Section 3
Educational Staff and Professional Learning

Section 3 provides data regarding the hiring and professional learning of educational staff in the French Immersion Program.

As immersion schools continue to provide a quality education for students by meeting Program goals, they also have the responsibility to create and to nurture an environment that ensures that the staff in the French Immersion Program is supported when hired and throughout their career.

Schools and school divisions were asked to provide examples of activities that support recruitment, retention, and professional learning of staff which contributes to the delivery of a strong French Immersion Program.

Recruitment and Retention of Staff

The sustainability of the French Immersion Program relies on the recruitment and retention of staff as well as succession planning in order to maintain stability and promote growth in the Program. Selecting and retaining a team of staff members that have the necessary skills, knowledge and vision to support student learning and decision making in a French Immersion environment is vital to the Program's overall success.

The subsequent 15 questions were included to ascertain the challenges faced by schools and school divisions with regards to hiring potential teachers and administrators, the commonalities with regards to the verification of the key competencies of potential candidates during the hiring process as well as the supports in place in order to ensure retention of staff.

In reference to hiring potential personnel, Chart 31 indicates schools' responses regarding the type of positions which pose a challenge, while Chart 32 examines the type of challenges being encountered.

Chart 31: Frequency of French Immersion schools indicating that the hiring of qualified French Immersion personnel posed a challenge by type of position
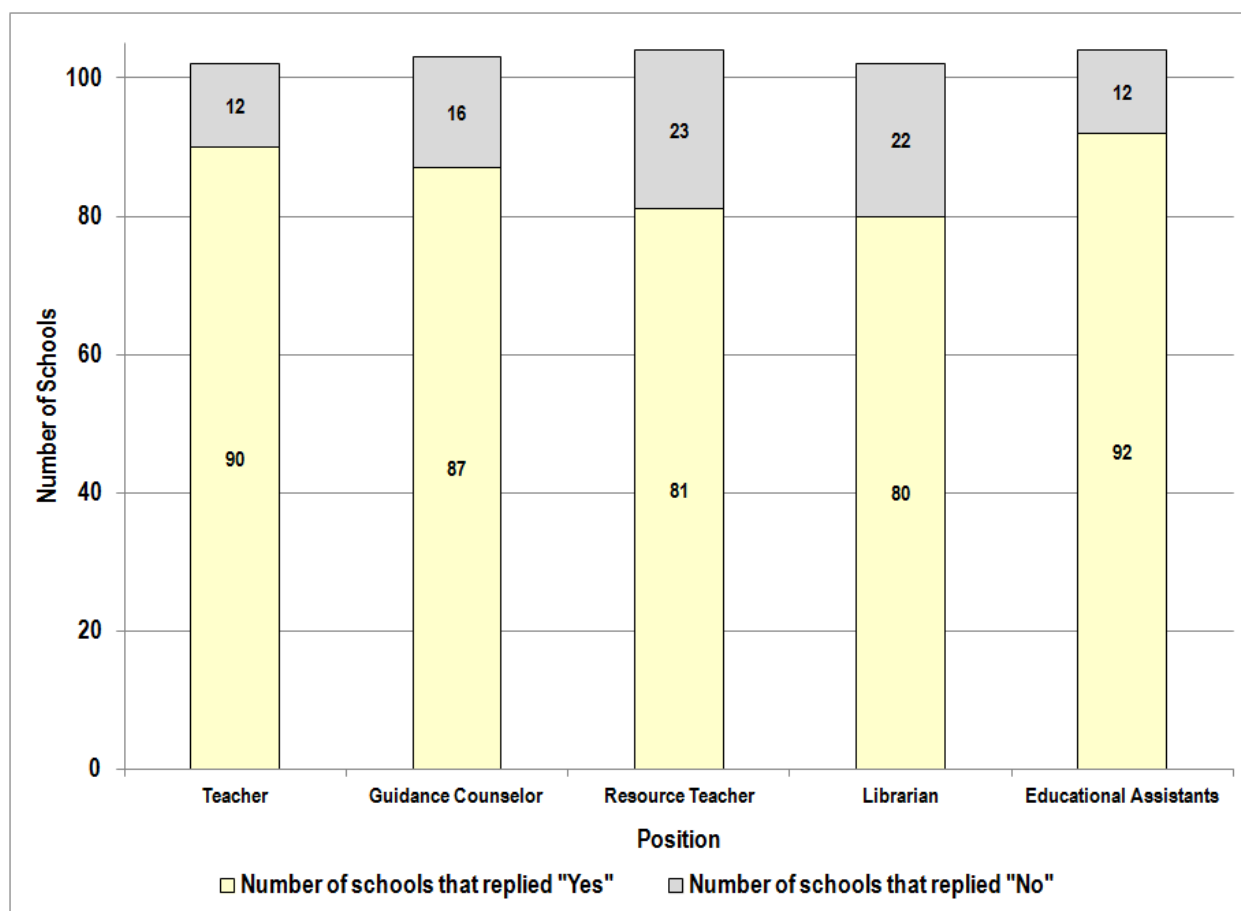
The data indicates that 80 or more of the 105 French Immersion schools encounter challenges in hiring qualified staff for all positions. This issue must be placed at the forefront and be addressed through productive dialogue and collaboration amongst various stakeholders.

Chart 32 depicts the responses that were provided as optional comments to explain the challenges encountered when hiring French Immersion personnel.

Chart 32: Challenges in hiring qualified French Immersion personnel, by type of challenge and frequency of responses
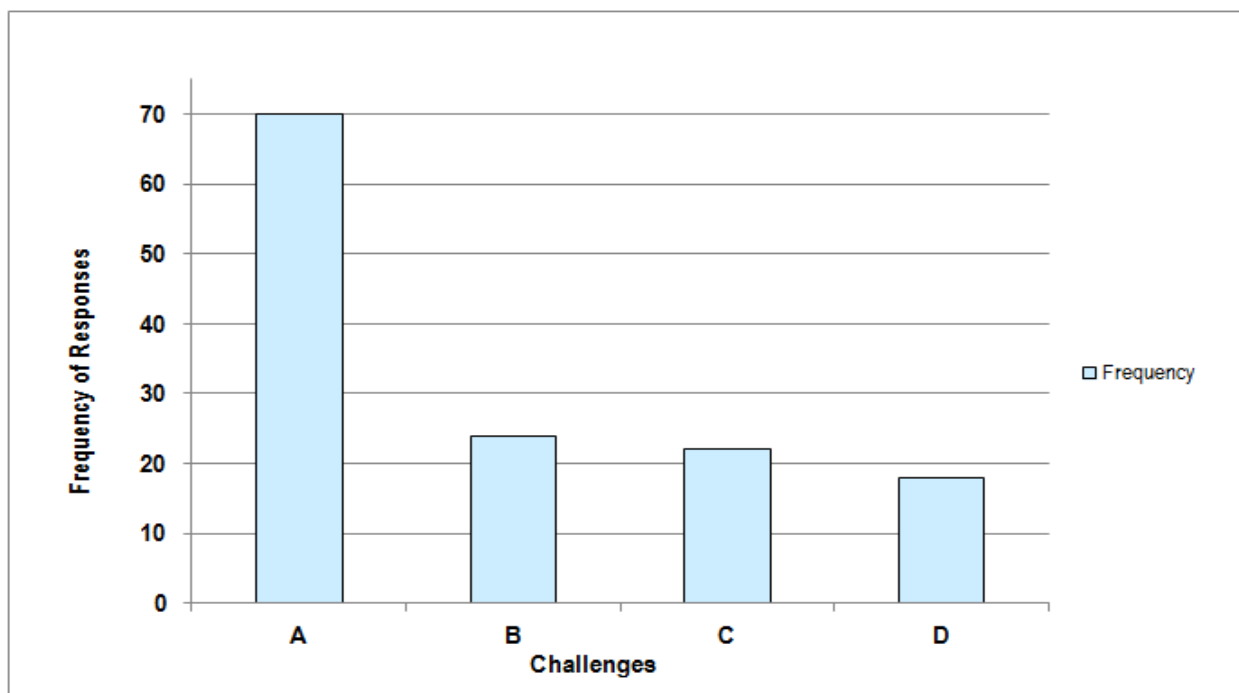
A - Limited number of qualified applicants

B - Rural divisions struggle to find bilingual employees

C - Hiring bilingual and trained educational assistants

D - Bilingual specialist personnel are particularly difficult to find (Resource, Counselling, Physical Education, Music, Library)

From the data presented, it is evident that the main challenge experienced by 70 schools (approximately 2/3 of schools) is the *Limited number of qualified applicants* (A). This corroborates anecdotal evidence from the field that there is a real challenge in finding and hiring qualified teaching personnel.

The other identified challenges, more specifically, *Rural divisions struggle to find bilingual employees* (B – 24 responses), the *Hiring of bilingual and trained educational assistants* (C – 22 responses) as well as *Hiring bilingual specialists* (D – 18 responses) simply emphasizes the fact that there is a limited number of qualified applicants.

Further analysis of the above data reveals that the four identified challenges are linked by the difficulty of finding and hiring bilingual staff. As a result, the frequency of school responses regarding the main challenge, *Limited number of qualified applicants* (A), increases dramatically.

Subsequent to the challenges reported in Chart 32, Chart 33 shows school divisions' responses regarding a divisional recruitment plan, while Chart 34 addresses the participation of school divisions in teacher recruitment fairs.

Chart 33: Percentage of **school divisions** having a divisional recruitment plan or policy regarding the hiring of French Immersion personnel
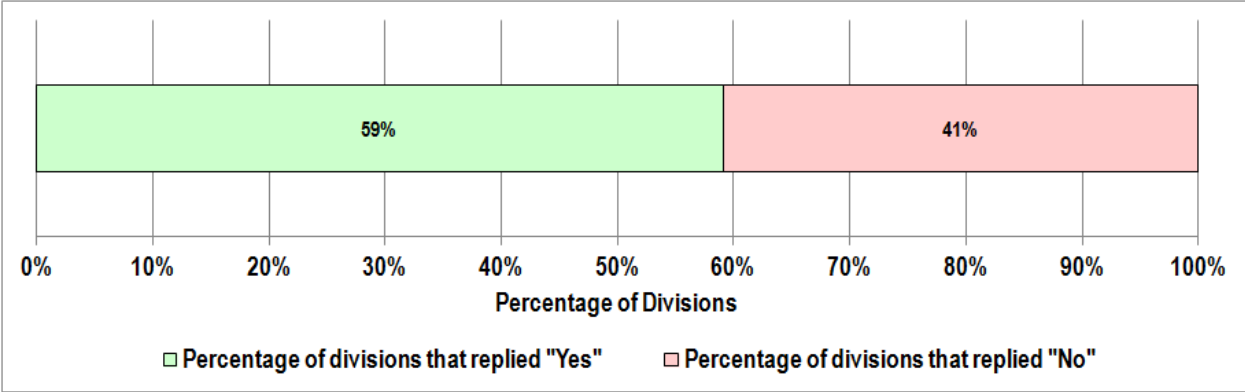
The data reveals that despite the limited number of qualified applicants, as per Chart 32, 41% of school divisions do not have a divisional recruitment plan or policy.

A divisional recruitment plan remains a crucial piece in maintaining stability in the French Immersion Program. Long-term planning as well as retention of personnel should also be infused into a plan in order to ensure the delivery of a strong Program.

Chart 34: Percentage of **school divisions** participating in teacher recruitment fairs
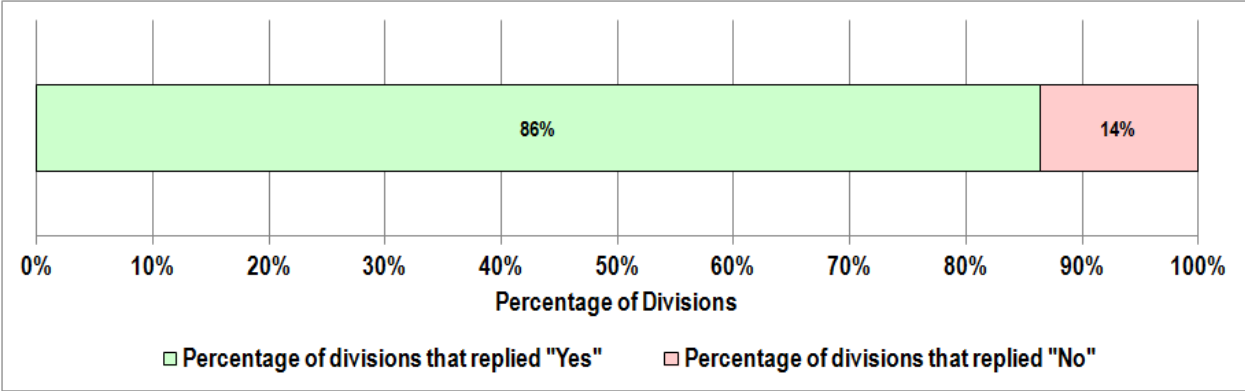
The data reveals that 86% of school divisions participate in teacher recruitment fairs.

School divisions put a lot of effort in attending such recruitment fairs. However, data in Chart 32 regarding the challenge of *Limited number of qualified applicants* (A) puts into question the effectiveness of such fairs and the need for them to evolve. Today's technology forces leaders to rethink their recruitment plan in order to reach as many potential candidates as possible. It is evident that school divisions can no longer depend solely on recruitment fairs to provide satisfactory results regarding possible candidates.

Chart 35: Number of French Immersion Senior Years schools indicating challenges with regards to hiring by subject area
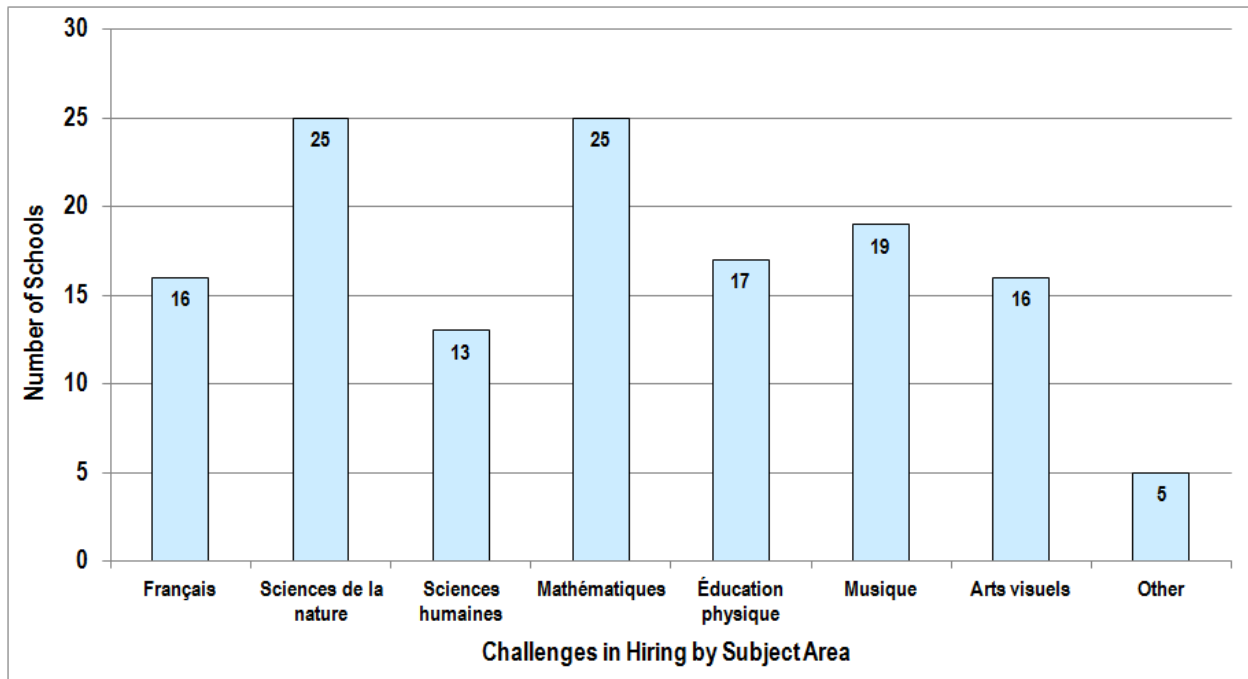
The data reveals that 25 of 29 (86.2%) schools offering Grades 9-12 courses indicated that the hiring for the subject areas of *Sciences de la nature* and *Mathématiques* poses the greatest challenge, and between 13 (44.8%) and 19 (65.5%) of schools reported that they also encountered challenges in hiring in the five other specialty areas.

Chart 36 depicts the responses provided as optional comments in relation to the challenges in hiring Senior Years French Immersion teachers.

Chart 36: Senior Years French Immersion schools reporting a particular challenge in hiring, by challenge
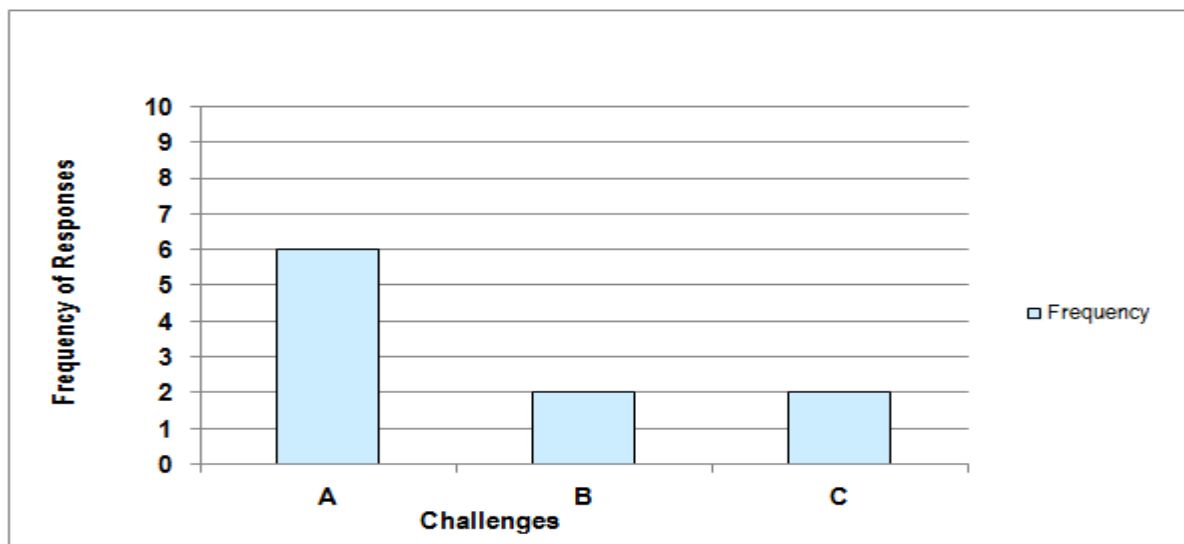
A - Difficulty finding specialists in Senior Years

B - Difficulty finding teachers with appropriate language competencies as well as content knowledge for academically demanding Senior Years courses

C - Fewer teachers due to low student enrolments in Senior Years in rural/northern schools limiting the number and choice of courses offered in French

The data reveals that 6 of the 10 responding schools indicated that Senior Years specialists were difficult to find (A). This information reiterates the challenge of having a *Limited number of qualified applicants* as reported in Chart 32.

In a similar vein, two schools mentioned that it was *Difficult finding teachers with appropriate language competencies as well as content knowledge for academically demanding Senior Years courses* (B).

The remaining two of the 10 responding schools also presented a corollary to the two other challenges by stating that there are *Fewer teachers due to low student enrolments in Senior Years in rural/northern schools limiting the number and choice of courses offered in French* (C). This low enrolment plays a large part in teacher workload, the number of courses offered, and is one of the contributing factors affecting the number of teacher applications in these locations.

It is thus evident that there exists a connection between all three hiring challenges identified.

Charts 37 and 38 indicate schools' and school divisions' responses regarding languages used during the interview process, while Charts 39 and 40 examine responses in respect to verification of applicants' competencies.

Chart 37: Number of French Immersion **schools** indicating the language(s) used when interviewing potential French Immersion teachers
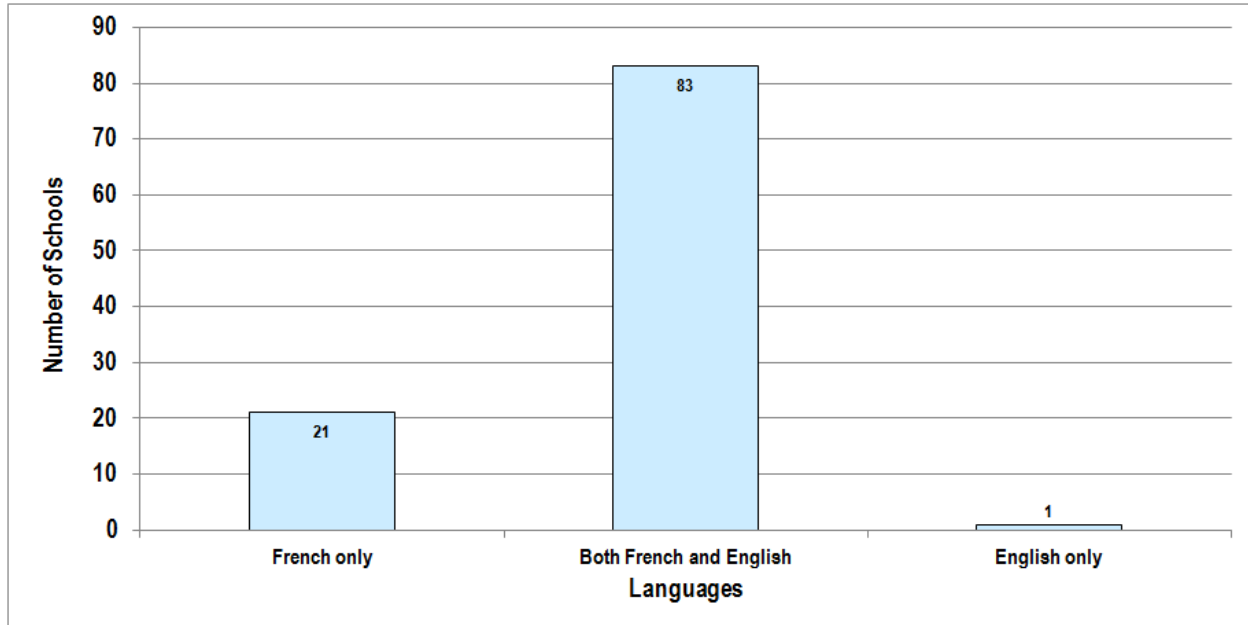
The data indicates that 83 of the 105 (79%) French Immersion schools interview their potential French Immersion teachers in both French and English; while 21 of the 105 (20%) schools interview in French only and 1 school in English only.

It is evident that schools are aware that French Immersion teachers serve as models for students and should have an excellent command of the language in which they will be teaching. Therefore, when considering new staff, a candidate's oral language proficiency in French should be assessed.

Chart 38: Number of **school divisions** indicating the language(s) used when interviewing potential candidates for administrative positions in a French Immersion school
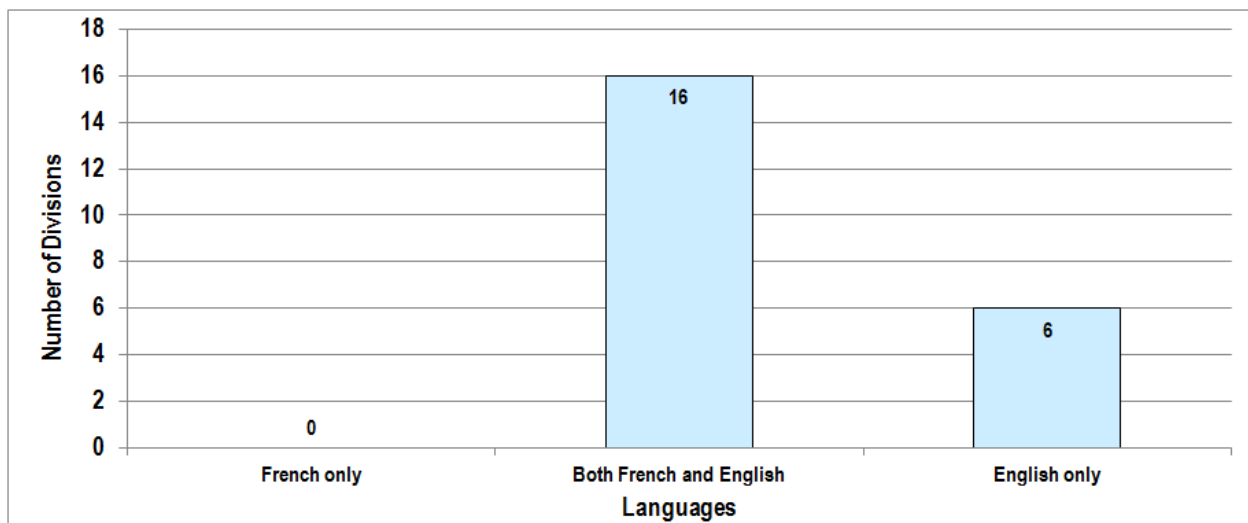
The data reveals that 16 of the 22 (72.7%) school divisions offering the French Immersion Program interview their potential candidates for administrative positions in both French and English, while 6 of the 22 (27.3%) school divisions interview in English only.

The information presented above is in part reassuring but also concerning. All potential candidates should be interviewed in both languages for they too will be serving as models for students and teachers but also as leaders of a language Program. This in turn enhances the French setting in the school as well as a sense of community.

Chart 39: Number of French Immersion **schools** verifying key competencies when hiring potential French Immersion teachers, by competency
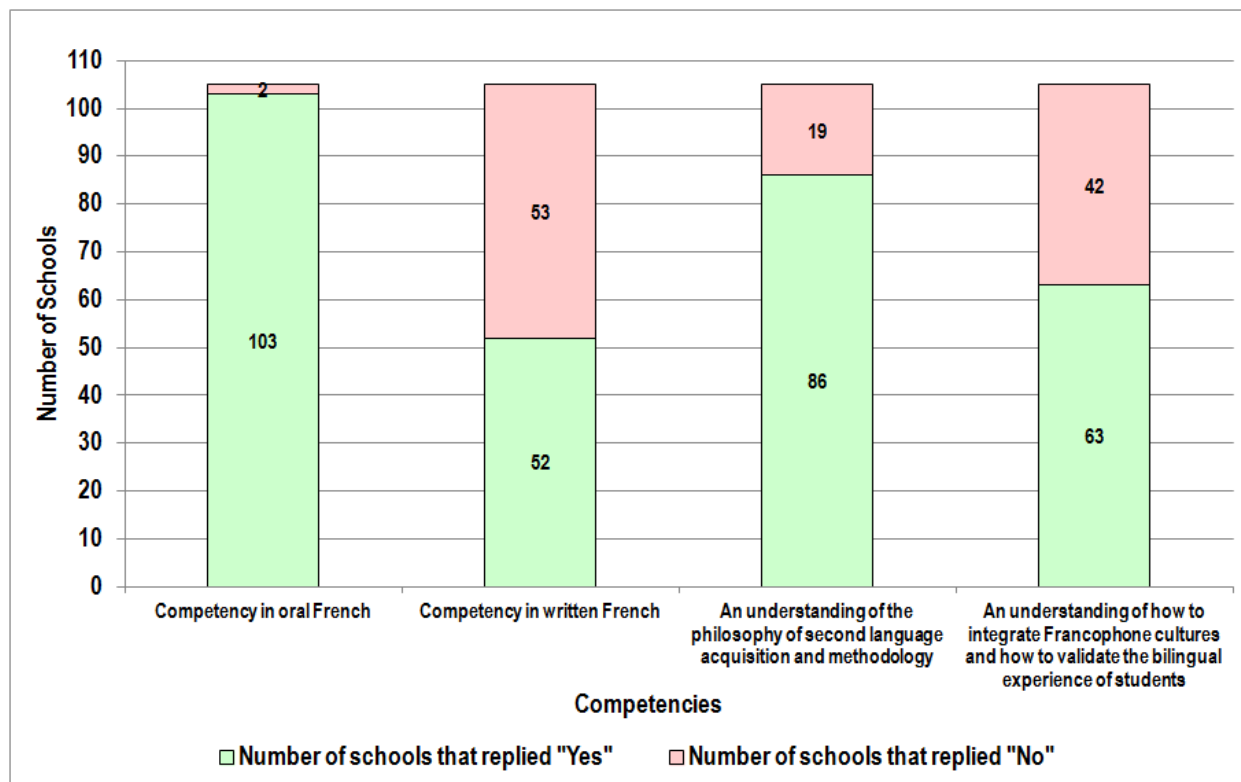
The data revealed for each competency is as follows:

Competency in oral French was verified by 103 of 105 (98.1%) of French Immersion schools. Although the majority of schools verify competency in oral French language, it is nevertheless worrisome that it is not requested by all schools. When considering new personnel, one must take into account that French Immersion teachers serve as models for students and should have an excellent command of the language in which they will be teaching. Assuming that the interviewers are unilingual, another bilingual administrator or lead teacher could become part of the interview process and assess the oral proficiency of candidates.
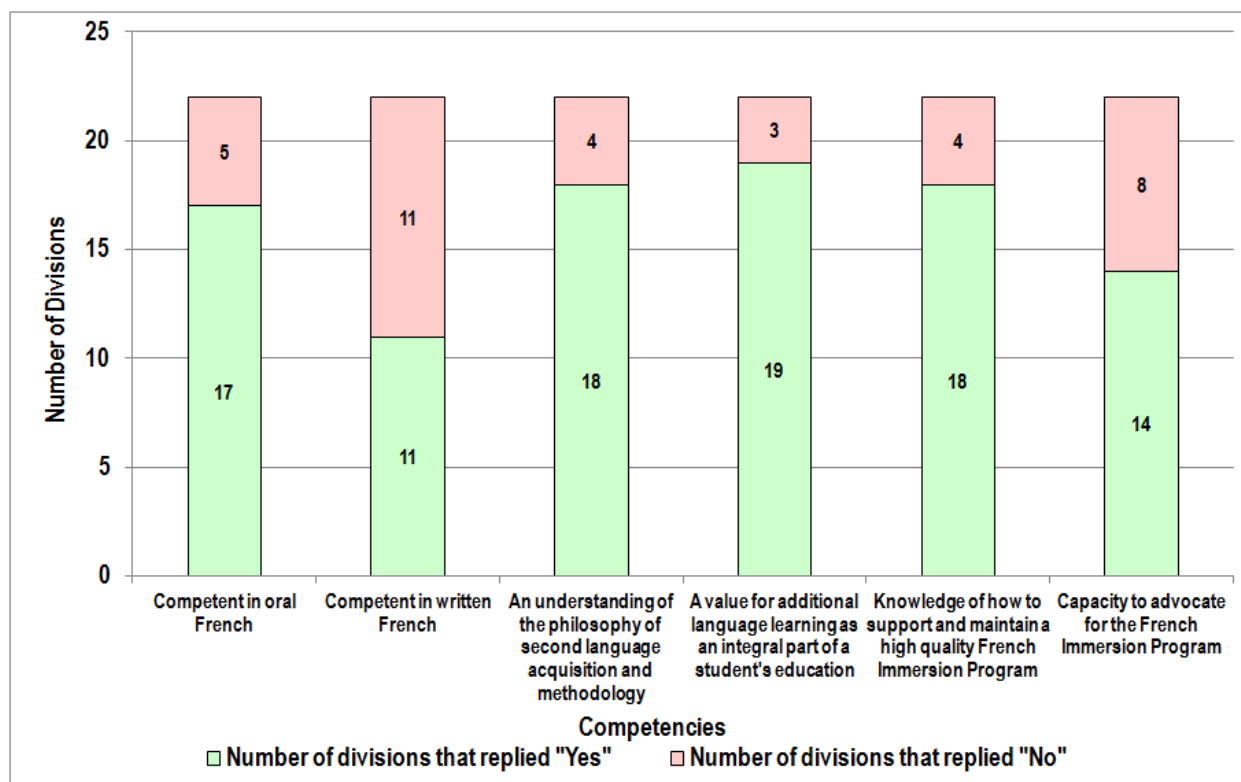
Competency in written French was verified by 52 of 105 (49.5%) of French Immersion schools. Results regarding the verification for competency in written French are somewhat disconcerting. One cannot assume that proficiency in French oral language is transferable to one's written language, thus a teacher could be proficient in one area but not the other. We should be reminded that French Immersion teachers serve as models for students and that the learning of a language is attained through different forms (oral and written).

An understanding of the philosophy of second language acquisition and methodology was verified by 86 of 105 (81.9%) of French Immersion schools. Even though a considerable number of schools verify for an understanding of the philosophy and methodology of second language acquisition, it is necessary to contemplate the following two elements when considering new personnel: not all teachers proficient in French have the teaching methods that will allow them to be effective in the French Immersion classroom, and not all teachers have the French skills required to be effective French Immersion teachers.

An understanding of how to integrate francophone cultures and validate students' bilingual experience was verified by 63 of 105 (60%) of French Immersion schools. Information in upcoming Section 4 of this provincial report affirms a significant loss of student population as French Immersion students move through the school system, from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Yet, not all schools verify for the understanding of validating students' linguistic experience, a crucial piece which impacts retention. Chart 19 of this report also maintains that schools offer numerous cultural activities to enrich the school environment. But yet, surprisingly, 40% of schools do not verify for an understanding of how to integrate francophone cultures.

Having stated the above, it is essential to verify the 4 key competencies when hiring teachers in order to provide a quality language program which in turn supports students' linguistic and educational experience. If the hiring of teachers with all of the required competencies proves difficult, school divisions need to ensure that once hired, teachers gain the required skills by attending various types of professional learning. School administrators are thus responsible in ensuring the follow up with all teachers needing this ongoing professional learning.

Chart 40: Number of **school divisions** verifying for six key competencies when hiring potential French Immersion administrators, by competency


The data indicates that generally all six competencies are verified by most of the 22 school divisions when interviewing potential administrators with the exception of written French. Hence, written competencies in French should be verified due to administrators serving as models for students as well as teachers. Furthermore, another area that might require additional focus is the capacity to advocate for the French Immersion Program especially in a dual track setting.

When schools administrators possess the knowledge and skills of the six key competencies listed above, they are better equipped to provide leadership in the school community, support teachers regarding methodology and current teaching practices while encouraging the development of students' linguistic competencies as well as their identity as plurilingual members of society.

Charts 41 and 42 indicate schools' and school divisions' responses regarding the support they provide to newly hired French Immersion teachers, while Chart 43 is in respect to school administrators. Such supports are essential for the integration of new teachers in classrooms and could increase the probability of retaining these teachers.

Chart 41: Supports in place for newly hired French Immersion **teachers** as identified by the 105 French Immersion **schools,** showing frequency of responses
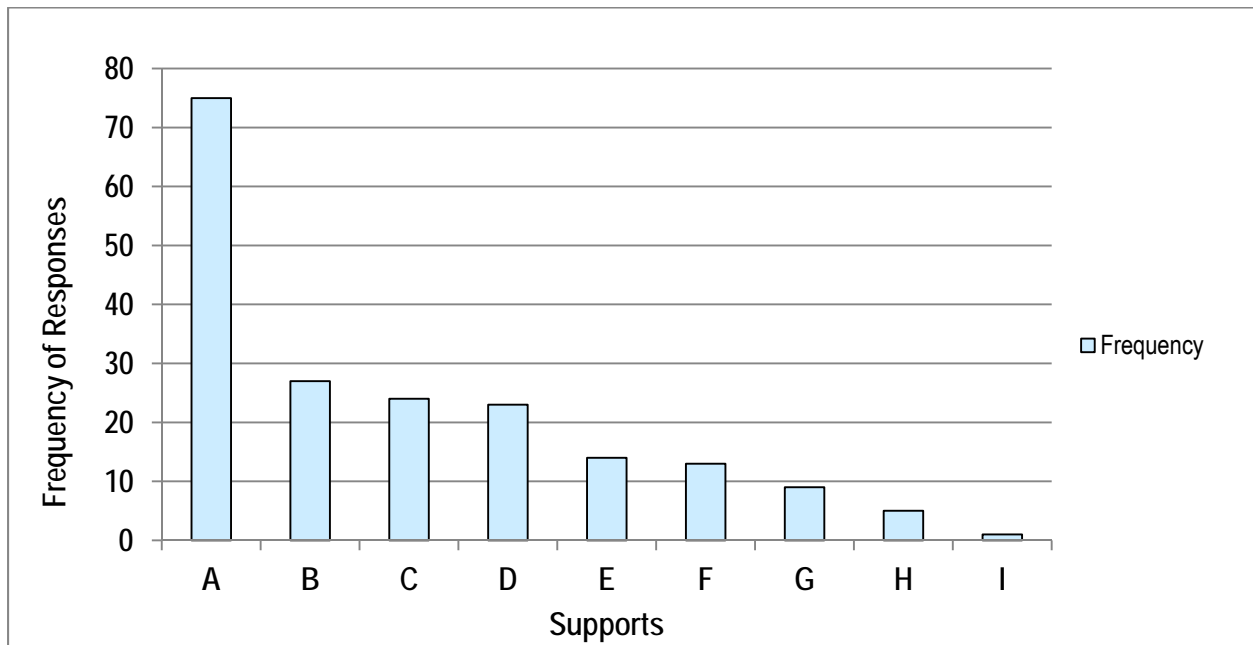
A - Mentorship/buddy system/school partners

B - New teacher workshops

C - Support from the divisional language consultant

D - Support from administrators and resource teachers

E - Grade level meetings/French Immersion team meetings

F - Opportunities to observe, network, collaborate

G - French Language courses

H - Instructional coach/Team leader/Department head

I - Training for assessing oral competencies (DELF)

The data indicates that the most common support offered is mentorship (A – 75 responses) while the remaining supports have much lower number of responses. Supporting new teachers to the profession enables them to be successful in the classroom, fosters a sense of belonging in the school, and contributes to their retention. School administrators are thus responsible for ensuring that a variety of professional learning opportunities are in place, however data indicates that there exists a limited variety in the type of supports offered at the school level for new teachers. Although mentorship is the easiest support to organize, the results are difficult to predict as they are a function of two individuals buying into it. Unless there is a formal process in place at the school, this model is very inconsistent in terms of the results it produces. A well established mentorship program should not limit itself to a teacher's first year in the profession, but rather encompass specific goals and strategies where scaffolding occurs in order to guide and respond to the needs of new teachers. In this respect, teacher retention could be addressed.

Chart 42: Supports in place for newly hired French Immersion **teachers** as identified by the 22 **school divisions** offering the French Immersion Program, showing frequency of responses
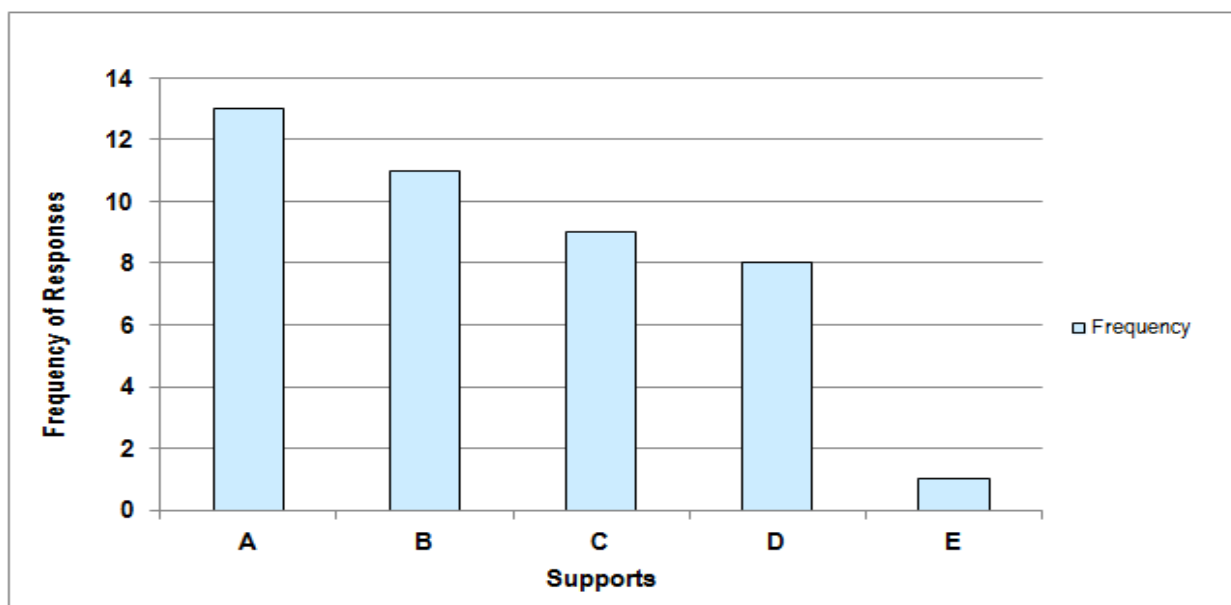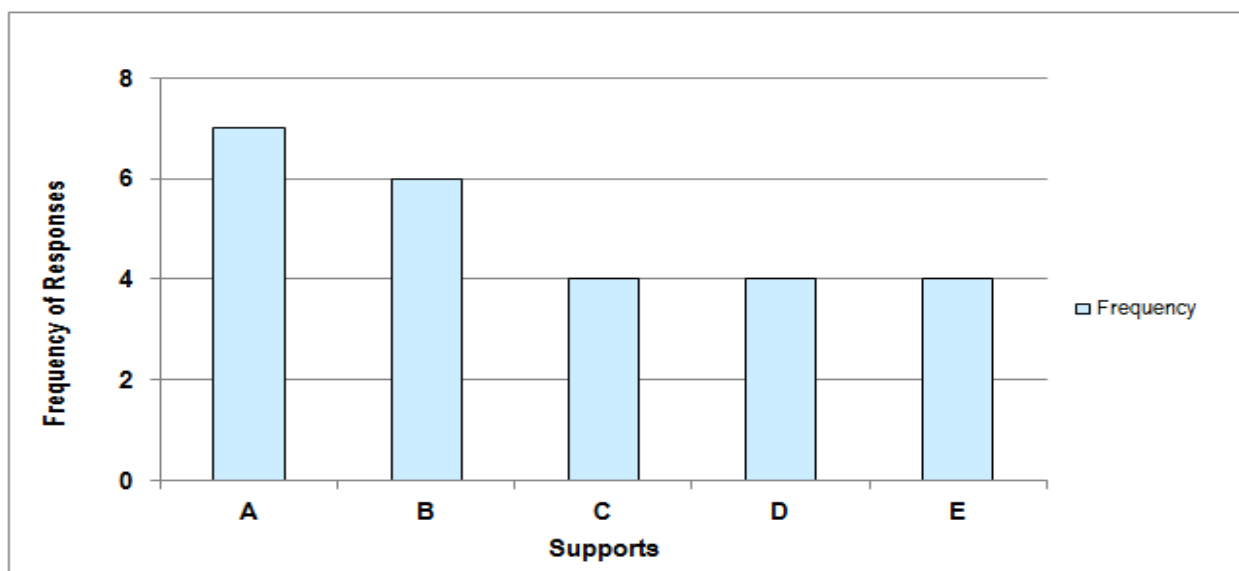

A - Mentorship
B - Access to professional leaning opportunities
C - Support of the divisional language consultant/coordinator
D - Divisional orientation for new teachers
E - One-to-one meetings with administrators

The data reveals that the supports most commonly offered by school divisions are mentorship (A – 13 responses) and a variety of professional learning opportunities such as language classes, methodology, assessment and networking (B – 11 responses). It has also been revealed that school divisions offer support through a divisional language consultant where observation of classes with debriefing and suggestions, dedicated professional learning time, lesson modelling and co-teaching opportunities were offered (C – 9 responses). However, not all school divisions have the resources to offer the support of a divisional language consultant/coordinator. In addition, school divisions offered a divisional orientation session which did not necessarily have a specific French Immersion component (D – 8 responses).

The above data seems to indicate that school divisions offer some support for newly hired French Immersion teachers. Schools and school divisions need to share this responsibility and recognize that the French Immersion Program has specific needs that differ from the English Program. Although some professional learning does occur at the divisional level, in most instances a French Immersion component is lacking and the specific needs of new French Immersion teachers are not entirely being addressed.

Chart 43: Supports in place for newly hired French Immersion **administrators** as identified by the 22 **school divisions** offering the French Immersion Program, showing frequency of responses

A - French administrator meetings/study groups/council/new administrators' groups

B - French Immersion consultant

C - Support from superintendents

D - Mentorship

E - Support for personal professional learning

The data reveals that school divisions offer support through *French administrator meetings or groups* (A – 7 responses)*,* and some divisions have a *Divisional language consultant* in place (B – 6 responses), while the three remaining supports (C – E) were each mentioned 4 times by the responding school divisions.

Charts 44 and 45 indicate school divisions' responses regarding the offering of a leadership program.

Chart 44: Percentage of **school divisions** offering a leadership program
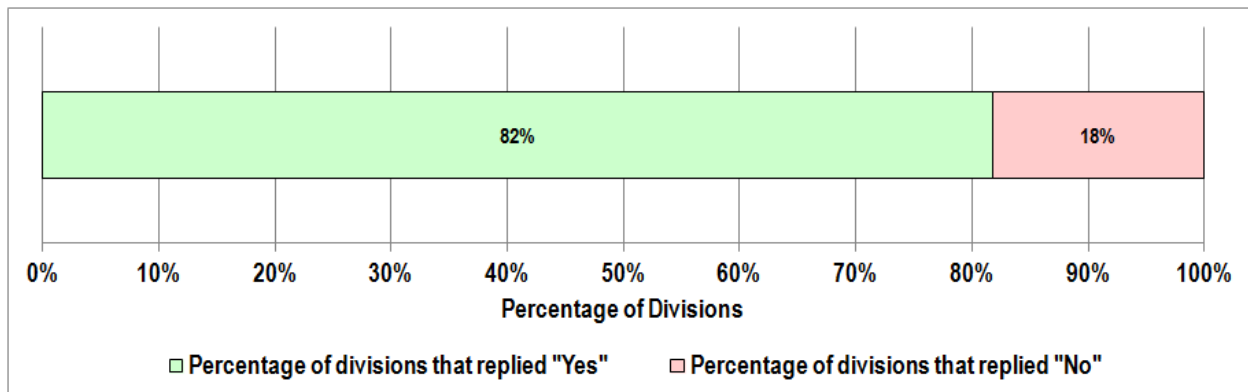
The data indicates that 82% of school divisions offering the French Immersion Program provide a leadership program for their teachers who are considering positions as school administrators. However, based on Chart 45 below, none of these leadership programs have a French Immersion component.

Chart 45: Percentage of the divisional leadership programs that have a French Immersion component
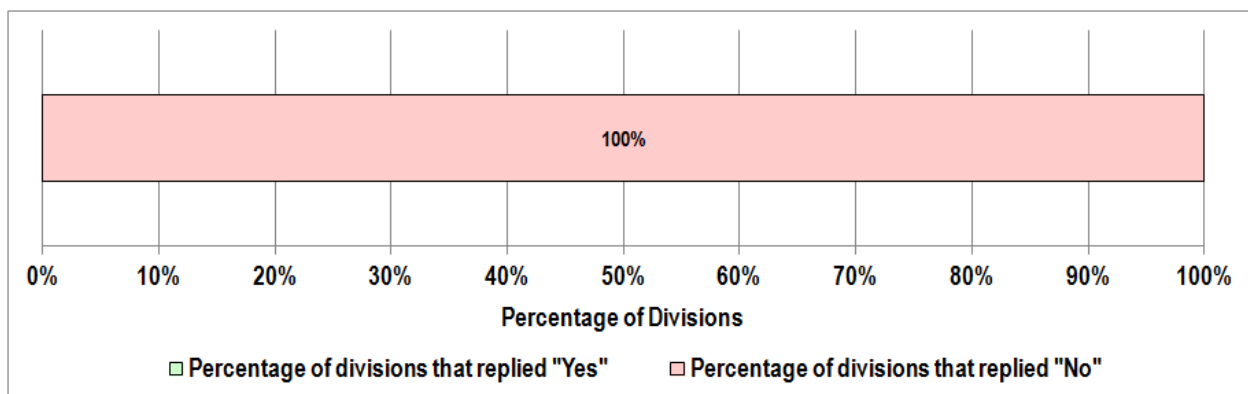
Given the information from the chart above, it is quite concerning that none of the school divisions provide a French Immersion component in their leadership program.

Professional Learning

All educators, teachers and administrators, need to be aware of research, issues and innovations related to their respective roles and responsibilities towards the French Immersion Program. Teachers need to stay informed of research in the area of second language acquisition and pedagogical resources that are available. One must recognize the importance for French Immersion teachers to have access to professional learning opportunities that meet their needs as educators in a French Immersion Program.

Since French Immersion teachers are in limited supply, many new teachers are hired without necessarily having acquired all the competencies mentioned previously. Given this situation, professional learning opportunities become paramount in ensuring that teachers gain the skills required.

The subsequent 4 questions were included to ascertain schools' priorities regarding French Immersion professional learning by looking at grade groupings as well as the type of professional learning opportunities sought by teachers.

Chart 46 indicates the schools' responses regarding educational staff members, while Charts 47 and 48 examine responses in respect to teachers.

Chart 46: Number of educational staff members (other than classroom teachers) that have participated in professional learning opportunities related to French Immersion in the 2013-2014 school year, by position
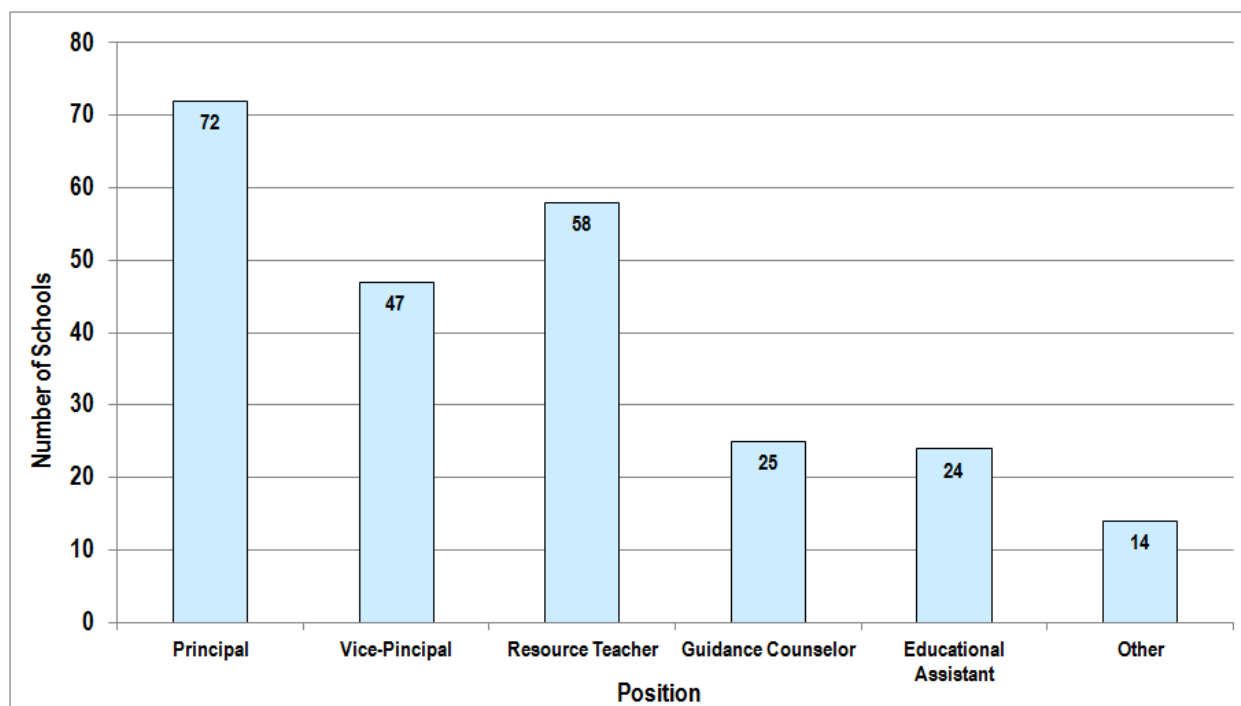

When considering data from Chart 46, it is important to note that personnel in schools may vary due to the fact that not all schools have a vice-principal and the number of educational assistants widely depends on students' needs.

The data indicates that the majority of school principals, 72 of the 105 (68.6%), and some resource teachers, 58 of the 105 (55.2%), participated in some type of professional learning opportunity related to the French Immersion Program. Although the majority of school principals took part in professional learning, it is nevertheless surprising that 31.4% of administrators did not attend a learning opportunity related to the French Immersion Program.

Apart from the positions of principal and resource teacher, very few other non teaching staff had any professional learning related to the French Immersion Program. It is essential that all educational staff participate in professional learning opportunities related to French Immersion in order to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to offer, support and maintain a high-quality program.

Chart 47: Number of French Immersion teachers having participated in professional learning activities offered in French in the 2013-2014 school year, by type of professional learning activity (as reported by the school)
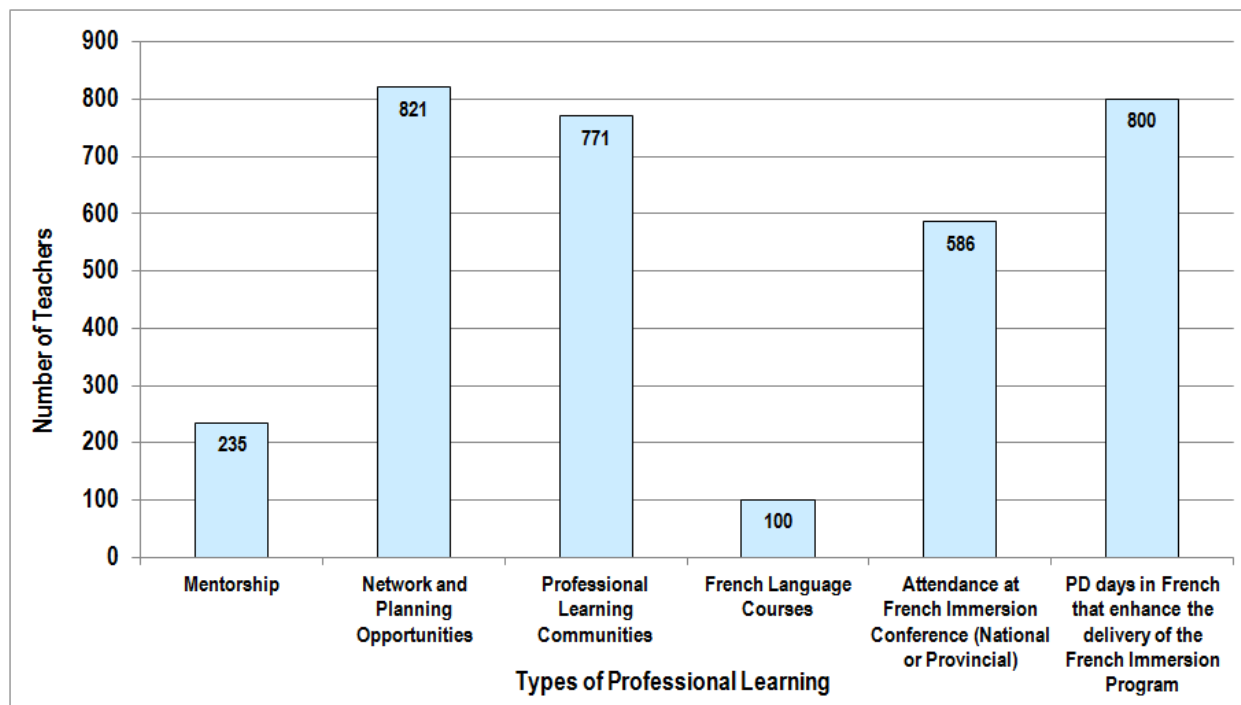
The data reveals that the most common types of professional learning activities attended by the teachers are *Network and planning* (821 responses), *Professional development days in French that enhance the delivery of the French Immersion Program* (800 responses), and *Professional learning communities* (771 responses).

In addition, many teachers (586 responses) participated in *French Immersion conferences.* Other professional learning activities identified by fewer schools are *Mentorship* (235 responses) and *French language courses* (100 responses). This is the second time that mentorship has been mentioned. The data from Chart 41 also identified *Mentorship* as the main support offered to new teachers. In reference to *French language courses,* there may be an increase in teacher participation in these types of courses in the future given that French Immersion schools maintain that hiring qualified staff poses a challenge due to the difficulty in finding teachers with appropriate language competencies and content knowledge as reported in Charts 31, 32 and 36 of this report.

Chart 48: Percentage of French Immersion teachers who participated in professional learning activities related to the French Immersion Program in the 2013-2014 school year, by grade levels
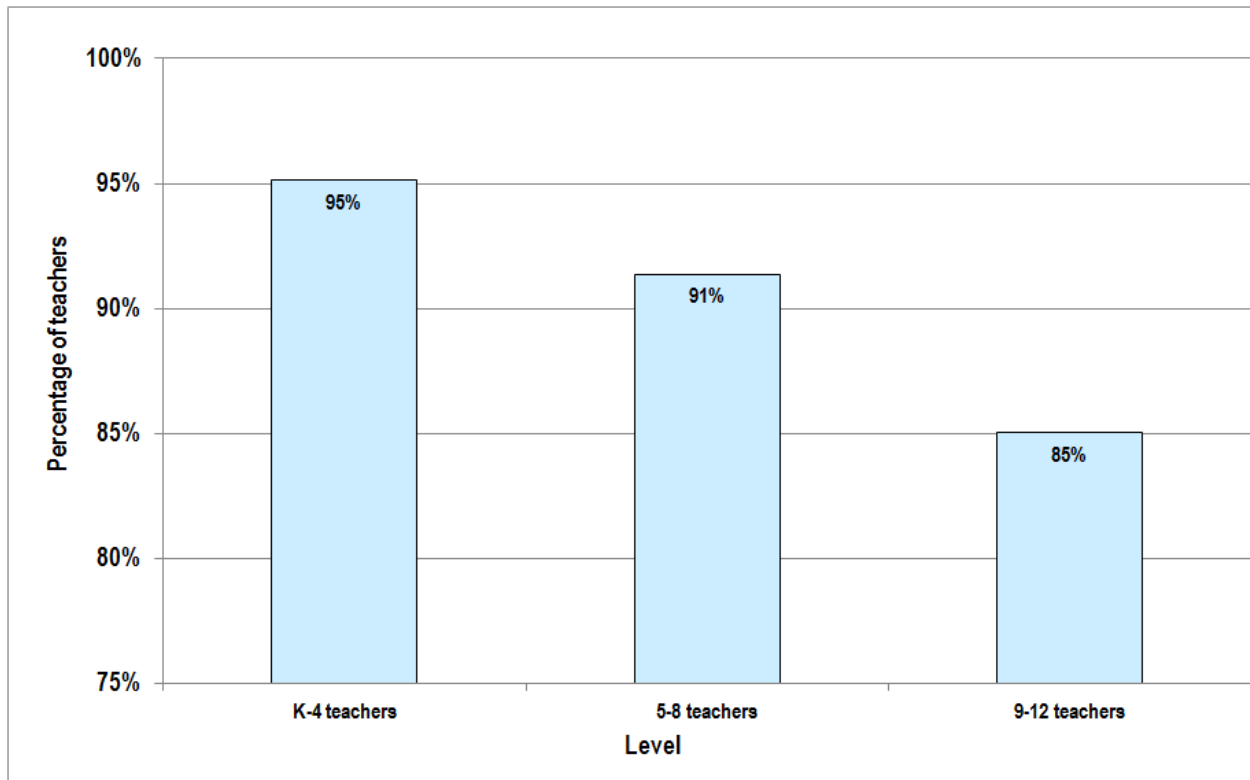
The data indicates that there is a high percentage of K to 4 (95%) and 5 to 8 (91%) teachers that participated in professional learning activities related to the French Immersion Program, and that there was a slight drop in the percentage (85%) among Senior Years teachers.

Chart 49 reveals schools' responses in respect to the type of professional learning opportunities. Please note that there are proportionately fewer Senior Years schools than Early and Middle Years French Immersion schools.

Chart 49: French Immersion professional learning priorities of schools, by frequency of responses and grade groupings
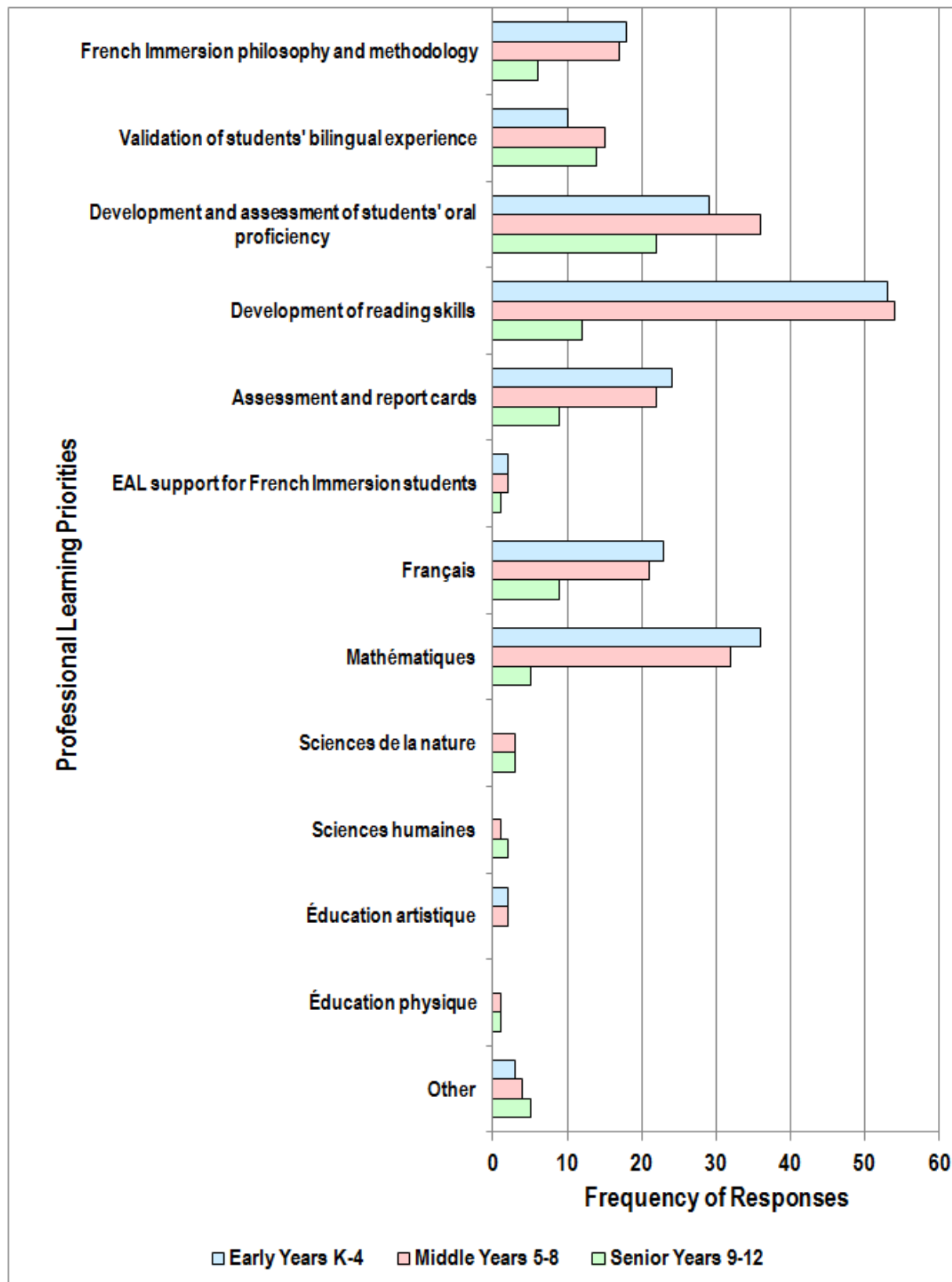
The data reveals that the seven main professional learning priorities are as follows: *Development of reading skills* (119 responses), *Development and assessment of students' oral proficiency* (87 responses), *Mathématiques* (73 responses), *Assessment and report cards* (55 responses), *Français* (53 responses), *French Immersion philosophy and methodology* (41 responses), and *Validation of students' bilingual experience* (39 responses).

Upon further analysis, the following chart illustrates the ranking of professional learning priorities by grade groupings. It should be noted that there are fewer Senior Years schools resulting in fewer responses.

Rank	Early Years (EY)	Middle Years (MY)	Senior Years (SY)
1	Development of reading skills (53 responses)	Development of reading skills (54 responses)	Development and assessment of students' oral proficiency (22 responses)
2	Mathématiques (36 responses)	Development and assessment of students' oral proficiency (36 responses)	Validation of students' bilingual experience (14 responses)
3	Development and assessment of students' oral proficiency (29 responses)	Mathématiques (32 responses)	Development of reading skills (12 responses)
4	Assessment and report cards (24 responses)	Assessment and report cards (22 responses)	Assessment and report cards (9 responses)
5	Français (23 responses)	Français (21 responses)	Français (9 responses)
6	French Immersion philosophy and methodology (18 responses)	French Immersion philosophy and methodology (17 responses)	French Immersion philosophy and methodology (6 responses)
7	Validation of students' bilingual experience (10 responses)	Validation of students' bilingual experience (15 responses)	Mathématiques and other (5 responses)

This analysis shows that the ranking of professional learning priorities is similar in Early and Middle Years, and differs slightly at the Senior Years. Early, Middle and Senior Years have all identified *Development of reading skills* as well as the *Development and assessment of students' oral proficiency* in their first three priorities, while *Mathématiques* seems to be more of a priority in the Early and Middle Years. In addition, *Validation of students' bilingual experience* is reported as being the second priority in the Senior Years but ranks seventh in the Early and Middle Years. A focus on validating students should occur throughout their plurilingual experience and must not be limited to the Senior Years, since validating students linguistic experience nurtures the development of their identity, influences retention, and enhances the sense of community inside and outside school. Truly understanding one's own identity is developed with guidance and through time, and should commence as early as Kindergarten.

Reflection on Educational Staff and Professional Learning

Upon completion of Section 3 of the questionnaire, schools were asked to reflect on the extent to which they successfully supported their educational staff and offered appropriate professional learning opportunities that enabled them to:

- support students in the development of their linguistic competencies
- validate students' French Immersion experience
- encourage students to become plurilingual members of society

This reflection included identifying successes achieved and challenges encountered while empowering their educational staff in delivering a strong French Immersion Program and are subsequently presented in Charts 50 and 51.

Schools were then asked to make an overall school self-assessment with respect to educational staff and professional learning. Hence, Chart 52 represents the schools' perspective regarding their degree of success in the hiring and supporting of staff.

Chart 50 presents the main factors identified as successes in hiring and supporting educational staff, by factor and frequency of responses.

Chart 50: Successes in hiring and supporting educational staff, by factor and frequency of responses
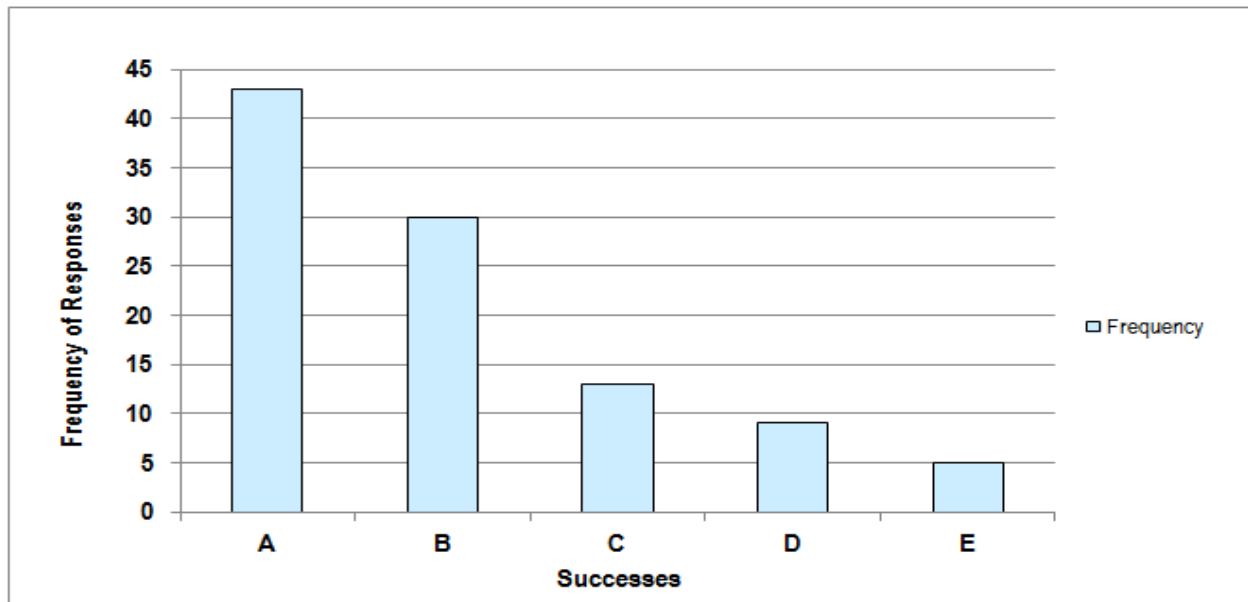
A - Professional collaboration between teachers at the school and school division level

B - Professional learning offered to all teachers that support the development of student's linguistic competencies

C - Very supportive and collaborative staff

D - Administration attends job fairs in early February in order to start the hiring process

E - Support teachers in the teaching and assessment of literacy and numeracy

The data indicates that schools perceive their two main successes to be in the area of *Professional collaboration* (A – 43 responses) as well as *Professional learning* (B – 30 responses). While 1 success pertains to the hiring process (D), 4 of the 5 successes identified relate to professional learning opportunities (A, B, C, and E). Nine schools reported attending *Job fairs in early February* (D); however, this may simply be considered a strategy rather than a success as the effectiveness of such fairs is questionable, as per Chart 34. Upon observation of the reported successes, they all reflect strategies implemented by schools; however revealing the outcomes of these strategies may have been more pertinent.

Chart 51 presents the main factors identified as challenges in hiring and supporting educational staff, by factor and frequency of responses.

Chart 51: Challenges in hiring and supporting educational staff, by frequency of responses and cumulative percentages
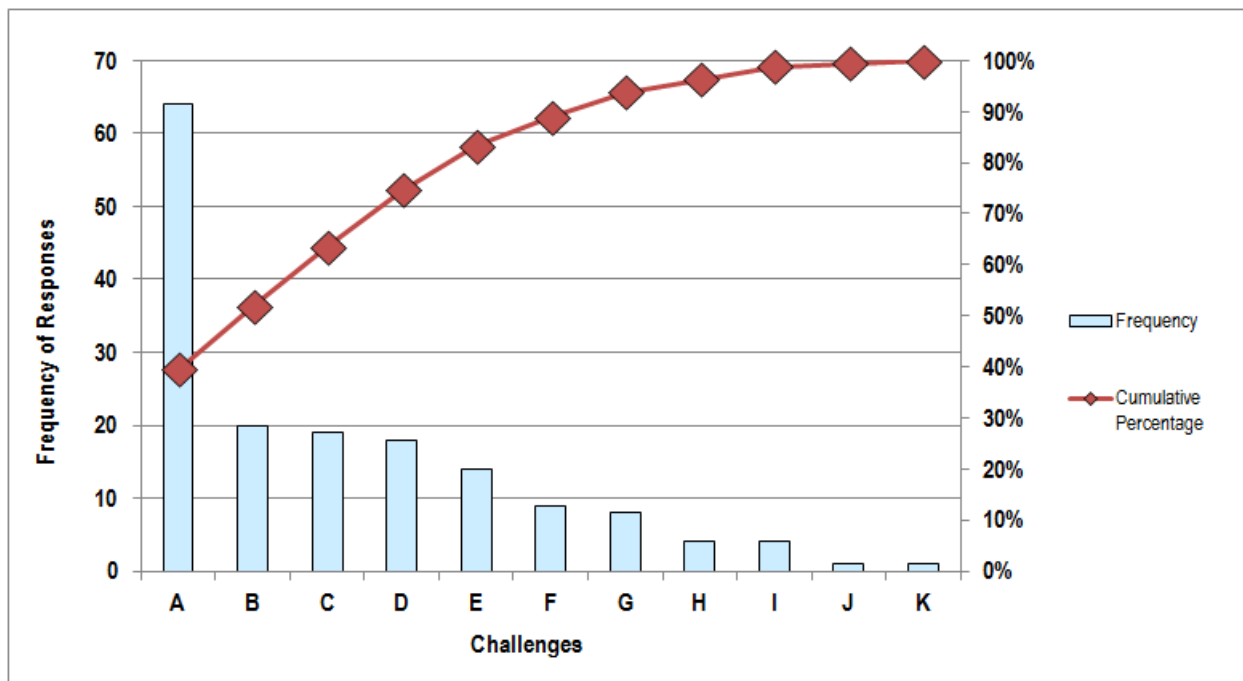
A - Limited pool of qualified candidates

B - Distance in rural/northern communities (recruiting, time/cost of professional learning).

C - Inconsistent professional learning offered to teachers in French

D - Lack of French linguistic competency of staff

E - High staff turnover limits stability and continuity

F - Difficulty finding French speaking educational assistants and substitute teachers

G - Faculty of education students are unprepared for today's French Immersion Program

H - Lack of appropriate French teaching resources

I - Lack of opportunity to meet as a French Immersion team in schools

J - Staff defer to English when speaking to staff or students

K - Ensuring the administration in French Immersion schools are knowledgeable and have experience in the French Immersion Program

The challenges identified by the schools are presented in the Pareto chart above. The Pareto Principle states that by addressing the factors that cause 80% of the challenges, strategies developed may become more focussed and resources may be allocated more effectively. As a result, most if not all of the remaining 20% of the challenges may also improve. The analysis of this data focuses on the challenges that need the most attention, those that represent a cumulative value of 80%.

The data reveals that schools perceive their main challenge to be a *Limited pool of qualified candidates* (A – 64 responses). This reality is only exacerbated in rural and northern communities in regards to hiring and retaining staff and further confirms the anecdotal evidence from the field. It is evident that this challenge affects the quality of and accessibility to the French Immersion Program. The remaining 20% of challenges (B – K) should be addressed by each school and school division according to their context.

According to the data, schools are faced with more challenges than successes, as they reported 11 challenges regarding educational staff and professional learning compared to 5 successes that were presented in Chart 50.

The following chart indicates the extent to which schools perceived their level of success regarding recruitment and professional learning of staff to ensure the delivery of a strong French Immersion Program.

Chart 52: Percentage of schools indicating their level of success in empowering their educational staff to deliver a strong French Immersion Program
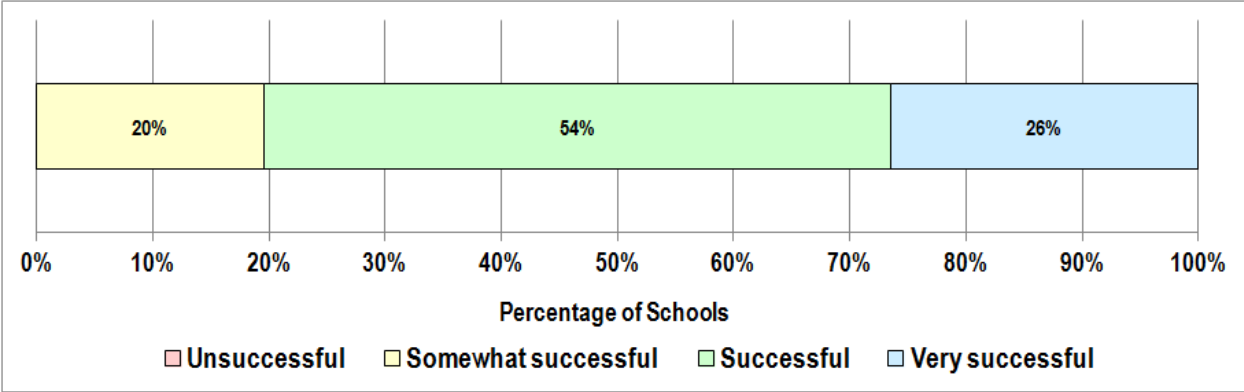
The data reveals that of the 102 responding schools, 80% perceive themselves as either being *Very successful* (26%) or *Successful* (54%) in empowering their educational staff in delivering a strong program, whereas 20% indicated they were *Somewhat successful*. These findings seem encouraging, but are nonetheless contradictory to other data presented in this section. As there are only a few successes highlighted in the data, the 80% success rate is questionable since it seems entirely linked to providing teachers with professional learning opportunities. Given that there is a limited pool of qualified candidates, schools and school divisions could be attributing their success to effective collaboration with current staff. It is evident that further work is required in order to support, recruit, and retain qualified educators thus contributing to the delivery of a strong French Immersion Program.