

French Immersion Student Attrition Why Do They Leave?

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**Immersion Education:
 Pathways to Bilingualism & Beyond**
 October 16-18, 2008
 St. Paul, Minnesota, USA



Observations

- Many programs need a lottery system to handle applications (usually at K level)
- Many of the same programs experience a high level of attrition, starting within a few months of children entering the program.
- What happened in between?



Negative Effects

- Effects on the student:
 - Adaptation issues
 - Changing school as well as program
 - Changing language of instruction
 - Social issues
 - Negative perceptions
- Effects on the program:
 - Weaknesses associated with a smaller program
 - Having to consolidate classes
 - Public perception
 - Scheduling issues
 - Financial issues



Research

- Literature Review:
 - From Canada: elementary & high school
 - From other countries (Finland, Scotland)
 - From the U.S. (Rigaud)
- Rule of Thumb
 - 50% attrition between K and 6th grade
 - Administrative advice: start big

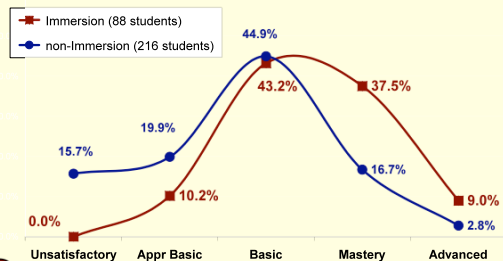


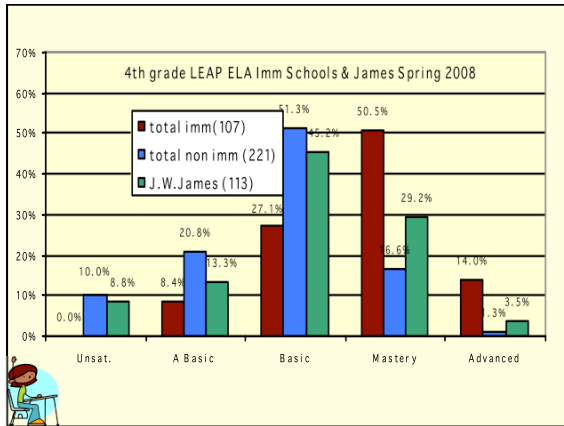
Lafayette Data: Numbers 06-07 (696)

School	Black	Non Black	Total
Pigeon	20.5% (77)	79.5% (299)	376
Serin	21.1% (15)	78.9% (56)	71
Moineau	34.4% (22)	65.6% (42)	64
Etourneau	59.5% (110)	40.5% (75)	185



LEAP 2005 4th grade Mathematic
 Immersion/Non Immersion (2 schools)





Lafayette Data: Exits

- Sources:
 - Exit forms & Roster comparisons
 - 38 % of exits undocumented
- Findings
 - 424 exits recorded between August 2002 and August 2007 - average of 85 student exits per year
 - Note: findings include exits between 5th and 6th grade, but roster numbers stop at 5th grade level.

Lafayette Parish Schools
French Immersion Program - Student Exit Report

In an effort to assure and improve the quality of the French Immersion Program, the Lafayette Parish School Board maintains documentation on students who exit the program.

School Year: _____ Student's name: _____
 School: _____ Grade Level: _____
 Teachers: _____

When a student is having difficulties in the French Immersion Program, a committee including the child's parent(s), teacher(s), counselor, principal, and the French Immersion Lead Teacher, must meet to decide upon a course of action that will be in the best interest of the child and the program.

Process initiated by: _____ parent _____ teacher _____ other: _____
 Date process initiated: _____

Parties involved in consultation:
 Mother _____ English Teacher _____ French Teacher
 Father _____ Principal _____ Counselor
 Fr. Immersion Lead _____ Other: _____

Nature of Difficulty: _____

Description of measures/interventions taken in an attempt to alleviate difficulties without removing the child from the program: _____

Date of Exit: _____
 Comments: _____

Approved: _____ (parent's signature)
 _____ (principal's signature)

child's Cumulative Records - 1 copy to parents - 1 copy to Immersion Lead Teacher

Trends

- At lower grade level (K and 1st grade)

School	# of sections of K and 1st	# of exits over 5 years
Pigeon	3 K and 3 1 st grade (around 120 students total each year)	86 or an average of 17 exits per year - 14.2%
Serin	1 K and 1 1 st grade (around 40 students total each year)	24 or an average of 5 exits per year - 12.5%
Moineau	1 K and 1 1 st grade (around 40 students total each year)	37 or an average of 7 exits per year - 17.5%
Etourneau	2 K and 2 1 st grade (around 80 students total each year)	46 or an average of 9 exits per year - 11.2%

Notes

- 193 exits at K and 1st gr level in 5 years (46% of the 424 exits)
- Some schools have a disproportionate # of exits.
- No racial pattern found in exits so far
- Most reasons when given included
 - difficulties in English, French, or both
 - parent's worries about academic achievement
- Not all reasons given were validated
- Secret reasons?

Next Exodus

At the end of 5th grade

- 119 exits at Pinson, or 28 % of the exits over 5 years *at one grade level*
- 14 exits at the end of the 2002-2003
- 25 exits at the end of both 2005-06 and 2006-07
- 28 exits at the end of 2007-08 (*not included in the data*)
- Most exits are majority students
- Transition year and much more

Summary

- Average French Immersion numbers over 5 years: **686**
- Average exits K – beginning of 6th: **85**
- Average exits in K and 1st: **38**
- Average exits end of 5th: **24**
- Average exits 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th: **23**



Interviews

- French Teachers
- English Teachers
- Parents
- To be added:
 - High School students who finished the program
 - Middle School students who exited the program



Information from Interviews

- Not enough information prior to K
- Still overwhelming assumptions of an elite program (are they justified?)
- Not enough help for at risk students
- Desegregation issues



What can we do?

- Better information process prior to enrollment
- Early identification of at-risk students
- Early intervention
- On going public relation, advocacy, and information
- **Find out who stays and why**



Parent(s):

I. I understand the underlying philosophy and goals of the program. I understand that French will be the main language of instruction during my child's school day.

III. I understand that the French Immersion Program in Lafayette Parish is designed to follow my child throughout his/her educational career. In filing this application for French Immersion, I am committing to my child's participation in the program for the duration of his/her elementary school years.

V. I understand that my child may be removed from the program if she/he experiences serious academic, social or psychological difficulties within the immersion environment. Such a decision would be made by a committee consisting of counselors, teachers, administrators and parents. However, I understand that fluctuations in academic performance can be normal in a child's school career and that a low grade does not necessarily indicate a difficulty with the immersion setting.

VII. To the best of my knowledge, my family intends to reside in Lafayette Parish for the next five years.

IX. I understand that the Lafayette Parish School Board is not responsible for providing transportation to out-of-zone immersion school sites. I understand that all students must follow school schedules for student arrival and dismissal.

