Key Area

STUDENT ENROLMENT

Factor

VISIBILITY AND COMMUNICATION
Visibility and communication are important factors in ensuring stable student enrolment and retention in the French Immersion Program from K–12.
Regularly communicating messages about the Program throughout the school and community increases awareness and understanding of the French Immersion Program and its value.

SUCCESS INDICATORS	RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES
Public visibility **Public access to French Immersion Program information** **Communication of pertinent information to K–12 parents** **Discussion of the French Immersion Program at various meetings** **Pre-school connections**	To ensure public visibility for parents and the community, various strategies need to be considered at the divisional and school levels, such as the following: • The French Immersion Program is discussed at divisional and school meetings and decisions include taking into consideration French immersion needs. • Develop promotional materials such as brochure, website (including articles and research), Kindergarten information kits, etc. • Organize public events: celebrations of learning, open house, information sessions, presentations at parent council meetings, and cultural events for families. • Enhance visibility of French immersion in schools for parents and the community: greeting people in French, announcements, signage, assemblies, posters, newsletters, website, etc. • Ensure all staff share the same understanding of the vision, the benefits of learning languages, and the importance of creating visibility of French language and culture throughout the school. • Connections are made with early childhood centres so parents are aware of French immersion as an option for their children.

Factor

ENTRY POINTS AND TRANSITION
Welcoming students into the Program and supporting them at whichever point they enter ensures a successful integration and a positive experience throughout K–12.
Having strategies to support students and parents at transition points, where there is often attrition, is essential for student success and program stability.
When students are well supported throughout their K–12 French immersion experience and they, along with their parents, understand the value of the Program, they are more likely to choose to continue in the Program.

SUCCESS INDICATORS	RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES
Flexible entry points	Divisions and schools follow the current provincial policy, which includes early, middle, and late entry points, while at the same time allowing space for flexible entry on a case-by-case basis with the appropriate supports in place.
School visits and information sessions for students and parents at entry and transition points	Schools need to put forth initiatives that provide information to students and parents so they can make informed decisions: • information sessions • presentations • pathway planning for graduation • parent-teacher meetings • school visits • incoming student activities • celebrations of learning Transition activities at various entry points as well as between school levels—from nursery school to Early Years, Early to Middle Years, Middle to Senior Years, and Senior Years to post-secondary—are crucial as they reduce student anxiety, provide continuity in students' linguistic and educational experience, involve parents in their child's education, and have an impact on student retention. These types of activities solidify students' identities as French language learners, providing stability and helping them make connections to the Program.
Student reflection and conversations about their French immersion experience **Interactions with French immersion students from feeder schools**	From K–12, school staff should lead students through conversations and self-reflections on their experiences as French immersion students. This helps students understand their development within the language continuum and who they are as plurilingual learners, and develops their identity. These conversations support students in choosing the Program for themselves and understanding its value for them in their lives today and in the future. It further provides students a sense of belonging and fosters community building within the classroom. This could include the following: • guided class/group conversations • presentations (e.g., Who am I as a French immersion learner?) • student surveys • panel discussions • portfolios • sharing reflections with parents and peers • exit interviews In addition, school staff should ensure connections are made with students in feeder schools in order to enhance students' sense of belonging, purpose, and participation in the larger French immersion community, as well as to validate them as plurilingual speakers. Activities could include the following: • learning/reading buddies • leadership programs • inter-school field trips and activities • mentorship programs • invitations to school and school events
Equitable access to space and resources to meet student and enrolment needs	The French Immersion Program has unique needs and requirements with regard to staffing and budgets, which have an impact on student enrolment trends. Addressing the needs and potential gaps in the Program to support students meaningfully is critical to avoiding attrition. This means that making decisions and allocating resources are essential to allowing for equity of service and access in the French Immersion Program. In practical terms, this could include the following: • offering a variety of courses despite low enrolment • shifting space allocations to support French immersion enrolment needs • ensuring staff supports are allocated based on equity of access • ensuring budgets are allocated based on unique needs (e.g., higher costs of resources, importance of connecting with the Francophone community outside the school)

Factor

RETENTION
School divisions are experiencing increased French immersion enrolment across the province. This increased enrolment often masks the challenges of student retention, as approximately half of the French immersion students leave the Program as they move through the school system.
Since attrition poses a challenge to program stability, a concerted effort is needed to improve K–12 student retention and increase French immersion diploma graduation rates.

SUCCESS INDICATORS	RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES
Monitor enrolment and attrition rates **Procedures in place if students wish to leave the Program**	It may be the case that schools focus more on recruitment than retention. It is important to follow data and trends related to attrition from K–12, both within schools and at transition points from Early Years to Middle Years and Middle Years to Senior Years. Knowing the factors that influence attrition and how to address them is essential to maintaining enrolment. It is important to track reasons that students leave the French Immersion Program so that mitigation strategies can be put in place where required (e.g., supporting struggling students or offering various programming options at the Senior Years level, such as specialized courses, trades, International Baccalaureate, etc.). Procedures need to be in place in all schools whereby communication—especially through dialogue—occurs with students and parents to establish ongoing appropriate supports to meet the child's academic, socio-emotional needs, etc., and to ensure continued participation in the Program. Conversations with parents could also address the myth that "transferring a struggling student to the English Program will remediate the problem."
Appropriate supports are in place when students struggle **Address parental concerns about their child's success in French immersion**	Attrition caused by learning difficulties requires schools to reflect on current practices and research so that students are supported appropriately. When students struggle, the automatic response should not be to leave the Program; rather, as required by inclusive education policies in Manitoba, appropriate supports should be put in place (see www.gov.mb.ca/fs/imd/edu_progr.html#a2). Schools need to ensure that staff are well informed on the research with respect to students with learning difficulties and second language acquisition. A common understanding among educators must also be in place regarding appropriate supports and pedagogies for these students to achieve success throughout their K–12 immersion experience. It is vital that discussions regarding learning difficulties and second language acquisition occur with parents before they consider removing their child from the Program, and that appropriate supports are established to meet the child's needs.
Senior Years timetable accommodates accessibility to a variety of courses in French	In the Senior Years, the attraction of other programs may pose a challenge to retention, especially in dual-track schools. Creative solutions to scheduling should be considered in order for students to simultaneously take part in the French Immersion Program and other offerings in high school. This could include developing partnerships with other stakeholders outside of school, apprenticeship programs, and online courses. Schools should be offering required and optional courses in French and ensure that parents and students fully understand the advantages offered in our global society by an immersion education and encourage students to take as many French immersion credits as possible.
Address student engagement and motivation to learn French	Developing student confidence, engagement, and plurilingual identity are factors that need to be fully integrated into the classroom and the school community, as they have an impact on student retention from K to 12. It is by supporting students in the co-construction of their identity as French learners and speakers that they will develop a better understanding of themselves, make ongoing progress in language proficiency, make connections to Francophone culture, and see the relevance of French in their lives—thereby enhancing their engagement and motivation. Students need to have opportunities to discuss the challenges or discomfort they may feel when they are communicating in various situations and to discuss what strategies they can use to improve their level of comfort and confidence. Guiding students to go from the language learned in school to living the language by creating these types of interactions not only supports further language development but is key to building their confidence, engagement, and plurilingual identity. As their identity evolves through varied social, cultural, and academic interactions, as well as through significant and relevant use of the language, they will want to make learning French a lifelong endeavour. Supporting students in this way throughout their French immersion experience is vital in retaining them in the French Immersion Program and prepares them for sustaining their bilingualism. With a leadership that fully values language learning and guides the whole school community to support the development of students' plurilingual identity, students will be able to become proud, confident, engaged, and plurilingual global citizens.
Monitor the number of French immersion diploma graduates	The French immersion graduation data is an indicator of how successfully schools and school divisions have fully implemented the Program from K to 12. It is important to monitor the number of French immersion graduates by following cohorts, monitoring attrition, and tracking progress and trends over time with the goal of increasing the percentage and number of French immersion diploma graduates. This data can be used to create strategies for increasing the success of the French Immersion Program.

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