic level of a community and the effectiveness of that community's schools. There was a strong correlation between attitudes of the administration and teachers and the effectiveness of schools.

Indeed, Willms and other researchers also point to the critical role of these school-based variables. For example, Willms (in press, p. 16) states:

Research in a number of countries has shown that there are large and significant differences among schools in their outcomes, even after taking into account students' family background characteristics and their ability upon entry to school (Gray, 1989; Willms, 1992). Thus schools differ in their "added value".

Willms goes on to refer to a study of 119 elementary New Brunswick schools that, while indicating a relationship between reading scores and SES, also found that there was a difference of about six to eight months of schooling at grade level at each level of mean SES. Willms concludes that schools differ substantially in reading results even after taking account of students' family backgrounds, and suggests that one explanation for this relates to school climate and particularly parental involvement. Schools with higher levels of parental involvement, on average, had higher levels of reading achievement (Willms, in press).

Schools with higher levels of parental involvement, on average, had higher levels of reading achievement (Willms, in press).

A crucial finding of Goodlad's research was that the kinds of strategies a particular school or teaching team uses in order to be effective depends upon the socioeconomic background of students. A school identified as being at-risk based on the socioeconomic background of students would need to provide more support in a wider variety of areas. Goodlad also found that schools in higher socioeconomic areas might also be ineffective if the administration and teaching staff do not facilitate a positive working environment. Essentially, Goodlad concludes that socioeconomic background is neither a guarantee of success or failure in school. Rather, it is viewed as an important piece of infor-

mation to be considered in determining strategies and in planning curriculum for success.

### **EL Research on Suitability of the Program for All Children**

Empirical research has also been conducted to determine if FI is suitable for all children. This research falls into three main categories: intelligence, learning disabilities, and socioeconomic background.

#### *Intelligence*

Genesee (1987) carefully examined the relationship between intelligence and academic achievement over a period of three years. Students in grade 4, 5, and 6 in early French immersion and in non-immersion classes were grouped as below average, average, and above average, according to their IQ scores. These students were then administered English language, French language, and Mathematics tests. The pattern was identical in both programs for the English and Math tests, and for the reading and grammar sections of the French test. As expected, students in the lower group scored lowest on all three tests, and the highest IQ group scored highest.

*Research shows the relationship between IQ and students' ability to succeed is the same in FI as in English programs.*

#### *Language and/or Learning-disabled Students*

The research on this issue has been limited, and the results are inconclusive. In the early 80s two studies (Trices, 1981 and Bruck, 1982) arrived at opposing conclusions regarding whether disabled children should or should not be selected for immersion.

On the basis of results of psychomotor tests, Trices argued that that there is an identifiable group of students that due to a developmental lag cannot make progress in EFL programs. Trices recommends that any child with learning difficulties in immersion switch to English as soon as possible and wait until they can enroll in a later entry program such as MFI or IFI. Several researchers (cf. Cummins, 1979; Genesee, 1987) have questioned Trices methodology and interpretations of the results.

Bruck (1982), in contrast to Trices, concluded that while learning disabled children take longer to learn in immersion, they generally benefit from the experience, and switching to L1 causes them only to display the same problems they exhibited in immersion. Bruck carried out her research in kindergarten immersion classes over a consecutive six-year period. She asked all

kindergarten teachers (English and French immersion) to identify children they felt had any problem with language. These children were referred to Bruck who interviewed them and administered and battery of tests designed to diagnose language difficulties. The results showed in fact that language disabled children in both immersion and non-immersion classes took longer to attain basic literacy skills in English and academic skills in other subjects. However, the disabled children in the immersion classrooms were found to have developed at a rate that was similar to that of disabled children in the English classrooms. Language disabled children in immersion demonstrated progress in French so as to be able to participate in classroom instruction within the limits of their disabilities. Bruck concluded that one should not exclude language disabled children from immersion simply because it is felt that "their first language development is poor".

In the late 80s, Wiss (1989) conducted a series of case studies to examine whether children whose cognitive and linguistic abilities are not adequately developed are able to deal with the requirements of a bilingual school environment. Wiss argues that given the complexity of the human brain and its limitless capacity for learning, it is very unlikely that there are children who are incapable of learning a second language. However the kind of program is important. According to Wiss, early immersion is not ideal for children suffering from a developmental immaturity. Late immersion on the other hand is not suited to children with specific learning disabilities.

#### Socioeconomic Status

According to Genesee (1987, p.95) "there is nothing to suggest that students from lower socioeconomic groups will experience difficulties in English language development in immersion programs or that they cannot benefit from immersion in terms of second language achievement." A relatively recent study (Genesee, 1991) conducted in the United States examined whether immersion is suitable for children from severely disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds or from a visible ethnic minority group (African Americans). Children from different backgrounds were monitored from kindergarten to the end of grade 3. Results were consistent with those found in Canadian research. Middle class students in immersion demonstrated similar levels of performance as middle class students in English. A similar pattern was found for working class students. Regarding ethnic groups it was found that African American students in immersion scored as well as their peers in English classes on math and English language tests at all grade levels.

While learning disabled children take longer to learn in FL, this rate is similar to that found in English program classrooms. Ultimately, they benefit from the FL experience.

"There is nothing to suggest that students from lower socioeconomic groups will experience difficulties in English language development in immersion programs or that they cannot benefit from immersion in terms of second language achievement." - Genesee



Genesee (1991, p.91) writes:

*Children from a wide range of backgrounds – including differing levels of socioeconomic status and varying degrees of intelligence can succeed in immersion just as well as in the L1 program.*

There exists no single or simple criterion that can be used to validly determine the suitability of immersion for individual children. Decisions regarding suitability can probably only be made with accuracy once the child's actual performance in immersion can be judged; that is, once they have been in the program for some time.

To conclude, with the exception of learning disabled children, research shows that children from a wide range of backgrounds – including differing levels of socioeconomic status and varying degrees of intelligence - can succeed in immersion just as well as in the L1 program.

### **FL Populations in Canada**

Research comparing the socioeconomic profiles of FI and English program populations elsewhere in Canada has been limited. A review of the literature revealed four such studies: Olson (1983) in Northern Ontario; Bienvenue (1986) in Winnipeg; Van der Kleuten (1995) in Sudbury; and Hart and Lapkin (1998) in Metropolitan Toronto. With the exception of the Bienvenue study, it was found that the SES of students enrolled in FI was higher than that of students in English programs in the same geographical area.

*In larger urban centres FI programs tend to be populated by a higher percentage of professional parents.*

An earlier study (Hart, Lapkin & Swain, 1991) examined the occupational distributions of parents of grade 8 and 9 EFI students in selected communities across Canada. Among these were three New Brunswick communities – Fredericton, St. John, and Bathurst – as well as urban centers such as Halifax, Toronto and Saskatoon. Using the same occupational scale used in the present study (Pineo, Porter & McRoberts, 1977), the researchers found that occupational distributions varied greatly. In metropolitan areas such as Toronto, Saskatoon, or Halifax the majority of FI students were from families where at least one parent was in a professional/upper managerial profession (e.g., 73% in Halifax). In New Brunswick, however, these higher socioeconomic status occupations did not constitute a majority in FI programs. In Fredericton 47% of FI students came from such families; in St. John, 37% did; and in Bathurst, 29% did.

This last study suggests that the FI programs in New Brunswick may be more

diverse than in larger metropolitan centers. It is important to recall that in New Brunswick, FI, by provincial policy, must be offered where numbers warrant (cf., Policy 309, Department of Education, NB). Consequently, nearly one of every four non-francophone students is in immersion in this province. It is also the case that no formal screening is done for FI. Given these parameters, one would expect a much broader representation of the general population than would be found in areas where FI is restricted to specific schools, communities, or areas of a city or town. If, on the other hand, it is the case that FI is attracting students from more advantaged homes, it is crucial to determine why this is so, and to address any discrepancies in program delivery or results that may occur as a result. The present study seeks to examine this issue more carefully by comparing the FI and English program populations in Fredericton and the surrounding area.

## THE STUDY

### Research Questions

Given the recent results of provincial assessment in English and FI programs in New Brunswick, the relevant literature on the effects of socioeconomic background on school effectiveness in general, and the research in FI in particular, this study explores the following five questions:

**Question 1:** *Are there differences in the socioeconomic backgrounds of the populations of FI and English programs as measured by occupation distribution and educational levels of parents?*

**Question 2:** *What factors influence parents and pupils to enroll in FI or in the English program when both options are available? Do these vary based on socioeconomic background?*

**Question 3:** *What are the perceptions and attitudes of parents with children in English or in FI programs or of pupils themselves regarding various characteristics of both programs (e.g., students' ability and achievement, classroom climate, teacher effectiveness, parental involvement)?*

**Question 4:** *What are the perceptions and attitudes of teachers and administrators regarding various characteristics of both programs (e.g., students' ability and achievement, classroom climate, important factors in choosing one program over another)?*

**Question 5:** *Is there a relationship between the achievement in various subject areas by students enrolled in FI and in English programs and the socioeconomic and educational backgrounds of families?*

*In N.B. FI must be offered where numbers warrant. Nearly one in four non-francophone students is enrolled in FI in NB.*

*The study involved 21 schools, all offering both FI and English programs.*

### Participants

As noted in the introduction, this study will explore these five interrelated questions in twenty-one schools: five in School District 17 and sixteen in School District 18. The focus of the study is on pupils and parents of pupils who enrolled in a FI program for the first time in September of 1999, school personnel involved in these programs, and the corresponding cohorts of English program parents, pupils, and teachers. Consequently, the main participants in this study are:

1. *Parents of children who enrolled in EFI and the English program in Districts 17 and 18 for the first time in September 1999 (Grade 1 EFI; Grade 1 English)*
2. *Pupils and parents of pupils who enrolled in Intermediate FI in grade 6 for the first time in September 1999 (Grade 6 IFI), and the corresponding pupils and parents who continued in the English program at grade 6 (Grade 6 English)*
3. *Teachers and administrators of Districts 17 and 18 who are or were involved in these FI and/or English programs.*

*The study involved parents, teachers, administrators and Grade 6 IFI students.*

Two other groups of pupils and parents were identified and surveyed. While these are not the main focus of the study, it was felt that they could provide interesting and valuable information for comparison purposes since both groups were involved in the provincial assessment program and are part of the Report Card '99. These are:

4. *Parents of pupils who enrolled in EFI or in the English program in Grade 1 in September 1996-97 and who were in grade 4 at the time of this research (Grade 4 EFI; Grade 4 English)*
5. *Pupils and parents of pupils of grade 6 students who began immersion in grade 4 (Grade 6 MFI), and the corresponding parents of English program students. (Grade 6 English)*

Because of the large numbers of pupils and parents involved and the limited resources available for data collection, entry and analysis, a random sample of parents and pupils was selected for participation. Class lists for all FI and English classes involved in the study were obtained through the School Districts and a minimum of 25% (one in four students for each class) was selected for participation. In some cases where numbers in a given grade were small



(combined classes in FI for example) a ratio of more than one in four was used in order to keep the numbers of students participating from English and FI programs nearly equal. This report will focus upon the main participants (groups 1-3 above), and to a lesser extent with the fourth group – the grade 4 EF1 and English program parents.

The fifth group, Grade 6 MF1 parents and students, is a particularly large group and the questionnaire and attitude survey results for this group will be analyzed and reported separately. The issue of a Grade 4 entry point for FI is not the focus of this study but is an important related topic. Consequently, a separate report will be prepared for this group and appropriate comparisons will be made with the findings of the present study.

As noted above, all administrators, all classroom teachers of FI and English program students, as well as all core French teachers in the schools involved also received questionnaires. The total numbers of surveys distributed to parents, pupils, teachers and administrators is presented in **Table 3**.

**Table 3**  
**Number of Surveys Distributed to Parents, Pupils, Administrators and Teachers**

	Parents		Gr. 6 IF1 Pupils		Admin.		Teachers	
	Eng.	FI	Eng.	FI	Principal	VP	Eng/ Core Fr.	FI
School District								
17	147	143	49	56	5	5	16	9
18	436	480	160	67	16	14	71	43
Subtotal	583	620	209	123	21	19	87	52
TOTAL	1203		332		40		139	

*Parents and students were selected on a random basis. Surveys were sent to 25% of all parents with children enrolled in FI and English programs in all schools, 1203 in total.*

*All administrators and teachers of FI and English program students received the questionnaire, 139 in total.*

### Research Instruments

The first four questions involved the administration of questionnaires to identify the occupational distributions and levels of education of participants enrolled in FI and in English programs in September 1999. These questionnaires also examined the importance of specific factors influencing parents'

and students' decisions to opt for one program or another, as well as teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the importance of such factors. The fifth question is explored by examining the test results obtained by provincial testing programs, and by determining if there is a relationship between test results and socioeconomic background of students in Grade 4 EFL and Grade 6 IFL.

#### *Development of the Instruments, Pilot and Field-testing*

Three similar questionnaires – one for each group involved parents, pupils, and administrators/teachers – were developed for this study. Each questionnaire was divided into three main sections: *Background Information, Factors Influencing Choice of Program and Attitude Survey*.

Section 1, *Background Information*, involved a series of questions including level of education, occupation and familial situation (parents), school and home information (pupils), teaching experiences, highest level of education (teachers and administrators).

Section 2, *Factors Influencing Choice of Program*, presented parents and Grade 6 students with a series of statements regarding their decision to choose either the English or French Immersion program. Parents were asked indicate to what extent these various factors related to each category influenced their decision to enroll their child in either the English program or the French Immersion program. Grade 6 students were also asked to react to these factors and to indicate to what degree they influenced their own decision to follow one program or the other. In the case of both parents and students, the degree of importance of each factor was indicated by circling the corresponding number on a Likert-type scale with 1 indicating totally unimportant; 4 – neutral or unsure; and 7 – totally important.

Section 3, the *Attitude Survey*, involved a series of statements about FI and English programs. The statements were written to reflect various popular viewpoints about FI made in media reports, as well as comments made by academics and members of professional parent and teaching organizations. (See Appendix B for a sample of the media reports and discussions on FI.) They reflect a wide range of issues related to FI programming. Once again, both parents and Grade 6 students were asked to respond using a seven point Likert-type scale with 1 indicating total disagreement; 4 – neutral or unsure; and 7 – total agreement.

*The questionnaire involved questions on background information, factors influencing choice of program and attitudes regarding bilingual education.*

The seven-point scale allows respondents to indicate high and low degrees of importance or agreement by circling numbers at the extreme ends of the scale – 1 or 2 in the case of little importance or agreement and 6 or 7 in the case of high importance or agreement. Consequently, the tables presented in this report will indicate the percentage of respondents indicating very strong levels of importance or agreement.

An initial draft of the questionnaires was pilot-tested in October of 1999 with two graduate students, two students, and two parents. This pilot testing resulted in revised questionnaires being produced for field-testing from October 22 to October 29 of 1999. The field-testing procedure involved parents of two FI classes and two English classes at grade 2; parents of two FI classes and two English classes at grade 5; as well as parents and pupils of two FI and two English classes at grade 7. In all three instances, one grade level higher than the grade to be involved in the actual research study was used in the field-testing procedure. This was to ensure that all classes at the levels involved in the main study could participate without prejudice. The results of the field-testing indicated that the questionnaires were effective in eliciting responses and that there were very few perceived problems with ambiguity or interpretation of questions. The time frame for return of the questionnaires appeared to be appropriate as nearly all the questionnaires were returned by the date requested. Consequently, minor revisions were made and the final versions of the questionnaires were delivered to schools on February 7, 2000 with a request that they be returned to the school by February 11th.

*Surveys were field-tested in 12 classes; two in each program (FI and English).*

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

#### *Data Collection*

The questionnaires were delivered to the main offices of the schools involved on February 7, 1999. An explanatory letter was sent to principals earlier and at the time of delivery. Each questionnaire was inserted into an envelope with the name of the participating student written on the outside. Grade 6 students received one envelope with two surveys inside: a parent survey and a student survey. The first page of each questionnaire was an informed letter of consent that parents, administrators and teachers could complete if they wished to participate in the survey. Parents of Grade 6 students participating in the survey were asked to sign this letter if they permitted their son or daughter to participate as well.

*Surveys were completed anonymously.*

A blank envelope was included for returning the completed questionnaire to the school anonymously should the parent's wish. An explanatory letter to the classroom teachers and the front page of the survey contained a request the completed questionnaires be returned to the school at the end of the same week they were delivered - no later than February 11<sup>th</sup>.

On February 11<sup>th</sup> either a personal visit or a phone call was made to each school to determine if there were a number of surveys to pick up. A large number of surveys had been returned, and a follow-up call was made near the end of the following week to arrange for pick-up of additional forms.

*The parent survey return rate was 61% - 53% for the English program and 69% for the FI program.*

Of the 1203 surveys sent to parents, 734 were returned for an overall rate of return of 61%. The return rate by program was 53% for English (307/583) and 69% for FI (427/620). These high rates of return are likely a reflection of the importance of this issue to parents in both programs.

For the Grade 6 student surveys, the overall return rate was 168/332 (52%). This return rate was considerably higher in IFI (82/123 or 67%) than in the English program (86/209 or 41%).

As for school administrators, the return rate was quite high at 80% (32/40) and higher for principals 18/21 (86%) than for VPs (14/19 - 74%). The overall rate of return for teacher surveys was 61% (85/139). When broken down by program the rate was higher for FI teachers (67% - 35/52) than for English program teachers (59% - 51/87).

#### *Data Analysis*

The data analysis involves four sets of information. The first three - background information, the questionnaire, and attitude survey - are analyzed statistically, mainly by examining frequencies and measures of central tendency. The fourth source - comments written by various participants regarding the different sections of the questionnaire and the research in general - are reported in relation to the overall trends indicated by the statistical treatment. These comments will in some cases shed light on the majority opinions and trends, and in other cases will provide insights into the minority opinion.

## RESULTS

### Section One: Background Information-Level of Education and Occupation

#### Background Information

##### *Home Language and Language Use*

The percentage of parents indicating English to be their first language was identical in both programs - 93.2%. The percentage of families with one parent with French as a first language was very low in both programs - 3% in English and 5% in FL. Families with one parent speaking a first language other than English or French were rare - 3.5% in English and 2% in FL. With regard to language use, a majority of FL program families (54.5%) reported some use of French in the home (music, TV, magazines, newspapers) compared to 27.7% of English program families. A very small percentage of FL and English families (2% and 1% respectively) indicated a lot of French language use in the home. These percentages were very similar across grade levels and programs.

93% of parents indicated English to be their home language

##### *Single vs. Two-Parent Households*

Nearly 18% of English program students came from single parent households compared to 12% of French immersion students. This compares with the New Brunswick average of 14% and the national average of 14.5%. (Statistics Canada, 1996)

##### *Level of Employment*

86% of English fathers and 92% of French Immersion fathers indicated they were working full-time. 43% of English mothers and 51% of French Immersion mothers also indicated they were working full time. Similarly low percentages of parents in both programs indicated they were looking for work - 2% of English parents and 1% of FL parents.

Very low % of parents in FL and English programs indicated they were looking for work, 1% and 2% respectively.

##### *Percentage of Mothers, Fathers, and Both Parents Completing Questionnaire*

Similarly high percentages of questionnaires were completed by mothers only in both programs - 77% in English and 74% in FL. A low percentage of questionnaires were completed by fathers only in both programs - 11% in English and 14% in FL. Both parents in the two programs - 12%, completed identical percentages of questionnaires. Thus, mothers were involved in completing 89% of the questionnaires in English and 86% of the questionnaires in FL, compared to 23% of English program fathers and 26% of FL program fathers.

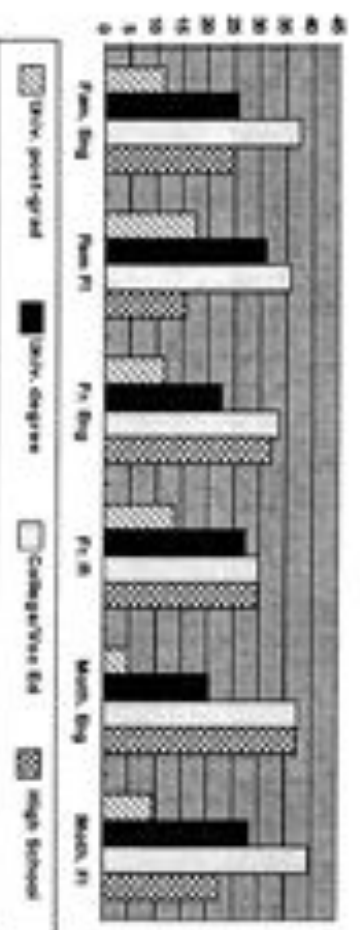
Approximately 3 in 4 mothers were involved in completing surveys compared to 1 in 4 fathers in both programs

## Level of Education

*Family Education Level – Overall for School Districts 17 & 18*

**Graph 2** below summarizes the percentages of parents at four levels of education in FI and in the English program at the three grade levels (Grades 1, 4, 6) for both school districts combined.

**GRAPH 2**  
**School Districts 17 & 18 Combined Results**  
**Percentages of Parents at Four Levels of Education**  
**in English and FI Programs**



The % of families with at least 1 parent with a post-secondary degree or diploma is very high in both English and FI programs.

The *Family* designation is used to indicate the higher level of education where two parents reported education levels. The percentage of families with at least one parent having completed some form of post-secondary education is extremely high in both English (73%) and French Immersion (84%). The percentage of families with at least one parent holding a university degree is also quite high in both the English program (37.2%) and FI program (48.8%). 12% of English program families have one parent with a graduate degree compared to 17% of FI families. 26% of English families report one parent with a university undergraduate degree compared to 31% of FI families. In both cases this percentage is approximately 5% higher in FI than in English. A similar percentage of FI and English parents have a college/vocational diploma.

Similar % of fathers in both FI and English programs hold university degrees.

The percentage of Fathers in each of the four levels of education in FI and in the English program tends to be quite similar, and similarly high percentages of fathers (34% in English and 41% in FI) hold university degrees. 12% of English program fathers and 14% of FI program fathers have graduate degrees while 23% and 27% respectively have undergraduate degrees.



A considerable percentage of mothers also hold university degrees in both programs.

25% of English mothers have some kind of university degree compared to 38% of FI mothers. 15% more English program mothers indicate a high school diploma as highest level of education than do FI program mothers.

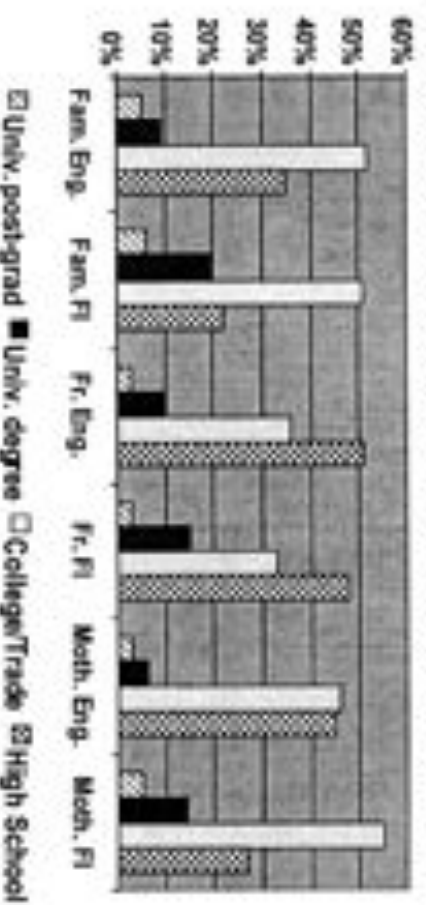
A somewhat higher % of FI mothers have university degrees than do English program mothers.

#### *Family Education Level - Districts 17 & 18 Separately*

The following graphs (Graph 3 and Graph 4) display the educational levels for families separately by school district.

**GRAPH 3 - School District 17**

Percentage of Parents at Four Levels of Education in English and FI Programs

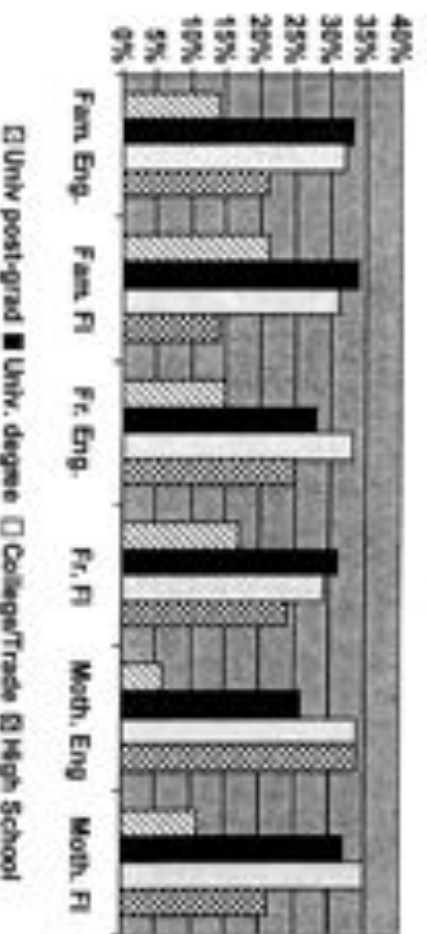


In School District 17 a community college or trade diploma was the most common level of education.

Graph 3 clearly shows that the dominant educational level for families, as well as for mothers individually, is a diploma from a community college or trade school. The most common highest level reported for fathers in both English and French Immersion programs was a high school diploma.

The percentage of families with one parent holding a university degree (either undergraduate or post-graduate) in SD 17 was 14% in English programs compared to 24% in FI programs. 5% more FI fathers hold university degrees than do English program fathers, and 10% more FI mothers hold university degrees than do English program mothers.

**GRAPH 4 – School District 18**  
**Percentages of Parents at Four Levels of Education in**  
**English and FI Programs**



*In School District 18 education programs for families in FI and English programs are similar. The most common level is a university degree.*

**Graph 4** clearly shows that the educational patterns for families as well as for fathers and mothers separately are quite similar in English and FI programs. The dominant educational level for families is a university degree followed closely by a diploma from a community college or trade school.

The percentage of families with one parent holding a university degree (either undergraduate or post-graduate) was similarly high in both programs - 47% in the English program and 55% in FI. Similar percentages of fathers in both programs hold university degrees. A higher percentage of FI mothers (43%) hold university degrees than do English program mothers (32%).

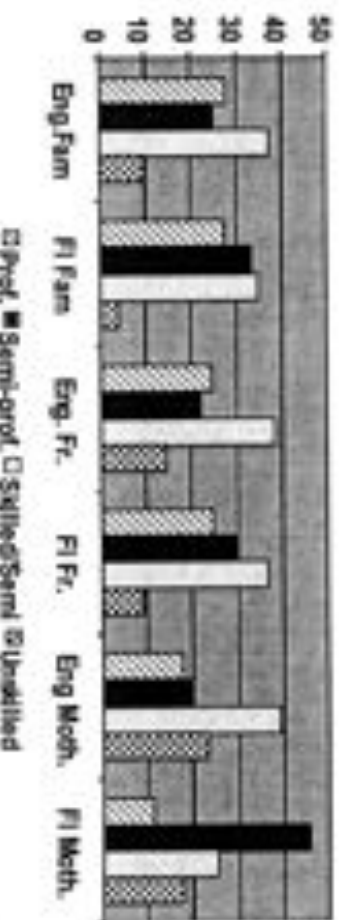
### **Occupation Distribution**

*Family Occupation Distributions – Overall for School Districts 17 & 18 Combined*

**Graph 5** summarizes the percentages of parents at five occupation categories in FI and in the English program for both school districts combined.



GRAPH 5  
School Districts 17 & 18 Combined Occupation Distributions



The majority of families in FI and English programs fall in professional or semi-professional occupation categories.

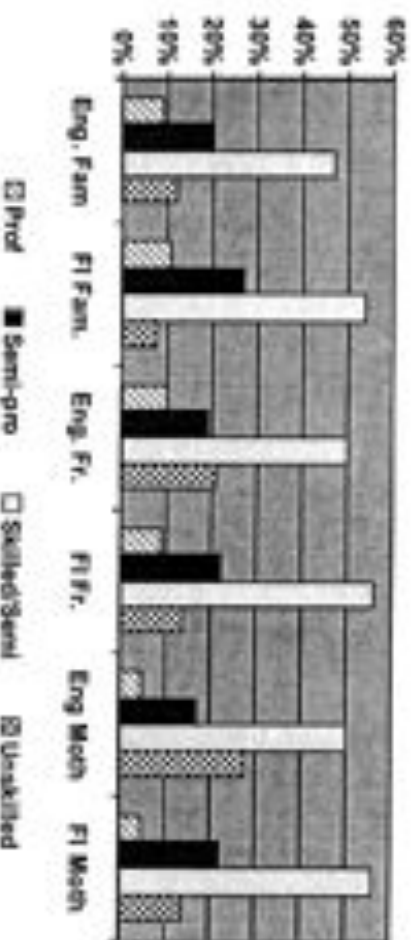
As in the education category, the *Family* designation refers to the higher occupational status where two parents reported to be working. The majority of families in both the English and French Immersion programs fall in the professional or semi-professional categories. The percentage of families having one parent working in a professional occupation is nearly identical in English and FI (28%). A somewhat higher percentage of FI families (33%) have one parent working in a semi-professional occupation than do English program families (25%). Similar percentages of families in both programs work in skilled or semi-skilled occupations.

The pattern seen for families changes very little when one examines fathers' occupation distributions. With regard to mothers, a higher percentage of English program mothers work in professional occupations than do FI mothers (18% vs. 11%). However, a considerably higher percentage of FI mothers work in semi-professional occupations than do English program mothers (46% of FI compared to 20% of English program mothers).

*Family Occupation Distributions – For School Districts 17 & 18 Separately*

Graph 6 and Graph 7 display the occupation distributions for school districts 17 and 18 separately.

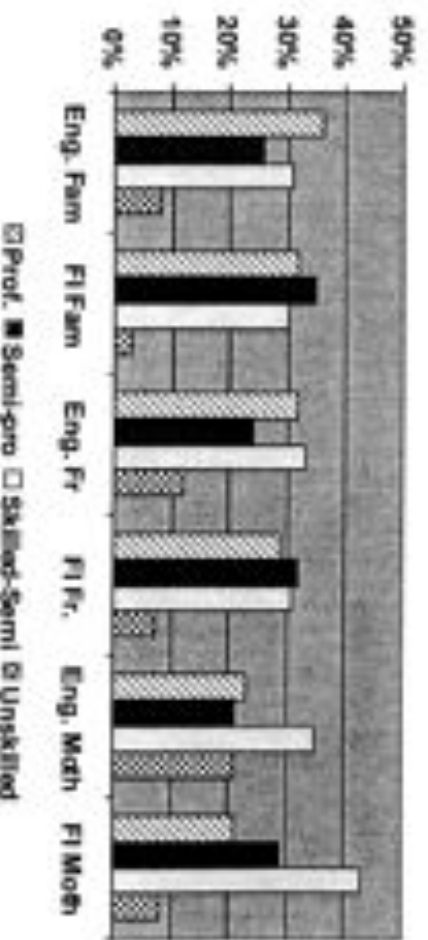
GRAPH 6 – School District 17 Occupation Distributions



*In School District 17 the dominant occupation is skilled/semi-skilled worker in both FI and English programs.*

Graph 6 clearly demonstrates that the dominant occupation in SD 17 in both English and FI programs is skilled and semi-skilled workers. A quite small percentage of families have one parent working in professional occupations. A somewhat higher percentage of parents work in semi-professional positions, and this percentage is quite similar in both programs.

GRAPH 7 – School District 18 Occupation Distributions



The occupational distribution pattern in SD 18 is more varied with a fairly high percentage of parents in all occupation types except unskilled jobs. Several important patterns are noted:

1. The percentage of families with one parent working in professional or semi-professional occupations is quite similar in both programs.
2. A similar percentage of fathers (around 30%) and of mothers (around 20%) in both programs works in professional occupations.

3. A high percentage of FI and English program mothers work in skilled or semi-skilled occupations.
4. A higher percentage of FI mothers work in semi-professional occupations than do English program mothers.
5. A higher percentage of English program mothers work in unskilled occupations than do FI program mothers

*In School District 18 a high percentage of parents are found in all occupation types in both programs.*

### Education and Occupation Levels by Grade Level

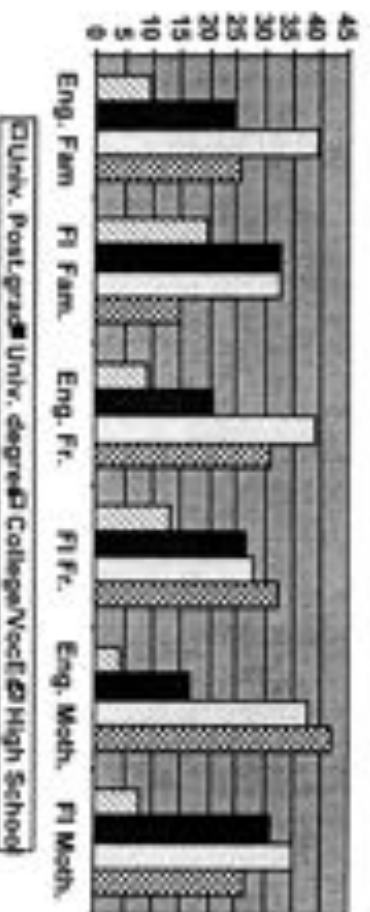
#### **Grade 1 - EFL and English Programs**

##### *Family Education Level*

**Graph 8** below summarizes the percentages of parents at four levels of education in EFL and in the English program at Grade 1.

**GRAPH 8**

**Percentage of Parents at Four Levels of Education at Grade 1**



*The patterns for levels of education at Grade 1 generally reflect the overall English program/FI program comparison.*

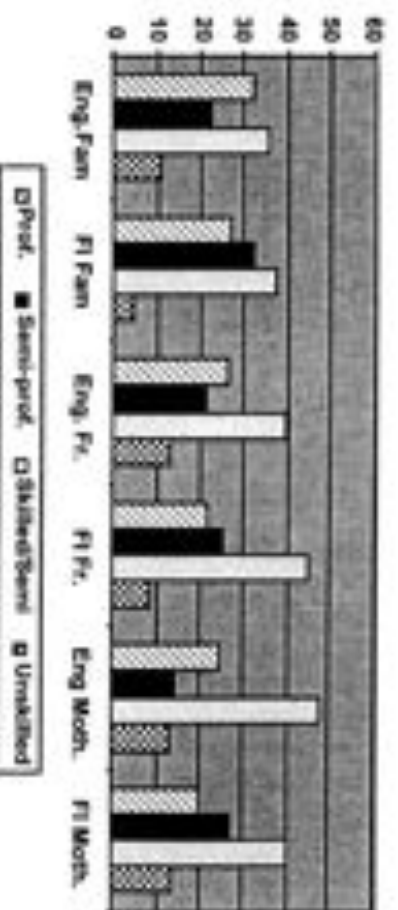
The patterns for levels of education at Grade 1 generally reflect the overall English program/FI program comparison. As was the case in the overall program comparisons, the percentage of families with at least one parent having completed some form of post-secondary education is extremely high in both English (74%) and French Immersion (85%). The percentage of families with at least one parent holding a university degree is also quite high in both the English program (35%) and FI program (52%). The gap between the programs is greater in EFL than overall however. While 10% more parents overall held university degrees in FI than in English, this widens to 17% in EFL.

The percentage of fathers at each of the four levels of education is similar to the overall English/FI comparison with 30% in English and 40% in FI holding a degree, and a 10% gap between the two. The difference from the overall comparison appears to be explained by the mothers' level of education. A relatively high proportion of mothers hold a university degree in both English (one in four) and in FI (one in three). 17% more FI program mothers hold a university degree than do English program mothers.

#### *Family Occupation Distributions*

**Graph 9** below summarizes the percentages of parents at four occupation categories in Early FI (EFT) and in the English program at Grade 1.

**GRAPH 9**  
Occupation Distributions of Parents in English and  
FI Programs at Grade 1



*In general, the family patterns at Grade 1 are quite similar to the overall occupation, distribution patterns.*

In general, the family patterns at Grade 1 are quite similar to the overall occupation distribution patterns. As was the case in the overall program comparisons, the majority of families at Grade 1 fall in the professional or semi-professional categories in both the English (54%) and French Immersion programs (58%). The percentage of families having one parent working in a professional occupation is somewhat higher in English than FI. A higher percentage of FI families have one parent working in a semi-professional occupation.

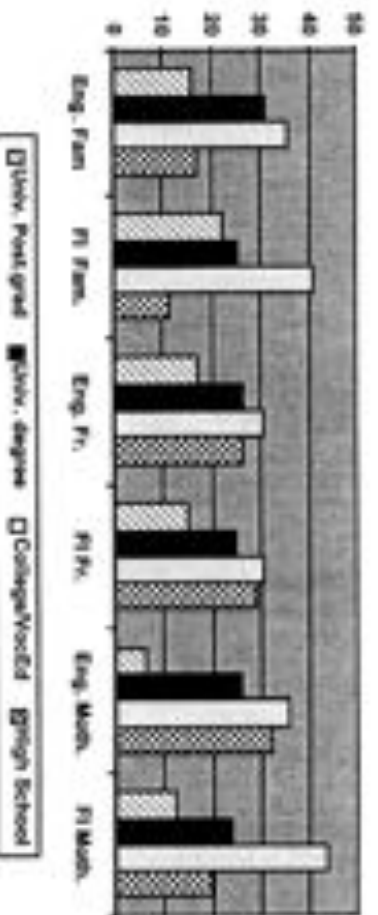
Again, as was the case in the overall comparisons, the pattern seen for families changes little when one examines fathers' occupation distributions separately. Also, with regard to mothers, a higher percentage of English program mothers

at Grade 1 work in professional occupations than do FI mothers. However, a considerably higher percentage of FI mothers work in semi-professional occupations than do English program mothers.

#### Grade 4 - EFL and English Programs

##### *Family Education Level*

GRAPH 10  
Percentage of Parents at Four Levels of Education at Grade 4



*Grade 4 EFL parents demonstrate educational levels that are quite different from the overall and Grade 1 patterns.*

**Graph 10** above summarizes the percentages of parents at four levels of education in EFL and in the English program at Grade 4.

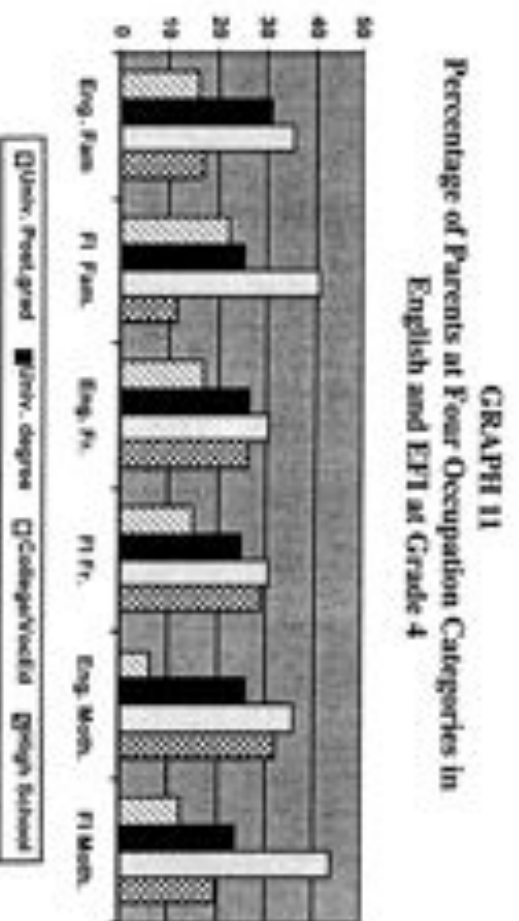
Grade 4 EFL parents demonstrate educational levels that are quite different from the overall and Grade 1 patterns. First, the percentage of families indicating a university degree as the highest level of family education is nearly identical in the English and FI programs. Second, the percentage of parents with a university degree is very high. In both programs this percentage is just under the majority.

The educational levels for fathers in both programs at grade 4 are very similar. Over 40% of fathers in both programs have a university degree. Similarly high percentages of mothers also have a university degree in both programs at grade 4. Unlike the overall comparison, which saw a 12% difference, and the Grade 1 comparison, which showed an 18% difference, there is only a 6% gap between English and FI mothers at Grade 4. The main differences with regard to

mothers' level of education at Grade 4 is the higher percentage of English program mothers that indicate a high school diploma as their highest level of education, and FI mothers who indicate a college/vocational diploma to be their highest level.

#### *Family Occupation Distributions*

**Graph 11** below summarizes the percentages of parents at five occupation categories in EPI and in the English program at Grade 4.



*The percentage of families indicating semi-professional or professional occupations is quite high (55% in English and 62% in FI) and constitutes a majority of families in the English and FI programs.*

The percentage of families indicating semi-professional or professional occupations is quite high (55% in English and 62% in FI) and constitutes a majority of families in the English and FI programs. The percentage of families indicating unskilled labour to be their occupation is higher in English than in FI, but this percentage is quite low in both programs compared to the other occupation categories.

This pattern for families also held for fathers at grade 4. Regarding mothers' occupations, a considerably higher percentage of FI mothers are found in skilled/semi-skilled occupations (56%) whereas a noticeably higher percentage of English program mothers are in unskilled occupations (32%).

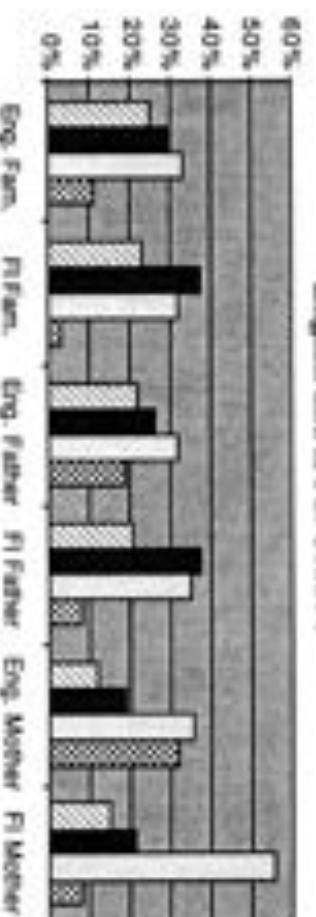


## Grade 6- EFL and English Programs

### Family Educational Level

**Graph 12** below summarizes the percentages of parents at four levels of education in Intermediate French Immersion (IFI) and in the English program at Grade 6.

**GRAPH 12**  
Percentages of Parents at Four Levels of Education in  
English and IFI at Grade 6



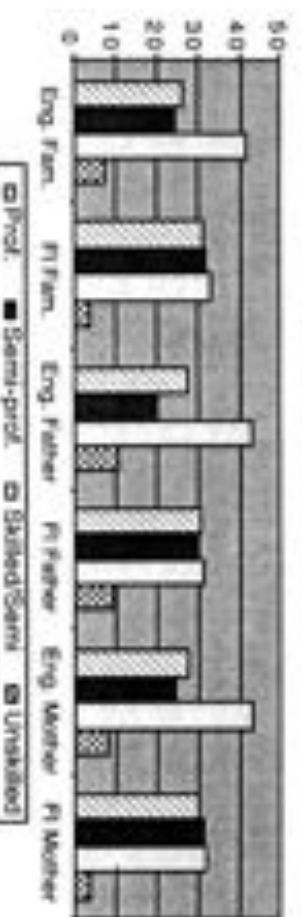
*At grade 6 in IFI, the patterns once again resemble very closely those seen in the Grade 1 EFL/English program and the overall FI English program comparisons.*

At grade 6 in IFI, the patterns once again resemble very closely those seen in the Grade 1 EFL/English program and the overall FI/English program comparisons. The percentage of families with one parent holding a university degree is quite high in both programs: just over half of IFI families compared to just under one in three families in the English program. This pattern tends to be quite similar for both the educational levels of both fathers and mothers at grade 6 in both programs.

### Family Occupation Distributions

**Graph 13** below displays the percentage of parents of Grade 6 English and IFI students in different occupational categories.

**GRAPH 13**  
Percentage of Families at Four Occupation Categories in  
English and IFI at Grade 6



*The pattern for occupational distributions at Grade 6 is very similar to the overall and Grade 1 comparisons. A high percentage of families in both programs hold professional/semi-professional positions at grade 6.*

The pattern for occupational distributions at Grade 6 is very similar to the overall and Grade 1 FI/English program comparisons. A high percentage of families in both programs hold professional/semi-professional positions at grade 6. A majority of the English program families have one professional or semi-professional parent and 63% of FI families do. In both programs a high percentage of families indicate skilled or semi-skilled occupations to be the highest occupation level. A somewhat higher percentage of English program parents work in skilled or semi-skilled occupations than do parents in FI program families.

This pattern is quite consistent for fathers in the English and FI programs. A noticeably higher percentage of mothers in the English program work in professional or semi-professional occupations (49%) than was the case in the overall (36%) and Grade 1 (39%) and grade 4 (33%) English/FI comparisons. 31% of FI mothers are in professional careers compared to 11% overall and 20% at Grade 1 and 15% at Grade 4. Also, the percentage of unskilled workers is much lower in FI (4%) than overall (18%) or in FI at grade 1 (14%) or grade 4 (8%).

#### **Conclusion: Family Background and Enrollment**

A very high percentage of parents of children enrolled in both the English and FI programs have university degrees and work in semi-professional or professional occupations. In many cases, this may be one in three parents or even a higher ratio as was the case in the Grade 4 English program where a slightly higher percentage of families had a university degree than did FI program families. On average 10% more FI families than English program families have completed university degrees. This gap is smaller for fathers (7%) and larger for mothers (13%). Professional and semi-professional occupations constitute the majority in both programs in the overall English/FI comparison, and were in the majority in the English program at grades 4 and 6, and approached 50% in Grade 1. While only 8% more FI fathers than English program fathers are in professional or semi-professional occupations, nearly 20% more FI mothers than English program mothers are.

*A very high percentage of parents of children enrolled in both the English and FI programs have university degrees and work in semi-professional or professional occupations.*



## Section Two: Factors Influencing Choice of Program

This section of the questionnaire involves 32 statements that parents, students, teachers and school administrators were asked to rate in terms of their relative importance in their decision to enroll their child in the English program or in FI. A Likert-type scale accompanied each statement with 1 being **Totally Unimportant**, 4 being **Neutral or Unsure**, and 7 being **Extremely Important**. Parents also had the option of circling N/A - not applicable if they felt a particular factor did not apply to their situation. These statements were grouped in six categories: *Information about FI from various sources; Perceptions of the English and FI programs; School influences; Support for French in the community or home; Attitudes and cultural factors; and Economic factors.*

### Category 1: Information on French Immersion Programs

There were five sources of information about FI proposed in this section. **Table 4** below summarizes the percentages of respondents indicating these various factors to be very or extremely important.

**Table 4**

**Percentage Indicating Source of Information to be Very/Extremely Important**

Information on FI provided by:	FI Parents	Eng. Parents	FI Teachers	Eng. Prog. Teachers	School Admins.	Gr.6 FI Students	Gr.6 Eng. Students
The NB Department of Education	43%	24%	46%	44%	38%	22%	8%
The school or school district	40%	24%	69%	28%	66%	9%	4%
Professional associations such as C.A.T., C.P.E.	13%	8%	44%	28%	16%	39%	20%
Magazines, TV newspapers, radio	15%	11%	49%	25%	13%	11%	6%
Friends, relatives, other parents	55%	33%	86%	76%	69%	57%	23%

### Information from Department of Education

43% of FI parents also indicated that Department of Education information was very or extremely important in their decision compared to 24% of English program parents. These percentages were very similar across grade levels in English and program variants in FI.

English program and FI teachers indicated a similar degree of importance for this source of information. 46% of FI teachers and 44% of English program teachers indicated they felt it was a very or extremely important factor in parents' decisions. 38% of school administrators indicated they felt information from the Department of Education was very or extremely important in parents' decisions. A fairly low percentage of students indicated this source of information to be very or extremely important.

*FI teachers and parents felt information from the Department of Education, school district or school was very or extremely important in the decision to enroll in FI.*

#### *Information Provided by School District*

40% of FI parents indicated that information provided by the school or school district was very or extremely important in their decision compared to 24% of English program parents. These percentages were very similar across grade levels in English and program variants in FI.

69% of FI teachers and 28% of English program teachers indicated they felt it was a very or extremely important factor in parents' decisions. 66% of school administrators indicated they felt information from the school or school district was very or extremely important in parents' decision of choice of program.

A very low percentage of students in both programs however indicated information from the school or district to be very or extremely important.

#### *Information from professional associations*

Parents indicated that this source was less important than Department of Education and School District information. 13% of FI parents and 8% of English program parents indicated that information from these associations was very or extremely important. Little variation in these percentages was seen across grade levels in English or program variants in FI.

44% of FI teachers and 28% of English program teachers indicated information from professional associations to be very or extremely important in their choice of program. 16% of administrators felt this information to be very or extremely important

Professional associations were also seen to be the an important source of information by students in both programs, however.

*Information about FI from the media (TV, newspapers, magazines)*

Quite low percentages of FI (15%) and English program parents (11%) indicated that this was a very or extremely important source of information. Again there was very little variation across grade levels or program variants.

In contrast, 49% of FI teachers indicated they felt this was a very or extremely important source of information. 25% of English program teachers also thought so as did 13% of administrators.

Students indicated that the information from the media was not influential in their decision.

*Information from friends, relatives and other parents*

Parents indicated that this source was the most important. 55% of FI parents and 35% of English program parents indicated it was very or extremely important. As with the other factors in this section these percentages were quite similar across grades and programs.

Teachers felt this source was even more important in parents' decisions. 86% of FI teachers and 76% of English program teachers felt this was a very or extremely important source of information influencing parents' decisions. 69% of administrators also felt it was very or extremely important.

Students in both programs also indicated that friends and relatives were an extremely important source of information.

### ***Summary of Importance of Sources of Information***

Both groups of parents and students identify similar sources of information as being important in their choice of program. However, there are some important distinctions. Information from two key sources - the Department of Education and the school/school district - is viewed as being important by a substantially higher percentage of FI parents than English program parents. IFI students also indicate that information from the Department was important in their decision to enter immersion. In general, information from informal sources such as relatives and friends appears to be contributing the most to parents' and students' decisions to enroll in FI or in the English program.

Teachers and administrators indicate that they feel information from informal

*A high % of parents and very high % of teachers indicated information from friends, relatives and other parents to be very/extremely important.*

sources to be extremely important in the decision-making process. Teachers in both programs and to a lesser degree administrators indicate a higher degree of importance than do parents.

#### ***Comments by Parents on Information from Various Sources***

In addition to providing a rating of the relative importance of various sources of information, participants were also asked to write any comments they felt were appropriate concerning this issue. The following is a selection of these comments:

##### **Grade 1 EL Parents Comments**

*Our son had a lot of problems in kindergarten and it was decided by the principal that he would be better off in the English program till he was older.*

*I was concerned when examining the figures given to us at the Early Immersion meeting of the students who complete EL, less than one half of them reach the program level of functional, when the goal is advanced.*

*Unfortunately French immersion has not been "pushed" by anyone else except the school district. I don't recall hearing about it anywhere else.*

##### **Grade 1 EL Parents Comments**

*Who wrote your survey? You didn't even touch on the fear I hear expressed so often by parents who struggle with the decision. Perhaps next time you could talk to some teachers, administrators, parents, etc. before you undertake this. There is so much more you could have touched on.*

##### **Grade 6 English Parents Comments**

*Lack of information from Dept. Of Education that students completing a French Immersion program are as proficient in English-Writing & Reading skills as the students that are enrolled in the English Program.*

*Began in middle French immersion (Grade 4) but switched to English early in Grade 5 because child was having some learning difficulties and there was inadequate methods & resource available in French.*

### Grade 6 FI Parents Comments

*The teacher recommended French Immersion because (the staff) + You wouldn't want your child in with the group going to English. Slow learners, behavior problems will make up the class.*

*Yes, the wish of our daughter who wanted to be enrolled in French Immersion.*

*Child needed a challenge which was not provided in the English program.*

### Category 2: Perceptions of the FI and English Programs

In this section participants were presented with six statements that referred to features that could be associated with the English or FI programs. These statements are reproduced in Table 5 below.

**Table 5**  
Percentage Indicating Perceived Characteristics  
to be Important or Very Important

Perceptions of the FI and English Programs	FI Parents	Eng. Parents	FI Teacher	Eng. Program Teacher	School Admin	Gr 6 IFI Students	Gr 6 Eng. Students
Overall reputation of program in this school	33%	39%	80%	74%	63%	35%	37%
Class size in the program	31%	35%	61%	59%	54%	22%	33%
Student classroom behaviour in the program	39%	35%	63%	79%	78%	34%	37%
Opportunities for out of school activities (field trips, travel, exchanges)	22%	22%	21%	21%	29%	47%	21%
Perceived lack of resource teachers in FI (English parents) Perceived availability (FI parents)	19%	30%	48%	29%	13%	34%	21%
Perceived lack of programs for gifted students in FI (English parents) Perceived availability (FI parents)	16%	8%	36%	18%	20%	27%	6%
Perceived family background of children in the program	14%	24%	41%	55%	53%	22%	17%

*The reputation of the program in the school in question*

This factor was considered to be very or extremely important by 33% of FI parents and by 39% of English program parents. This pattern was consistent across programs and grades with a somewhat greater percentage of English program parents indicating reputation of the program to be more important.

80% of FI teachers and 74% of English program teachers felt this was a very or extremely important factor in parents' decisions. 63% of administrators also felt it was very or extremely important.

*Very high % of FI and English program teachers felt the reputation of the program was very or extremely high*

This was also shown to be an important factor for a fairly high percentage of students in both programs.

#### *Class size*

This was felt to be very or extremely important by a somewhat higher percentage of FI parents (31%) than English program parents (26%). This was a consistent finding across grade levels and program variants.

61% of FI teachers and 59% of English program teachers felt this was a very or extremely important factor. 63% of administrators felt this was very or extremely important.

#### *Classroom behaviour*

39% of FI parents felt classroom behaviour in the FI program to be very or extremely important compared to 26% of English parents who felt the same in regard to the English program. Again this was consistent across programs and grade levels.

63% of FI teachers and 79% of English program teachers felt this was a very or extremely important factor in parents' decisions. 49% of administrators also felt this was very or extremely important.

A fairly high percentage of FI students also indicate that classroom behaviour was a very or extremely important factor in their decision.

#### *Opportunities for out of school activities*

Identical low percentages of parents in both programs (22%) indicated this factor to be very or extremely important in their decision of choice of program. Again, very little variation was noted across grade levels or programs.

*A much higher % of FI and English program teachers felt classroom behaviour and class size to be a very or extremely important factor*

Identical low percentages of FI and English program teachers (21%) felt this was very or extremely important in parent's decisions. 25% of administrators also felt it was very or extremely important.

However, a high percentage of IFI students (nearly half) indicate that their perception of this was a very or extremely important factor in their decision.

*Lack of methods and resource teachers was viewed as very or extremely important by a high % of FI parents and teachers.*

*The perceived availability or lack of resource teachers in FI*

30% of English program parents indicated that the perceived lack of resource teachers in FI was a very or extremely important factor in their choice of program. 38% of FI parents indicated that their perception that there would be resource teachers was very or extremely important in their decision to opt for FI.

48% of FI teachers and 29% of English program teachers feel this is a very or extremely influential factor in parents' decisions. Administrators feel differently: Only 13% feel it is a very or extremely important factor.

*The perceived availability or lack of programs for gifted learners*

Only 16% of FI parents and 8% of English program parents felt the availability or lack of a program for gifted learners was a very or extremely important factor in their decision. Again, this was a consistent finding across grade levels and programs.

36% of FI teachers and 38% of English program teachers feel this is a very or extremely influential factor. 20% of administrators feel this to be the case as well.

*Family Background*

A very low percentage, just 14% of FI parents, indicated that family background was very or extremely important in their decision to enroll in FI. A somewhat higher percentage of English program parents 24% felt this to be very or extremely important in their decision to enroll in English.

At grade 6 there was some difference noted from the overall results. Only 12% of FI parents attributed some degree of importance to family background compared to over 26% at grade 1 and grade 4 in FI.



*A much higher % of teachers and administrators feel family background to be an important factor in parents' decision.*

41% of FI teachers and 55% of English teachers feel family background is a very or extremely important factor in parents' decisions to enroll in FI. 53% of administrators also feel this way.

### ***Summary of Perceptions of the Programs***

Overall reputation of the program in the school in question proves to be a very or extremely important factor for both English parents (the most important factor) and FI parents (the second most important factor). For FI parents the most important factor is student behaviour, and for English parents the second most important factor is the lack of a methods and resource teacher. Both groups of parents indicate class size to be the third most important factor influencing their decision.

*Reputation of program, student behaviour, and lack of methods and resource teachers are the most important factors for FI and English program parents.*

Both English program and FI teachers perceive these same factors to be very or extremely important. In fact much higher percentages of teachers indicate these factors to be very or extremely important than do parents. One exception is family background, which teachers and administrators view as being very or extremely influential but which is not reported to be so by a very large percentage of either FI or English parents. The question of methods and resource teachers seems to be very and extremely important for a high percentage of English parents and FI teachers and English teachers. School administrators however do not perceive it to be a very or extremely important issue in program choice – only 13%.

For students in both programs the overall reputation of the school is an important factor in their decision. A much higher percentage of IFI students indicate that student classroom behaviour was an very or extremely important factor in their decision. Perceived opportunities for out of school activities was also shown to be a very or extremely important factor for a high percentage of IFI students.

### ***Comments by Parents on Perceptions of the Programs***

#### ***Grade 1 English Program Parents***

*Class size is a negative side of the English program. Teachers in the English program have to deal with more behavior problems etc. as well. We have*



created a two-tier education system. If we truly want to give "equal opportunity" to all we should consider one program that can give both French and English learning opportunities. As a parent I had a very difficult time trying to decide what program to put my child in – unnecessary stress in an already stressful world. When most households have two parents working outside the home would total immersion for a year not give better results? Above all, one program for all!!!

It is my perception that for the most part the French immersion program does not encourage the enrolment of children with learning difficulty. The English program does not have the luxury of removing children that can't cope or even encouraging placement elsewhere.

There are no children with learning difficulties in the FI program. They are "strongly encouraged" to transfer to English where they must be accommodated.

The fact that learning disabled, or differently abled children are not provided for by the French Immersion program affected my decision.

We are bilingual English and would be unable to assist our children with school work if required. We would be open to late immersion if our children are strong academically. A strong base in English, Math and Science was most important to us.

#### Grade 1 FI Program Parents

As a child, my mother tried to place me in French school (1966) (immersion did not exist then) as she believed it was important. How could I not take advantage of that which is now readily available - given the efforts I went of learn French - intensive University courses, immersion Summer programmes and continuing adult education courses.

I have fostered children for 8 years, so I have seen the Core English Program and the French Immersion Program. The more troubled children tend to be in Core English, thus making a vast difference between the two. The thing that I do find unfair is that if children have a different learning style there is not accommodation in French Immersion and teachers are eager to switch children to core English.

### Grade 6 English Parents Comments

*Concern re: not being able to actively participate/monitor homework.*

*Child was very concerned/uncomfortable with French program. The French at elementary level did not provide her the confidence to try immersion.*

*Parents can help their children with English homework but there could be language barriers if the child is in French Immersion.*

- 1. More fun to learn in own language*
- 2. Can become bilingual later if needed*
- 3. Have heard university professors complain F.I. Students have very poor written English skills.*

### Grade 6 FI Parents Comments

*Probably wouldn't be as many behaviour problems in French Immersion classes*

*It appears that most of the resource dollars go into the French Immersion program. French immersion*

### Category 3: School Influences

Eight factors were presented related to possible school influences on parents' choice of program. These are presented in **Table 6**.

#### *Results of testing for entry to FI*

Regarding results of testing for entry to FI, 56% of FI parents and 65% of English program parents indicated this was not applicable, presumably since no testing was done. Furthermore, only 18% of FI and 12% of English parents indicated this was very or extremely important. This was similar across grade levels and program variants.

However, 38% of FI teachers and 35% of English teachers felt results of testing were very or extremely influential on parents' choice of program. 32% of administrators also felt this to be the case. A high percentage of IFI students indicate that results of tests were very or extremely important in their decision. This likely refers to previous success in school as measured on tests, however.

**Table 6**  
**Percentage Indicating Perceived Characteristics**  
**to be Important or Very Important**

School Influences	PI Parents	English Parents	FI Teachers	English Program Teacher	School Admin.	Gr. 6 IFI Staff	Gr. 6 Eng. Staff
Results of tests your child did for entry to French immersion	18%	12%	38%	35%	32%	41%	14%
Child's previous success in further schooling	60%	40%	65%	77%	69%	58%	54%
Child's previous interest in French	45%	43%	60%	66%	47%	48%	47%
Child's general level of interest in school	62%	40%	66%	76%	69%	45%	53%
Advice of former (classroom) teacher	41%	35%	97%	76%	69%	42%	27%
Advice of core French teacher	30%	13%	82%	71%	83%	35%	25%
Advice of the school principal	13%	15%	28%	33%	22%	30%	7%
Advice of people who work at the school or school district	13%	8%	9%	13%	19%	64%	29%

#### *Previous success in school*

Previous success in earlier schooling proved to be a critical variable. 60% of FI parents indicated this to be very or extremely important and 49% of English parents did as well. Since EPI is a Grade 1 entry in New Brunswick, this is based on either pre-school or kindergarten experience for parents enrolling a child in that program. This factor is even more important at grade 6 where 70% of English program parents and 82% of IFI parents indicated that previous success in school was important to some degree in their decision.

This was also seen to be very or extremely important by a large percentage of IFI students in both programs.

65% of FI teachers and 77% of English teachers feel this is a very or extremely influential factor on parents' and students' decisions. 69% of administrators also feel this to be so.

#### *The child's previous interest in French*

This was also an important factor. 45% of FI parents and 43% of English parents indicated this was very or extremely important. 60% of FI teachers and 66% of English teachers feel this is very or extremely influential in parents' decisions. 47% of administrators also believe this to be the case.

*Previous success in school and general level of interest in school are the most important factors for parents, teachers and administrators.*

*Child's general level of interest in school*

62% of FI parents and 49% of English program parents indicated that their child's general interest in school was very or extremely important in their decision to enroll their child in FI or not. One in three parents in both programs indicated this was an extremely important factor. These percentages are fairly stable across programs and grade levels with the exception of FI parents at grade 4 where 67% of parents attributed a degree of importance of this factor.

66% of FI teachers and 76% of English program teachers feel this is influential. 69% of administrators also feel this is a very or extremely influential factor in parental and student decision making. Students in both programs also felt this to be so.

*Advice of a former teacher*

This factor is also quite important with 41% of FI parents and 33% of English program parents indicating it to be very or extremely important. These percentages did not vary greatly across program or grade levels.

57% of FI teachers and 76% of English program teachers feel this is a very or extremely influential factor on parental decision making. 69% of administrators also feel this to be so.

*Advice of the core French teacher*

The core French teacher seems to play a role in parents' decision to enroll in FI - 30% of parents claim this to be very or extremely important. However, only 13% of parents choosing not to enroll in FI indicate this factor to be very or extremely important

*Teachers and administrators see advice of former teachers to be as important.*

While only 20% of English parents at Grade 1 indicate this factor to be important, 35% of FI program parents do. 9% of Grade 1 and 4 English parents indicate it to be extremely important compared to 18% of grade 1 and 4 EFI program parents. At grade 6, 52% of English program parents and 47% of FI program parents indicate this factor to be important to some degree and 14% of English program parents and 17% of FI program parents indicate it to be extremely important.

52% of FI teachers and 71% of English program teachers feel the core French teacher is influential is very or extremely influential in parents' decision making. When examining how core French teachers responded, 88% indicated very or extremely influential.

53% of administrators also felt the core French teacher was very or extremely influential in parental choice of program.

#### *Advice of the school principal*

Very low percentages of parents, 17% of FI and 13% of English program parents, indicate that advice from the school principal is a very or extremely important factor. Another 31% of parents in each program are neutral or unsure about this. This percentage is quite similar across grades and program variants.

Very low % of English and FI program parents indicate advice from the school principal to be very/extremely important.

FI and English teachers feel somewhat differently. 28% of FI teachers and 33% of English teachers feel the principal does have a very or extremely high influence.

Only 22% of administrators feel they have a very or extremely high degree of influence.

#### *The advice of school district personnel*

This source follows a pattern similar to that of school principals with only 13% of FI parents and 8% of English parents indicating this to be important to some degree. These percentages are similar across grades and programs.

9% of FI teachers and 13% of English teachers feel this to be very or extremely influential. 19% of administrators also feel this way. However, a very high percentage of IFI students indicate that this was a very or extremely important factor in their decision.

A high % of IFI students indicated advice of school district personnel to be very/extremely important in decision to enroll in the program.

#### *Summary of School Influencers*

The school-related influences indicated to be very or extremely important by the greatest percentage of parents are: *Child's general interest in school*; *Child's previous success in school*; *Child's previous interest in French*; *Advice of a former teacher*. These follow the same order of importance for FI and English parents but a higher percentage of FI parents indicate them to be very or extremely important. FI teachers, English teachers, and Administrators also indicate these to be the most important factors.

Previous success and interest in school are the two factors shown to be very or extremely important by very high percentages of English program and IFI students. An extremely high percentage of IFI students, however, indicate that advice from someone at the school or school district was very or extremely important. A high percentage of IFI students also indicate that results of tests were very or extremely important.

#### ***Comments by Parents on School Influences***

##### **Grade 1 English Program Parents**

*My child was not offered any testing for entry to FI. I was told that district employees are not allowed to offer advice on what program a child should be placed in.*

*Older sibling required large time investment with homework reinforcing our decision for the English program. Teachers are overloaded so parents are required to help children with learning more than ever before-I can't help if I do not speak the language.*

*My wife wants the children to have a second language. I want my children to be very successful in reading and writing my language. This will help preserve my heritage & background.*

##### **Grade 1 FI Program Parents**

*Our child was extremely apprehensive and unwilling to go into French immersion. It meant a bus ride, a new school no longer in our local neighbourhood, no coming home for lunch - different time schedule. He is a child who does not cope well with change at the best of times. His previous school was very well organized to deal with his disabilities - his new school took time to get it together. None the less we enrolled him due to our strong feelings about the need for multilingualism. We discovered that his real fear was that he thought that he would be the only student who couldn't speak French and that all the other children would be fluent. Once we explained that children who spoke French wouldn't be able to enroll in immersion, 99% of the battle was won. We also verified with a medical specialist that he should be able to adapt the language/speech function.*



#### Grade 6 English Parents

*-Teachers etc did not advise, rather left decision to parent (except to say immersion is better resourced' and that English programs have proportionately higher # of special needs/difficult children.*

*My child does very well in school and has no problems with French in the core program. In my opinion, I feel my child should become proficient in one language (English-reading & writing) before learning a second language.*

*Our son is very bright but misses instructions because he stops listening when he is bored or thinking about other things so we felt things would get worse in a French program.*

#### Grade 6 EL Parents

*The importance of being bilingual was the biggest factor in our decision. Our son is a low-average student, immersion makes school a little more difficult but the outcome is worth it in the end. Our daughter is above average which may make immersion easier but a low achiever as long as the language does not make school a frustrating experience.*

*My child appeared to learn the language with relative ease. Also he did not appear to have learning disabilities in the reading-writing area that would hinder him. Learning a second language did not appear to hinder his social development in particular communication ability.*

#### Category 4: Support for French in Community and Home

In this section there are five variables. These are presented in Table 7.

Table 7  
Percentage Indicating Elements of Support in  
Community to be Important or Very Important

Support for French in the Community, Home, among Friends	FL Parents	English Parents	FL Teachers	English Program Teachers	School Admin.	Gr 6 IFI Students	Gr 6 English Prog. Staff
The extent to which French is present in your community	35%	20%	22%	31%	31%	16%	13%
The number of friends and/or relatives who speak French	11%	26%	38%	33%	28%	15%	18%
Your own level of French or ability to learn French	36%	31%	29%	29%	28%	48%	30%
You have another child in the French immersion/ English program	42%	36%	65%	63%	75%	22%	31%
Your child's friends are in the French immersion/ English program	19%	24%	62%	52%	78%	22%	32%

*The extent to which French is present in the community*

35% of FI parents and 20% of English parents indicated this to be very or extremely important. These percentages were considerably lower in grade 6 where only 15% of English program parents attributed some degree of importance compared to 45% of FI parents.

32% of FI teachers and 31% of English teachers felt this was very or extremely influential. 31% of administrators thought this was the case.

*Availability of friends or relatives who speak French*

Similarly, having friends or relatives who speak French does not appear to be a crucial factor. 21% of FI and 26% of English program parents indicated this to be very or extremely important. These percentages were similar across programs and grade levels with the exception of grade 6 IFI where only 6% of

38% of FI teachers felt this was very or extremely influential, as did 33% of English teachers. 28% of administrators felt this to be so.

*Own level of French or ability to learn French*

36% of FI parents indicated their own level of French or ability to learn the language was very or extremely important in their decision to enroll their child in FI. 31% of English program parents indicated this to be the case in deciding to enroll their child in English and not in FI. These percentages are similar

across programs and grade levels with the exception of 6 IFI where the extremely important percentage drops to 9%.

29% of FI and English teachers felt this was very or extremely influential, as did 28% of administrators. A fairly high percentage of Grade 6 students indicated their own ability to learn French was important.

#### *Another child in the same program*

42% of FI parents and 36% of English program parents indicated that having another child in the program was a very or extremely important factor in their decision. This was an even more important factor in grade 1 where 39% of English and 38% of EFI parents indicated it to be extremely important.

Having another child in the same program was viewed as very important by a high % of parents, teachers and administrators.

An even higher percentage of FI teachers (65%) and English program teachers (63%) viewed this to be very or extremely important in parents' choice of program. 75% of administrators also felt this to be the case.

#### *Child's friend(s) being in the same program*

The child's friend or friends being in the same program was not an equally important factor however. Only 19% of FI parents and 24% of English program parents felt this was very or extremely important. An exception is noted in grade 6 where 47% of English parents indicated this was important and 25% indicated it was extremely important. Only 9% of FI program parents at grade 6 indicated this was extremely important.

A fairly high percentage of Grade 6 English program students indicated that having a friend in the same program was an important factor in their choice. This percentage was lower in IFI.

Teachers and administrators perceived that having a friend in the program was an important deciding factor. Parents did not.

In contrast, 62% of FI teachers and 52% of English teachers viewed this to be a very or extremely influential factor. 78% of administrators also saw this to be very or extremely influential.

#### ***Summary of Support for French in Community and Home***

Having another child already enrolled in the program was the factor reported to be the most important by the greatest percentage of FI and English program parents. This was more important in FI than in English however. The parents' own level of French or perceived ability to learn was ranked the second most

important by both groups of parents. Teachers and administrators perceptions of the importance of a child's friend being enrolled in the program is at odds with what parents in both programs report – 78% of administrators feel this is very or extremely important while only 19% and 24% of parents indicate this to be the case.

Having a sibling or friend in the same program as well as one's ability to learn French were also the two factors indicated to be very or extremely important by the highest percentage of students.

#### ***Comments by Parents on Support for French in Community and Home***

##### ***Grade 1 EL Parent***

*There is no support in the French Immersion program for children who do not fit the mould.*

##### ***Grade 6 English Parents***

*Our son's friends went to French Immersion in Grade 4, which meant they went to ... School in Grade 6. We considered having (our son) in F.I. in Grade 6 when we found the English class was full of disruptive children but it would have meant transferring to another school where he did not have friends.*

#### ***Category 5: Attitudes And Cultural Factors***

The next section involves three cultural factors: a desire to know more about one's own or a second language and culture; a belief that schooling in a second language is either as easy or more difficult than in one's first language; and a belief that we should learn either the majority language or contribute to a bilingual society.

**Table 8**  
**Percentage Indicating Various Attitudes and**  
**Cultural Factors to be Important or Very Important**

Attitudes and Cultural Factors	FL Parent	English Parent	FL Teacher	English Program Teacher	School Admin.	Gr.6 FL Student	Gr.6 English Student
A desire to know more about French language, people and culture (FL parents) A desire to know more about English language, people and culture							
A belief that schooling in French is as easy and as natural as it is in English (FL parents) A belief that schooling in English is easier and more natural than it is in French (Eng parents).	33%	34%	26%	29%	28%	17%	41%
A belief that since Canada is a bilingual country we should contribute to that by knowing both official languages (FL parents) A belief that since English is the language of the majority in Canada, we should concentrate on learning English in school.	36%	34%	15%	25%	9%	19%	39%
	68%	59%	44%	17%	13%	9%	36%

*A desire to know more about French/English language, people and culture*  
 33% of FL parents indicated that a desire to know more about French language, people and culture was very or extremely important in their decision to enroll their child in FL. A low percentage of EFL students indicated this was important however.

34% of English program parents indicated that a desire to know more about English language and culture was an important factor in their decision to enroll in the English program. These percentages are similar across grades and programs. A similar percentage of English program students also indicate this to be an important factor.

26% of FL and 29% English program teachers feel this is a very or extremely influential factor. 28% of administrators also feel it is very or extremely influential.

*A belief that schooling in French is as easy and as natural as English or that schooling in English is easier and more natural*

36% of FL parents indicated that a belief that schooling in French is as easy

*Only about one in three parents indicated cultural factors or language learning factors to be very or extremely important.*

and as natural as English so be a very or extremely important factor in their decision to enroll their child in FI. 34% of English parents indicated that their belief that schooling in English is easier and more natural than French was very or extremely important in their decision.

*A very high % of FI parents indicated belief in bilingualism to be a very or extremely important factor. A very low % of administrators felt this to be the case.*

A higher percentage (64%) of grade 4 EFI parents and a lower percentage (42%) of English program parents indicate this to be important than was the case in the other grades. A considerably lower percentage of FI grade 6 parents (31%) indicate this to be important to some degree and only 7% strongly agree.

While very low percentages of FI students attach importance to French cultural factors, fairly high percentages of English program students indicate learning about English culture and language was important in their decision.

A very low percentage of FI students indicate this to be an important factor. However, for a high percentage of English program students, the idea that English schooling is easier was a very or extremely important factor.

15% of FI teachers and 25% English program teachers feel this is very or extremely influential, as do 9% of administrators.

*A belief that since Canada is a bilingual country we should learn French/A belief that since English is the majority language we should concentrate on it in school*

A very high 68% of FI parents indicated that a very or extremely important factor in their decision was a belief that we should contribute to Canada as a bilingual nation. A fairly high 39% of English program parents also indicated that a very or extremely important factor in their decision was that English is the majority language of Canada and the one we should learn in school.

This percentage was higher in grade 1 EFI (79%) and in grade 4 EFI (82%) than in grade 6 FI – (67%). The percentage indicating this to be extremely important was considerably higher in EFI grade 1 (49%) and grade 4 (50%) than in grade 6 FI (27%).

A low percentage of FI students indicate that bilingualism was an important factor in their decision.



Very low percentages - 17% of FI teachers and 13% of English teachers - felt that a belief we should contribute to Canada, as a bilingual country was very or extremely influential in parents' decisions to enroll in FI. Only 13% of administrators felt that this was the case.

#### *Summary of Attitudes and Cultural Factors*

Very similar percentages of FI and English program parents indicate knowledge of language and culture and the process of language learning to be very or extremely important factors in their decision. The factor, which stands out, is the importance of contributing to Canada as a bilingual country. 68% of French immersion parents report this to be very or extremely important. While fairly high percentages English program parents and FI teachers also indicate this to be true, this is not the case for English program teachers or school administrators. Only 17% and 13% respectively perceive bilingualism to be a very or extremely important factor in parental choice of program. Low percentages of FI students also indicate that contributing to bilingualism was a very or extremely important factor in their decision.

#### *Comments by Parents on Attitudes and Cultural Factors*

##### *Grade 1 English Parents*

*I believe a child should be able to speak and write in his own language before he/she does another.*

*I can't imagine putting the stress of a second language on a child in grade 1. Getting use to school is hard enough.*

##### *Grade 1 FI Parents*

*I do not speak French, but I am an Acadian and the children should know their heritage and language.*

##### *Grade 6 FI Program Parent*

*The fact that my son who is in French immersion could not get advanced level math and science courses in Grades 11 and 12 in the high school. Therefore, felt better about putting this son in English.*

### Grade 6 English Program Parents

*Belief that child in immersion do not have strong basic skills in English (or at least not as good as they could/should be) - feedback from university educators;*

*the fact that my older son who studies in French Immersion could not get advanced level math & science courses in Grades 11 & 12 in the High School therefore felt better about putting this son in English (Having him in French immersion didn't seem as important as earlier even though we would have preferred to have our son in French Immersion because there are fewer behaviourally disruptive children in French. (Grade 6 English program parent)*

*The cost of providing two programs poorly as opposed to concentrating on one program with an excellent second language element has always caused me a great deal of concern I believe English is the lang of the majority in Canada and I also believe our children should have the opportunity to learn a second or third lang. The province on N.B. is trying to please everyone at the risk of the whole education system and economic system.*

### Category 6: Economic Factors

In this subsection there are four factors related to opportunities for work using French: opportunities in the immediate community; opportunities in New Brunswick; opportunities in Canada or elsewhere in the world; opportunities to get a high paying, prestigious job anywhere.

**Table 9**  
**Percentage Indicating Economic Factors to be Important or Very Important**

Economic Factors	FI Parent	English Parent	FI Teacher	English Program Teacher	School Admin.
Increased opportunity to get work using French in your community.	74%	11%	71%	71%	59%
Increased opportunity to get work using French in New Brunswick.	82%	12%	82%	79%	81%
Increased opportunity to get work using French anywhere in Canada or the world.	75%	14%	73%	62%	53%
Increased opportunity to get a high-paying, prestigious job anywhere using French.	65%	14%	68%	64%	56%

### *Opportunities for employment*

Between 74% and 82% of FI parents indicated that opportunities for work in the community, in the province or in the country were very or extremely important factor in their decision to enroll their child in FI. These percentages were similar across programs and grade levels.

(The issue of employment in French was difficult to measure for English program parents. When prompted to indicate to what extent difficulty in finding employment using French in their community or province might have influenced their decision, 45-48% indicated this was totally unimportant.)

These perceptions were also held by FI and English program teachers and to some degree by school administrators. A lower percentage of administrators felt work in the community or outside the province to be very or extremely important. Work within New Brunswick was reported to be very or extremely important by 79-82% of all groups.

*Opportunities to get a high paying, prestigious job anywhere.*

A high paying prestigious job was also important with 65% of parents indicating it was very or extremely important.

68% of FI teachers and 64% of English program teachers felt this was very or extremely influential, as did 56% of administrators.

### *Summary Of Economic Factors*

In general employment is reported to be a very or extremely important factor in the decision to enroll in FI. Teachers in both programs and administrators also perceive this to be equally important in parents' choice of program.

### *Comments by Parents on Economic Factors*

#### *Grade 1 English Program Parents*

*What does Economics have to do with a child in grade 1?*

*Employment is reported to be a very or extremely important factor in the decision to enroll in FI.*

### Grade 1 EL Parents

*Children graduate with a working and competent knowledge of 2 languages in the same amount of time as the English only program.*

*Very very important. I want the best our system has to offer and I feel I am giving them that with FL.*

### Grade 6 English Program Parents

*Unfortunately I believe to get a job in Government or almost anywhere in NB - One Must have French. But Professional Jobs ie) Doctors, Lawyers. Some Teachers. University Professors etc will get work in English but easier if they have French. Only NB really needs French. Quebec hire Quebecers 1st & Rarely outside workers.*

*French is not an issue elsewhere in the world. People learn many langr. Depending on what their needs are. I find N.B. Very closed in their perception of what is really going on in the rest of the world.*

*When you consider the world as a possible job market the French language would not be an asset. If any second language would be helpful it would be Spanish. Therefore it is more important to have a good strong educational background in English. ( Grade 6 English program parents)*

*The opportunities are there but we don't believe French will be needed for the type of work our son will do-as an engineer or with computers also, with Core French background, French can be learned after high school if needed.*

*We believe the good jobs which require French go to French language students (ie. Ecole St Anne) not to French immersion students."*

### Grade 6 EL Parents

*I've read that children at an early age have greater ease of learning a second language than later on. Also, adding additional languages is deemed to be easier.*

*I strongly believed at the time (1997) that in the future 2 languages would get you a better job, and French language would be a necessity to survive in the work place.*

### **Conclusion - Factors Influencing Choice Of Program**

In the preceding section, several factors have been shown to be much more important than others in parents' decision to enroll their child in either English or the French immersion program. The most important of these are listed below according to program using 30% as a cut-off point.

#### **Factors Considered Most Important by Teachers**

<b>English Program Teachers</b>	<b>FI Program Teachers</b>
1. Information from friends, relatives and parents 2. Information from Department of Education 3. Overall reputation of the program in the school 4. Student behaviour in the program 5. Child's previous success in school 6. Child's general level of interest in school + Advice of former 7. Another child in the English program 8. Child's friend in the program 9. A desire to know more about English language and culture 10. A belief that schooling in English is easier and more natural than in French	1. Information from friends, relatives 2. Information from school district, school 3. Overall reputation of the program 4. Student behaviour in the program 5. Child's previous success in school 6. Child's general level of interest in school 7. Another child in the FI program 8. Child's friend in the program 9. A belief we should contribute to Canada as a bilingual country 10. A belief that schooling in French is just as easy as in English

### Factors Considered Most Important by Parents

English Program Parents	FL Program Parents
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information from friends, relatives and parents</li> <li>2. Information from Department, school district, school</li> <li>3. Overall reputation of the program in the school.</li> <li>4. Perceived lack of methods and resource teachers.</li> <li>5. Child's previous success in school.</li> <li>6. Child's general level of interest in school</li> <li>7. Another child in the Eng. program.</li> <li>8. Own level of French or ability to learn.</li> <li>9. Belief that since English is majority language we should concentrate on it.</li> <li>10. Belief that learning English is easier and more natural than French.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information from friends, relatives</li> <li>2. Information from Department, school district, school</li> <li>3. Student behaviour in the classroom</li> <li>4. Overall reputation of the program in the school.</li> <li>5. Child's general level of interest in school.</li> <li>6. Child's previous success in school</li> <li>7. Another child in the FL program</li> <li>8. Own level of French or ability to learn it</li> <li>9. Belief we should contribute to bilingualism of Canada.</li> <li>10. Belief that schooling in French is just as easy as in English.</li> </ol>

### Factors Considered Most Important by Students and Administrators

Students	Administrators
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information from various sources</li> <li>2. Information from professional associations</li> <li>3. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities</li> <li>4. Overall reputation of program</li> <li>5. Classroom behaviour (FL students only)</li> <li>6. Advice of people at school or school district (FL students only)</li> <li>7. Previous success in school</li> <li>8. Own level of French or ability to speak it</li> <li>9. Friends in the program. (English program students only)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information from friends, relatives, etc.</li> <li>2. Information from the school district or school.</li> <li>3. Student behaviour in the program in question.</li> <li>4. Overall reputation of the program.</li> <li>5. Child's previous success, interest in school</li> <li>6. Advice of a teacher.</li> <li>7. Child's friend in the program.</li> <li>8. Another child in the program.</li> <li>9. A desire to know more about the language/culture</li> <li>10. A belief we should contribute to Canada as a bilingual country</li> </ol>

In addition to the information provided by parents regarding the importance of various factors, there are also the perceptions of teachers and administrators concerning these. In some cases, teachers and administrators perceptions closely reflect parents' responses. In other cases they do not.

In the *Sources of Information* category, for example, a fairly high percentage of FL teachers felt that information from professional associations such as CPF



and the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers (44%) and from the popular press (49%) would be very or extremely important for parents choosing FI. Only 13% and 15% of parents indicated this to be the case.

Very high percentages of both FI and English teachers (80% and 74%), and to a lesser extent Administrators (63%) felt the overall reputation of the program would be very or extremely important. Only 33% of FI parents and 39% of English program parents felt that way.

A similar pattern is noticed with regard to classroom behaviour.

The perceived lack of a resource teacher in FI was a concern for 30% of English program parents. A similar percentage of English program teachers and a higher percentage of FI teachers (48%) felt this way. Administrators did not however with only 13% indicating they felt this to be a very or extremely important factor.

The issue of family backgrounds was not reported to be very or extremely important by either FI or English program parents. A fairly high percentage of teachers in both programs as well as administrators perceive this to be an important factor.

While advice of a former teacher was indicated to be very important by a fairly high percentage of parents in both programs, considerably higher percentages of English program teachers (76%) and Administrators (69%) perceived this to be very or extremely important. This was also true for the advice of the core French teacher.

Having another child in the program was reported to be very important by parents in both programs. However, teachers and administrators perceive this to be much more important than parents report it to be. Having a child's friend in the same program was not deemed very important by many parents in either program. Teacher and especially administrators (78%) perceive this to be very important however.

While 68% of FI parents indicate a belief in bilingualism to be a very or extremely important factor, English program teachers and administrators do not perceive this to be so. Only 17% and 13% perceive it to be very or extremely important.

### **Comments by Teachers/Administrators Regarding Advice to Students**

The teacher-administrator survey contained a specific question asking whether or not they had provided advice to parents concerning their decision to choose French immersion of the English program. The following are the responses received to the following question: "Have you ever advised a parent to opt for French immersion or not based on what you know about the child's development, personality, or previous school success?"

#### **School Administrators**

*Yes, I have advised parents to enrol in FI because the child was very good in French- wanting to read books, write stories in the language- advice given to place child in French at the next entry point.*

*... if people want it. It shouldn't be pushed on them.*

#### **English Program Teachers**

*Yes. If a child has a high aptitude and interest in learning - offering a more challenging program for the child would be beneficial. This includes children who may be dyslexic but have excellent verbal skills.*

*I do believe and have mentioned to parents that there are more opportunities for the child if he has a second language.*

*Yes. Developing children academically some need to be challenged more than others- immersive provides this. The ability children show in picking up language skills- verbal/ written/ comprehension are also important. The ability of parents to assist students with homework may affect the parent decision.*

*I am asked quite frequently on what is best for their child. My response is actually middle of the road- Look at pros & cons - Decide.*

*No, but I do feel that students should be screened to prevent the harmful effects of children having to drop out of the program and repeating a grade. It is an emotional scar they have to live with.*

*YES - each child must be considered individually based on his/her ability. Not all children have the outgoing personality necessary for an oral programme.*

*Yes, parents often ask kindergarten teachers if their child would do well in FI - (grade one).*

*If a child is not working academically in English I do not recommend they try French immersion. This is only if I am asked which is very rare since the*

*opinion of the English teachers seem to be less important in the parents' decision.*

*specific success in Language Arts - strong student.*

*if a child exhibited high-avg. abilities in Language Arts I would encourage FI*

*I think parents need to know that there is no services provided if there child is having difficulties.*

### **French Immersion and Core French Teachers**

*I often encourage parents or friends, who ask for my opinion, to consider the program. We live in a bilingual province; therefore, I feel it is important to open these doors for our children.*

*Some students judged less likely to succeed in English or French programs did do fairly well in the French Immersion.*

*How well disciplined is the child in being able to be attentive and to listen in class to French?"*

*FI is challenging and involves more homework than the core program. Not all children are ready for that.*

*A child with learning difficulties or low pre kindergarten skills (after kindergarten) should be advised against the program.*

*As a core French teacher there were children in Gr. 5 who spent the entire year barely understanding anything. How could they be expected to cope having all subjects in French?*

*The child should be interested and motivated to before want to be in such a program. If the student really does not want to be in an immersion program, in my opinion other options may be looked at.*

*Every year, when we had middle immersion, I had quite a few students who had remediation in English in grades 1, 2 & 3 & still could barely read in English. They still entered them in grade 4 immersion & with very few exceptions, stayed & learned to read in French before the end of the year. Also, for many years in a row, (as a matter of fact, only in the last 2 years I didn't have such children) I had in my class of 32 kids, a child with severe emotional problems conduct disorder and several ADHD. Last year I had a child who tested below "slow learner". If we have the cream as the myth says, it is not thick!*

*I never discouraged anyone to come in immersion whether they had learning disabilities or personality disorder or not. I always dealt with them & never encourage them to change in English once they were in my class!*

*I tell parents that it is important to have high expectations regarding their development, personality, and previous school's success, with proper guidance, an unmotivated pupil in the Core French Program might even flourish within an immersion program.*

*This would be outrageous! And discriminatory! I encourage pupils from any socio-economic status to consider French immersion. Every parent and child in this province are given the choice to enroll in French immersion. Unfortunately some parents attitude towards the French culture in general is the biggest motivator in opting for Core instead of FI.*

### Section Three: Attitude Survey

Section 3 of the questionnaire is an attitude survey containing 20 statements to which parents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement. Using the same 7-point scale as in Section 2, 1 indicated **total disagreement** and 7, **total agreement**. The tables presented in this section indicate the percentage of respondents in various categories (parents, teachers, and administrators) who either strongly agreed (6) or totally agreed (7) with each statement. These 20 statements fall into five categories: *Perceived Student Ability, Surrounding Attitudes related to elitism and bilingualism, Program characteristics, Effects of French immersion on English, and Economic factors.*

#### Ability and Interest of Students

There were four statements related to student ability. These are presented in **Table 10**.

*Approximately 1 in 4 teachers in FI & English programs and administrators believe children must have above average ability to succeed in EFI.*

*A child must be of above average ability to succeed in EFI*

13% of FI parents strongly/totaly agreed that a child in EFI must be of above average ability to succeed in that program compared to 24% of parents in the English program parents who felt this to be the case. 26% of FI teachers strongly/totaly agreed with this statement as did 36% of English program teachers and 25% of administrators. Only 10% of EFI students strongly agreed compared to 26% of English program students.

*A child must be of above average ability to succeed in IFI*

18% of FI parents strongly/totaly agreed that a child must be of above average ability to succeed in the IFI program compared to 31% of parents in the

English program. Identical percentages (36%) of FI and English program teachers strongly or totally agreed. 25% of administrators also strongly/totally agreed. Only 9% of IFI students strongly agree compared to 27% of English program students.

**Table 10**  
**Statements Related to Student Ability and Percentage of Participants**  
**Indicating Strong or Total Agreement**

Student Ability	FI Parent	English Parent	FI Teacher	English Program Teachers	School Admin.	Gr 6 IFI Students	Gr 6 English Program Students
In order to do as well as she or he would in English, a child in Early French Immersion must be of above-average ability.	13%	24%	16%	36%	25%	10%	26%
In order to do as well as she or he would in English, a child in Late French Immersion (Grade 6/7 start) must be of above-average ability.	18%	31%	16%	36%	25%	9%	27%
In general, French immersion classes are made up of above-average pupils compared to English classes.	17%	22%	11%	59%	75%	22%	13%
Students who have difficulty in French Immersion should transfer to the English program as soon as possible.	16%	26%	12%	27%	27%	21%	41%

*FI classes are composed of above-average pupils compared to English program classes*

17% of FI and 22% of English parents strongly or totally agreed with this statement. 11% of FI teachers strongly or totally agree compared to 59% of English program teachers and 75% of administrators.

*Students who have difficulty in FI should transfer to the English program as soon as possible*

16% of FI parents strongly or totally agree with this statement compared to 26% of English program parents. 12% of FI teachers strongly agree compared to 27% of English program teachers and 27% of administrators.

*A very high % of English program teachers and school administrators strongly agree that FI classes have more above average pupils.*

**Parents' comments on Ability and Interest:**

*We chose to put our daughter in Early immersion because she was interested and had the ability to listen and learn. We chose not to put our son in that program because his listening skills were so poor. Unfortunately, 11 years in the English program has done very little to help him. I would not consider late immersion an option. My husband and I feel in Canada's only officially bilingual province all children should have the opportunity to enroll in early immersion if they can handle a second language.*

**Streaming**

The two statements related to streaming issues are presented in Table 11 and discussed below.

**Table 11**  
**Statements Related to Streaming and Percentage of Participants**  
**Indicating Strong or Total Agreement**

Streaming	PI Parents	English Parents	PI Teachers	English Program Teachers	School Admin	Gr 6 IPT Student	Gr 6 English Student
French Immersion tends to have better behaved students than does the English program.	20%	19%	14%	64%	63%	27%	14%
Classes in the English program tend to have children from a wider range of family backgrounds than do classes in French immersion.	14%	30%	18%	99%	53%	12%	24%

*A very high % of English program teachers and administrators feel the FI program has better behaved students than the English program.*

*FI has better behaved students than does the English program.*

The first suggested that FI has better behaved students than does the English program. Similarly low percentages of FI (20%) and English program parents (19%) strongly or totally agreed with this statement.

A low percentage of FI teachers also strongly/totally agreed compared to the considerably larger percentage (64%) of English program teachers. A similarly high 63% of administrators also strongly or totally agree.

*The English program is made up of children from a wider range of backgrounds than the FI program.*

14% of FI parents strongly or totally agree with this and compared to 30% of English program parents.



18% of FI teachers strongly agree and 59% of English program teachers strongly or totally agree. A majority of school administrators (53%) also strongly or totally agree.

#### ***Parents' Comments on Streaming***

*French immersion programs should be designed to accept & cope with all students - English programs certainly do not have the option to suggest transfer.*

*This survey seems quite negative to me. It gives me the impression someone is looking for negative factors in the immersion program. The immersion program has children from all backgrounds and is not an "elite" program-parents have chosen immersion for their child for one reason or another (or have not chosen) if the social class differs, it is not because the others are being "sent to English". In extreme cases, when a child gets to the point of total frustration, the parent may choose English-but these cases are rare.*

#### **Attitudes Related to Elitism and Bilingualism**

**Table 12**

#### **Attitudes Related to Elitism and Bilingualism**

Attitudes	FI Parents	English Parents	FI Teachers	English Program Teacher	School Admin.	Gr 6 FI Student	Gr 6 English Program Student
French immersion creates a sort of elite and results in a negative attitude toward students in the English program.	11%	27%	6%	85%	56%	16%	17%
French immersion is seen by those who are NOT in the program as an elite program, and this results in negative attitudes towards students in the French immersion program.	12%	12%	21%	92%	58%	19%	14%
French immersion results in an awareness of another culture and language, and a more tolerant attitude towards others on the part of students in the FI program.	37%	12%	16%	27%	19%	26%	11%
Being bilingual is an important part of what it means to be Canadian.	48%	19%	71%	48%	23%	32%	24%

Four statements deal directly with attitudes related to French or bilingual education.

*A majority of school administrators and English program teachers strongly agree that FI creates an elite.*

*FI creates an elite resulting in negative attitudes toward students in the English program.*

11% of FI parents strongly or totally agree with this compared to 27% of English program parents. Only 6% of FI teachers strongly or totally agree, compared to 55% of English program teachers and 56% of administrators.

Quite low percentages of students in FI and in the English program indicate strong or total agreement with this statement.

*Those not in FI perceive the program as being elitist and this results in negative attitudes towards students in the FI program.*

Identical low percentages (12%) of FI and English program parents strongly or totally agree with this statement. Somewhat higher percentages of teachers and administrators strongly or totally agree. 21% of FI teachers, 32% of English program teachers, and 28% of administrators. Once again, low percentages of students strongly or totally agree.

*FI creates a greater tolerance toward the French language and culture.*

37% of FI parents and 12% of English program parents strongly or totally agree with this statement. 36% of FI teachers and 27% of English program teachers strongly or totally agree, as do 19% of administrators. A low percentage of both English and IFI students strongly agree with this statement.

*Nearly 1/2 of FI parents & English program teachers feel bilingualism to be an important part of being Canadian. Nearly 3 in 4 FI teachers strongly agree that less than 1 in 4 administrators strongly agree.*

*Being bilingual is an important part of being Canadian.*

48% of FI parents strongly or totally agree with this statement compared to just 19% of English parents. 71% of FI teachers and 48% of English program strongly or totally agree. However, only 23% of school administrators strongly or totally agree with this statement. One in three FI students and one in four English program students strongly agree.

### Parents' Comments on Effort and Bilingualism

*I used to believe that (bilingualism is important) but I am less convinced & concerned about that now. What do you mean by bilingual? What 2 languages are you referring to? How presumptuous to imply that French & English are the most frequently used languages!*

*There are many who have not had the opportunity to learn a second lang. No matter what lang that may be. They are no less canadian because they were not afforded the opportunity.*

**Program Characteristics**  
**Table 13**  
**Program Characteristics**

Program Characteristics	PI Parent	English Parent	PI Teacher	English Program Teacher	School Admin	Gr 6 PI Student	Gr 6 English Student
Students in French immersion have benefits that those in the English program do not (more field trips, resources such as computers, library books, etc.)							
French immersion programs benefit from extremely well-regarded teachers.							
English programs benefit from extremely well-regarded teachers.							
Parental involvement in French programs is very high.							
Parental involvement in English programs is very high.							

Five statements deal with program characteristics.

*F1 students have benefited that English program students do not such as more field trips, computers, resources, etc.*

*While 55% of F1 program parents strongly agree teachers are extremely well prepared, 37% of English program parents agree English program teachers are well prepared.*

8% of F1 parents strongly/total agree with this statement compared to 14% of English program parents. 6% of F1 teachers strongly or totally agree, compared to 17% of English program teachers and 25% of administrators.

*F1 and English program teachers are extremely well prepared*

55% of F1 parents and 68% of F1 teachers strongly/total agree that F1 teachers are well prepared. 37% of English program parents and 68% of English program teachers strongly/total agree that English program teachers are well prepared. 59% of school administrators strongly/total agree that F1 teachers are well prepared and 66% strongly/total agree that English program teachers are well prepared. The majority of F1 students strongly or totally agree that their teachers are well-prepared. 27% of English program students indicate strong or total agreement on this question.

*Parental involvement is very high in the F1 and English programs*

Similar percentages of parents in both the F1 and English programs (20% and 19%) strongly/total agree that parental involvement is very high in that program.

*While 37% of F1 teachers strongly agree parental involvement is very high, only 10% of English program teachers strongly agree.*

While 37% of F1 teachers strongly or totally agree that parental involvement is very high in F1, only 10% of English program teachers strongly/total agree that parental involvement is very high in the English program.

42% of administrators strongly or totally agree that parental involvement is very high in F1 but only 16% feel that way about the English program.

***Parents' Comments on Program Characteristics***

*French immersion teachers tend to be more rigid in their teaching, concentrating on the language first/Children are unable to express creatively.*

*English teachers have the opportunity to be more creative because they are using a language understood.*

### Effect of French Immersion on English and other Subjects

Three statements relate the potential effect of learning in French on competence in English language and Math and Science.

*F1 puts too much emphasis on language and takes too much time away from Math and science.*

9% of F1 parents strongly/totally agree with this compared to 28% of English parents, 6% of F1 teachers strongly/totally agree, compared to 29% of English program teachers. 26% of administrators strongly/totally agree.

**Table 14**  
**Effect of French Immersion on English and other Subjects**

Language and Academic Effects	F1 Parents	English Parents	F1 Teachers	English Program Teachers	School Admin	K-6 F1 Students	Gr 6 English Program Students
French immersion places too much emphasis on language and takes away time from other subjects such as Math and Science	9%	28%	6%	29%	26%	10%	19%
Students who have taken science in French immersion at the elementary / middle school are at a disadvantage when they have to take science courses in English in High School	12%	17%	14%	19%	13%	11%	15%
In the long run, French immersion has a negative effect on students' learning of English	7%	22%	6%	29%	22%	9%	13%

*Studying in French will hinder students' ability to study subjects like math and science in English later.*

12% of F1 parents and 17% of English program parents strongly/totally agree with this statement. A large percentage of parents in both programs – 46% in F1 and 52% in English – are unsure.

14% of F1 teachers, 19% of English program teachers, and 13% of administrators strongly/totally agree. However, as was the case with parents, a large percentage of professionals (43% of F1 teachers, 36% of English program teachers, and 30% of administrators) are unsure.

Approximately 1 in 3 English program teachers and 1 in 4 school administrators strongly agree that F1 takes time away from Math and Science and has negative effects in English learning later.

High percentages (nearly half) of IFI and English students were unsure about the effect of FI on Math and Science.

*FI will have a negative impact on students' learning of English in the long run*  
7% of FI parents and 23% of English program parents strongly/totally agree.  
6% of FI and 29% of English teachers strongly/totally agree. 22% of administrators strongly/totally agree.

A high percentage of English students (45%) were unsure about the effect of FI on English language in the long run. This was not the case for IFI students however.

#### ***Parents' Comments on Language Effects:***

*If I knew then what I know now, my 9 year old would have started grade one in English to get a good basic English spelling and reading. We are an English family and she has trouble with grade 2 level books. Late French immersion would have been the choice. (Grade 4 FI parent).*

#### **Economic Issues**

**Table 15**  
**Economic Issues**

<b>Economic Issues</b>	<b>FI Parents</b>	<b>English Parents</b>	<b>FI Teachers</b>	<b>English Program Teachers</b>	<b>School Admin</b>	<b>Gr 6 IFI Students</b>	<b>Gr 6 English Program Students</b>
Students who are bilingual will have a greater opportunity for employment than those who are not.	60%	58%	74%	69%	33%	81%	48%
Students who are bilingual will get better higher-paying jobs than those who are not.	50%	38%	27%	36%	13%	50%	35%

*A much lower % of school administrators than other groups strongly agree that bilingual students have an advantage for employment.*

Two statements dealt with economic issues.

*Bilingual students will have a greater opportunity for employment.*  
Very high percentages of both English program and FI parents and teachers strongly/totally agree with this statement. A very high percentage of IFI students, like their parents, strongly or totally agree. Administrators however are much less likely to strongly or totally agree.

*Bilingual students will get better higher paying jobs.*

Much lower percentages of parents, teachers and students strongly or totally agree with this statement than the previous one. Again a very low percentage of school administrators strongly or totally agree.

#### ***Parents' Comments on Economic Issues***

*I believe if my child decides to work in N.B. And sees the need to be bilingual he or she will become so, even if this does not occur in her/his schooling (K-12). The idea that we as parents are taking away from our children's future by not enrolling in the French program is totally ridiculous. I compare it to learning a profession. If it is a necessary tool or part of that job it will be learned. (Grade 6 English program parent).*

*Although it is becoming essential to be bilingual in N.B. I was not provided French immersion in school and am now being turned down for jobs because I am not French. I would like them to be bilingual but because I was not provided the opportunity, I cannot offer assistance in French homework." (Grade One English program parent)*

#### ***Conclusion - Attitude Survey***

A high percentage of English program parents, English teachers and administrators strongly or totally agree that FI creates a negative attitude toward English program students.

A near majority of FI parents and English program teachers, and 71% of FI teachers strongly or totally agree that being bilingual is an important part of being Canadian; 23% of administrators feel this way.

Nearly 1 in 4 English program teachers and school administrators agree strongly or totally that FI takes too much time away from Math and Science and has a negative effect on English in the long run. Another 30-40% are unsure.

Parental involvement in FI programs is viewed to be very high by a high percentage of FI teachers (37%) and administrators (42%). Only 10% of teachers and only 16% of administrators view parental involvement in English programs to be very high.



## **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

This research set out to explore the issue of similarities and difference between various stakeholder in French Immersion and English programs. In an attempt to synthesize this complex issue, I will address the 5 research questions put at the outset:

*Question 1: Are there differences in the socioeconomic backgrounds of the populations of FI and English programs ?*

The data show that more than 1 in 3 English program families and nearly half FI families have at least one parent with a university degree. A somewhat higher percentage of mothers have university degrees in FI than in English, and lower percentage of FI mothers indicate high school to be highest degree. Professional and semi-professional occupations constitute the majority in both programs, and parents in both programs occupy a wide range of occupations from professionals to unskilled labourers. In short, there are differences in the SES backgrounds between the two programs, but these differences are not great. Indeed, the data reveal many more similarities than differences.

*Question 2: What factors influence parents and pupils to enroll in FI or in the English program when both options are available ?*

Parents and pupils in both the English and French Immersion share many of same strong influences with regard to their respective choice of program. However, some important differences do emerge. English parents, for their part, view the lack of methods and resource teachers in FI to be a very or extremely important factor in their decision. English program parents also tend to see learning in English as easier and more natural. A much higher percentage of French Immersion parents, on the other hand, view student behaviour in the program to be a very or extremely important factor. They also see learning in French as being easy and natural.

*Questions 3: & 4 What are the perceptions and attitudes of parents, teachers, and administrators regarding various characteristics of both programs?*

At least one in four English parents, English program teachers, FI teachers, and school administrators strongly or totally agree that in order to do well in Early French Immersion, a child must be of above-average ability.

While a low percentage of FI teachers feel that FI classes are made up of above average pupils, a very high percentage of English program teachers and school administrators feel strongly that this is the case.

Two out of three English teachers and administrators strongly or totally agree that FI has better behaved pupils than the English program. Very low percentages of parents and FI teachers agree.

Similar percentages of FI teachers and English program teachers strongly agree that FI creates an awareness of another culture and promotes tolerance.

FI teachers on one hand and English teachers and administrators on the other hand differ in their perception of the following critical factors:

- student ability
- classroom behaviour
- diversity of family backgrounds
- immersion creating an elite
- emphasis on language over math and science
- effect on English in the long run

A high percentage of FI teachers and school administrators view parental involvement in FI to be very high. By way of contrast, a very low percentage of English teachers and school administrators view parental involvement in English to be very high.

*Question 5: Can differences in achievement on provincial testing be explained by any of these findings?*

The most recent provincial testing results show a 25% advantage for FI program students over English program students in the areas of Math and English Language Arts. The socioeconomic profiles of students in the English and FI classes do not appear to be able to account for this wide discrepancy. Only

12% more FI families hold university degrees or are employed in professional occupations than are English program families. However, the results do offer some insights and suggest that certain variables need to be examined more closely.

First, regarding the socioeconomic data, it was found that the gap between the level of education of mothers in FI and English programs is greater than that of fathers. While this discrepancy is not extremely large, this is one difference that may benefit from further investigation. The critical role of the mother in the child's education has been documented in the research literature. In this particular exercise, mothers were much more heavily involved than fathers (89% of mothers compared to 23% of fathers in the English program and 87% of mothers compared to 26% of fathers in the FI program).

Second, the perceptions of teachers and school administrators regarding classroom climate in both programs differ considerably. While FI teachers generally do not strongly agree that FI classes are made up of above-average pupils, a moderate or high percentage of English teachers and administrators do. This also applies to classroom behaviour, diversity of family backgrounds, and the creating of an elite. These differences in perception need to be addressed at the school and district level. Increased opportunities for interaction among FI and English program children and teachers may be one way of developing a better understanding on the part of parents and teachers in both programs of the unique characteristics and challenges that both FI and English programs pose.

Third, the perceptions of FI and English teachers and administrators concerning parental involvement vary considerably. FI teachers and school administrators indicate that parental involvement in this program is perceived to be very high. English teachers' and school administrators perceive parental involvement in the English program, however, to be considerably lower. Given the importance of attributed to school climate in students success by Goodlad (1984), Williams (in press) and others, it would seem vitally important to pursue this issue. We know that the more parents are involved in their child's education, the greater the success of the child. Is there something about the FI program that either evokes or requires more involvement on the part of parents? Do parents who send their child to school in FI worry more about their child and his or her ability to succeed? Whatever the reason, it would appear that there is room for more parental involvement in the English program. Schools, school districts and Department officials may wish to explore ways

of encouraging parental involvement, particular in the English program.

A final insight involves the sources of information which were deemed to be very or extremely important. Parents in both programs indicated that the most information source of information was that provided by friends or relatives. It was also shown that a much higher percentage of FI program parents and teachers feel that information from the School District or the Department of Education was a very important factor in the decision than do English program parents and teachers. The results indicate that a substantial percentage of English program teachers and school administrators, and to some extent French immersion teachers, are unaware of the considerable French immersion research which shows that this program is suitable for a wide range of children of varied backgrounds and abilities. Among the misconceptions or uncertainties on the part of teachers and administrators are the following:

- In order to succeed in Early French Immersion a child must be of above-average ability
- If a child encounters difficulty in French immersion he or she should transfer to English.
- French Immersion will have a negative effect on students' learning of English in the long run.

These beliefs are unfounded and have been addressed in numerous research studies. (The work of Genesee (1987, 1991) is particularly relevant in this regard). It would appear vitally important to follow up on this. One would also want to ensure that those who advise parents and students are themselves fully informed. A first step, therefore, would be to ensure that all teachers and administrators, especially those who may be in a role of informing or advising parents or students, are fully informed regarding the research conducted in French immersion on these fundamental questions. It is crucial that, ultimately, parents and students receive accurate and timely information in order to make the decision that is in the best interest of the children involved – whether that be to opt for French Immersion or the English program.

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**SUMMARY COMMENTS**

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*Conclusion, Limitations of Research and Future Direction*

In conclusion, there are important similarities and differences between students in FI and English programs. This research points out some of these and raises other issues and questions to be examined further. In that regard, it is important to recognize that this study is limited to two school districts, in and the results and conclusions cannot be generalized to the province as a whole. Further research on a larger scale is needed to gain a broader view of the issue in the New Brunswick context. Also, survey research provides a context for a large number of participants to express their views, but is limited by the depth of analysis that is possible. Follow-up interviews and focus group sessions with representatives of the various participant groups would allow for a more in depth probing of key questions.

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**APPENDIX A**


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**List of Participating Schools**

1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>School District 17</b></p> <p>Assiniboine Avenue Elementary            Geisner Street Elementary            Harold Peterson Middle            Minto Elementary/Middle            Summerhill Street Elementary</p>
6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>School District 18</b></p> <p>Albert Street Middle            Alexander Gibson Memorial (Mayville)            Barker's Point Elementary            Cornaught Street Elementary            Devon Middle            Forest Hill Elementary            Garden Creek Elementary            George Street Elementary            Harvey Elementary            Liverpool Street Elementary            Nashwaakiss Memorial            Nashwaakiss Middle            New Maryland Elementary            Park Street Elementary            Priestman Street Elementary            Royal Road Elementary</p>

## APPENDIX B

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### Partial List of Recent Articles Pertaining to French Immersion

1. *Immersion amounts to segregation, tests confirm*, *Telegraph Journal*, December 17, 1999.
2. *Education experts have raised legitimate concern*, *The Daily Gleaner*, February 5, 2000.
3. *French immersion at the crossroads*, *The Montreal Gazette*, March 20, 1999.
4. *Professor debunks myth of French immersion advantage*, *The Telegraph-Journal*, November 23, 2000.
5. *Balance must be restored to French immersion debate*, *The Daily Gleaner*, May 26, 2000.
6. *Don't dilute French immersion program*, *The Daily Gleaner*, December 26, 1999.
7. *French immersion goes mainstream*, *The Gazette*, Montreal, March 20, 1999.
8. *Please tell me this can't be true*, in **The State of French Second Language Education in Canada**, Canadian Parents for French, 2000.
9. *The decline of immersion*, *The National Post*, February 27, 2001

