

## Conversation with FSL Grade 9–12 students

We want to have a conversation with you about your opinions regarding French instruction.

Why did you choose to go into FSL?

My parents wanted me to, thought it would be good for me.

What do you enjoy most about FSL?

Get to go on trips, some Universities require a second language.

Student in grade 12: I am really in French 11 (It's a 10–12 split). I am in it because of University.

Are there other benefits to being in French program? Are any of you in Immersion before? (No)

How many of you are taking it because you just wanted to speak the language French/travel (most students put hands up)

Speak sometimes with people who I know speak French (2 students)

Have travelled to Quebec (2 students)

Have travelled to France and Belgium; I absorbed some language, picked it up really fast from being in school

Travelled to Quebec...tried to speak French, not very successful...this past summer

If there was another program at GSS that expected a higher level of French, would you be interested?

Wouldn't that be hard? More speaking? What would happen to immersion?

Yes, that would be better.....there are a lot of kids who don't want to be in FSL, smaller class would be easier, more opportunity to speak, needs a teacher who understood and would be consistent, help us

What else would be important? More speaking in class would be important. It all depends on the expectations of the teacher. It's better when you are only allowed to speak French.

Have you used your French outside class? (Grade 12 student)...I was in French speaking countries so it was "expected"

Grade 9 student...I tried but wasn't very successful

Would you like to have a "stronger" French program? Yes, would take it.

If it was a "harder" program, how many would take it? All put hand up.

In Grade 9 class how many? 22. Some of these students are in French by default (don't want to take other things).

Was it a good choice for you to take French?

If we had some more choice in the French program (travel to a place that only spoke French...more of a goal to get "submerged" in the language) that would

be good. It would be more like other kids get to do in electives (outdoor ed goes on a trip), more of that kind of thing.

Is there anything that has come to your mind about your French studies that you haven't had a chance to share?

If it is the same next year, I probably won't take it, I haven't learned much. Teacher, Curriculum, smaller class, something. The teacher is the most important..it makes a big difference if the teacher talks a lot, if they really speak it.

I like it semester where there is more time. More repetition.

### **Conversation with French Immersion Grade 11-12 Students**

Introductions.

How many have been in immersion right from K? All but 2. One entered in grade 1, one immigrated from France

How many of you love immersion? All.

What are the benefits?

You get to learn a 2<sup>nd</sup> language, you can speak French anywhere, jobs, university, totally expands your knowledge, helps to learn other languages.

Teachers are like friends.

Who is going on in French at University (about 7 kids put hands up).

What are the challenges with immersion? Some kids in the English program don't understand what it is about, which can be frustrating.

Do you want to cut the program (Question from student)?

(Response to question from student) No, we want to know what you are thinking. There are rumours in the community, but the rumour that French is being cut is not true.

Perception that the courses are harder than English. An English student said they have a 95 in SS and don't do homework. I do homework and I have 80!

We have gone on trips, it's the best thing to go to French speaking places.

Do you speak French at home? 8 students.

Are you starting to think in French? Most hands go up. On the trip to France I thought in French.

Being with friends, having that is important, being involved with the culture, that is important.

Are there other things that could be added that you think would be important?

The way it is seems pretty good.

We enjoyed the French foods course. We learned a different vocabulary. We can now read French cookbooks!

Anything else that would make it better?

Offer more electives in French. Better scheduling so other electives don't conflict.

Would you take a DL course in French?

Rather do it in a class.

Do you have friends that wish they were in immersion? Yes.

We can tell the difference in the quality of French between people that started earlier and later.

How do you plan to keep up your French?

I am going to University in Quebec.

I watch French channel (10 kids).....

Over the years some of your friends have dropped, what reasons did they give? Different reasons, found it too hard, didn't want to give up electives, didn't want to put in the work.

How are your skills in English? Better than average. We do a lot of writing in French and this helps us be better writers.

Have your English skills always been good?

No

There are 11 grade 11s in the program.

Anything else you want to add?

Immersion is a good program, it is my favourite thing about high school. It is rare that a group of students get to be together like we have been, we have so many memories from way back, special to learn a 2<sup>nd</sup> language, not always possible.

Some adults are critical of the program, but the students succeed better than other students.

What do you think could have been done differently to keep more kids in the program?

Some found it too hard, some moved away, I think some weren't prepared to put in the work.

People need more education on the program. Some people are against learning another language. I think they are jealous! You do learn both languages at the same time.....

TOC: I have tutored many ex immersion students, there are students who struggle in immersion, they struggle in other things as well, the immersion students tend to succeed in everything they are doing.

How was your French when you got to Quebec and France?

We understood everything....we felt successful, we didn't know the slang, we had to learn it.

They speak more clearly in France....we learned more the Quebec style. They talk faster than we do, but we still feel completely bilingual.

Students spoke about their travel experience, positive, connections with kids from Quebec. Planning a trip to Martinique, we have exchanged letters with people from there, we are on Facebook.

Immersion is harder in Grade 8-9, once you get to 10-12 it starts to be really fun.

How has your French improved since Grade 8?

A lot!

French teachers...when you see them, how do you speak?

It's automatic that we speak to them in French it would be strange to do otherwise.

### Students who have left the French Immersion program

Introductions.

We need to hear from students, that is how we learn and make things better. You have all been in immersion at one point.

Grades 10, 11, 11, 10, 8, 11, 11

You dropped out of the program, why?

I wanted more electives, options.

I dropped out half way through grade 9. Wanted to take photography.

Do you regret your decision?

No, I am still in a French class and speak the language.

I wanted to pursue art electives, I didn't find the courses interesting enough, I regret my decision sometimes. I still speak French.

I wasn't understanding the teacher, I didn't like the language, and didn't enjoy it.

I dropped out after grade 10, didn't like the teachers. Don't regret leaving it, I will not be pursuing studies in French. I started not liking it in High School.

Really didn't like the grammar and the rules instruction (3 students nodding)

I couldn't get the electives I wanted. The Grammar was killing me. I was getting good marks but just didn't like it. I still use the language. I will take French 12 because I may as well continue.

I dropped out in Grade 4 because I moved away....I was gone for 2 years and just didn't go back in the program. I am in FSL now, it's alright.

I am taking the immersion class, but not the whole program. I wanted a wider variety of things I could learn. I really wanted to learn more stuff and felt English was a better choice.

We dropped in the middle of grade 8, it was just too hard.

If we had more of a conversational French course, we would have stayed in the program (all students). I liked immersion right up until high school. Got too

hard, too focused. Mme Soujah made it so captivating, we're going to learn about Egypt and we're going to make a poster about it! We would be excited.

When we got here, it was "read 5 pages" and we didn't understand it, it wasn't interesting or fun. Outside of the class we would always speak English. One student said "sometimes".

Do you see the French as "valuable"?

Yes, I am going to Italy and that will help.

It helped me learn Spanish.

What would you recommend about the program?

More hands on work, projects, stuff that is not all about reading....presentations instead of essays.

I was pretty bad at French grammar, I would rather do other things.

Would you consider yourself bilingual? Yes (all) except.....

Student who left program in Grade 4 – I have begun to catch on more this year. I didn't like the way I was being taught. I was bored, it was mundane. Didn't like all the focus on the rules, content, academics. If it was different I would like it. Are there things that have come to your mind you would like to share? Would like the opportunity to take some subjects in French, but have the option to take SS in English if we wanted to. More flexibility. The talking part is more important...if we didn't have great grammar they could still understand us.....I would feel comfortable going to different countries where French was spoken. Believe a 2<sup>nd</sup> language is important, even though left immersion, value being able to speak French. If the subjects were elective based/activity oriented, I would have stayed in the program.

### **Students in French Immersion Grade 8–10**

Introductions.

Most have been in Immersion since K , one started in 1.

Almost all students love immersion program (3 didn't put up hand).

All plan to stay in immersion through Secondary.

Courses: It would be nice if we could have more electives. Clarification...would like to have more access to English electives because we have to take three classes in French.

I really liked the foods class in French, it was a really interesting course and good way to learn French.

I would like to have PE in French, so we don't burn up one of our electives.

Electives, we had drama and English, and then we had it in French, so there is a lot of repetition because there aren't that many options.

The foods course was great because it helped expand the vocabulary into the non-academic vocab.

Given the option, would you rather learn SS in English or in French....different opinions on this.

How can we improve the immersion program?

Design it so we didn't have to burn up an elective.

But, if we put in more French electives, will that mean I don't get to take shop class?? Discussion.

Would be hard to agree on what elective was best.

What are the advantages of immersion?

Bilingual certificate, Teachers, more options for careers, I like the smaller classes, since we know French, we can learn new languages easier, exchanges are a great opportunity, we all know each other so we can help each other, I think it helped that I got to start early rather than late immersion.

Who has been places where you had to speak French?

Many.

Were you able to speak fluently? Comfortable speaking, examples given, we ordered food for our parents at a French restaurant in Texas.

Relatives in Quebec, so we are going there for Grandparents anniversary...speak only French when in Quebec

Who speaks French at home? (3).

All students feel they are fluent in French....some felt they were not completely fluent in elementary, but learned more complicated language in High School.

Who has been in both France and Quebec, what was easier.

We learned more Quebec French, and find that easier. It is spoken faster than we speak it.

Do you know students who are not in the program but would like to be? There are students who have dropped and regret it. There are students who would like to speak French but don't want to be in a "program".

Suggestions on how to make it a better program?

Might be interesting to learn more about the Culture...it would be nice to look at that more in depth. Learn about the origins of the language, what they do differently from us.

What would help to keep students in the program?

Electives issue again. Some found it too hard, try to make it easier for those students. Example...the vocab of different subjects is different and it makes it really hard sometimes.

Some students...found it too difficult, learning another language is not easy, used to do one block of PE in French but there was not enough opportunity to speak in the class and the school dropped it because of that, I agree with that.

Are there other things that have come to your mind?

Question from a student, why are we having this meeting, is it to do something?

About examining how to ensure more students complete the program.

Our electives are not as good. Some feel it was too hard. Some didn't like the teacher. Some felt it was the SS that was the problem.

Three of my friends dropped out before high school, they already found math difficult, and then with the added difficulty of the language it was too hard for them.

How could we improve the curriculum?

Better to have the more challenging courses in French, different opinions on this!