

**Final Report**  
*Ce Qu'on a Entendu*  
**Findings of the 2011 French Immersion  
Parent Consultation Process**

***Submitted to***

Edmonton Catholic School District  
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***By***

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## Executive Summary

### Proposals

The Edmonton Catholic School District is currently reviewing two proposals to grow and enhance its French Immersion programs.

- The first proposal involves the phase-out of partial French Immersion high school programs at Archbishop O’Leary and St. Francis Xavier and the concurrent establishment of a more comprehensive French Immersion program at Archbishop MacDonald.
- The second proposal involves the construction of a new school in southeast Edmonton to replace J.H. Picard. The replacement school would provide single-track French Immersion programming for Grades 7-12 as well as an outreach centre.



The Board of Trustees appreciates that these changes would affect a significant number of French Immersion students and their families and is committed to considering their perspectives before making decisions regarding either of the two proposals. To this end, the District has undertaken a comprehensive consultation process to gather the opinions of parents of students currently enrolled in the District’s French Immersion programs.

### Consultation Process

The District engaged an independent consulting firm to undertake the consultation process. Nichols Applied Management<sup>1</sup> worked with the District to facilitate a series of six community consultation meetings and field a survey of parents.

<sup>1</sup> Nichols Applied Management is an Edmonton-based firm which provides management and consulting services in the fields of economic and financial analysis, strategic and business planning, program and policy evaluation, and general management. The firm offers specialized expertise in the local government and education sectors and the general field of quantitative research.

This report provides a summary of the input gathered through the community consultation meetings, survey and written submissions to the District on each of the proposals.

## **Findings**

There are mixed opinions amongst parents on both proposals.

### ***Archbishop MacDonald Proposal***

With respect to the proposal to develop a more comprehensive French Immersion program at Archbishop MacDonald, parents appreciate the District's intent to improve French Immersion programming on the city's north side, but raise a number of concerns.

- Many of the participants at the community consultation meetings indicated that they do not believe the proposal goes far enough and that it wasn't being presented within the context of a longer-term plan to promote French Immersion programming in north Edmonton (and across the city).
- A significant number of parents and students at the community consultation meetings raised concerns with the proposed academic requirements associated with a new French Immersion program at Archbishop MacDonald. Many suggested that these requirements would negate the opportunity for many students to continue with French Immersion.

The survey confirmed the split in parental opinion on the proposal. Just over half (56%) of the survey respondents indicated that they agree with the proposal. Support for the proposal is weaker (52%) amongst those respondents who indicated their children would be affected by the proposal.

### ***J.H. Picard Proposal***

The participants at the community consultation meetings expressed a range of opinions with respect to the proposal to construct a school in southeast Edmonton to replace J.H. Picard.

- A strong majority of the participants at the community consultation meeting held at J.H. Picard expressed significant concerns with the proposal. These participants argued that the proposal would result in the loss of a very unique and successful French Immersion program. Many noted that J.H. Picard is the only single-track, K-12 French Immersion program in Western Canada. Other emphasized that a "school of choice" should be centrally located in the city. Concerns were also raised with the negative impact the proposal would have on

the communities and neighbourhoods around J.H. Picard. There was a strong sense amongst these participants that the proposal would result in an overall decline in French Immersion enrolment across the District.

- Participants at the community consultation meetings held at Archbishop MacDonald indicated that the proposed location of the replacement school would be very impractical for students from north Edmonton. Several participants argued that developing a new French Immersion school in north Edmonton should take priority over replacing J.H. Picard.
- Parents at the community consultation meetings conducted at the three elementary schools in south Edmonton had very different opinions on the proposal. The opinions expressed were strongly influenced by location. For example, parents at the Frère Antoine community consultation meeting were quite supportive of the proposal while parents at Monsignor William Irwin were opposed. The former emphasized the locational advantages of the proposal as well as the benefits of a modern school. The latter argued that given the growth within Edmonton's southwest communities, the District should consider a new French Immersion school in this area instead of the Meadows.

The survey indicated a lack of support amongst parents for the proposal. Over 61% of survey respondents indicated that they disagreed with the proposal to construct a school in the Meadows to replace J.H. Picard. The level of disagreement rises to 67% amongst parents who indicated that their children would be affected by the proposal. A strong majority (73%) of survey respondents with children currently enrolled at J.H. Picard indicated that they were opposed to the proposal.

### ***General Findings***

A range of general findings were gleaned from the community consultation meetings and surveys. Not surprisingly, the parents who attended community consultation meetings and/or completed surveys are very supportive of French Immersion as an educational program option for their children. These parents emphasized that the District should be doing more to solicit the opinions of students and staff regarding the proposals and the development of French Immersion in the future. Others argued that the District needs to be more evidence-based in its decision-making. Finally, a number of parents argued that the District should explicitly consider the impact its decisions have on the communities and neighbourhoods in which schools are located.

Overall, it is clear that parents want the District to develop and implement longer-term plans to enhance French Immersion across the city. Many people noted that the lack of a long-term plan detracts from the capacity of the District to attract and retain French Immersion students.

## 1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of a consultation process undertaken by Nichols Applied Management on behalf of the Edmonton Catholic School District. The consultation process included a series of community consultation meetings and a survey to gather input from parents of students currently enrolled in the District's K-12 French Immersion programs on two distinct proposals.

- The first proposal involves the phase-out over three years of the modified French Immersion High School programs at Archbishop O'Leary and St. Francis Xavier and the concurrent establishment of a more comprehensive High School French Immersion program at Archbishop MacDonald.
- The second proposal involves the construction of a new school in southeast Edmonton to replace J.H. Picard. The replacement school would provide single-track French Immersion programming for Grades 7-12 as well as an outreach centre.

### 1.1 Background

There are over 3,100 students currently enrolled in French Immersion programming within the Edmonton Catholic School District. As illustrated in Figure 1.1, this represents an increase of more than 500 students, or 19%, over the past decade. Today, approximately one in ten District students is enrolled in French Immersion.

**Figure 1.1 French Immersion Enrollment Growth, 2002-2011**

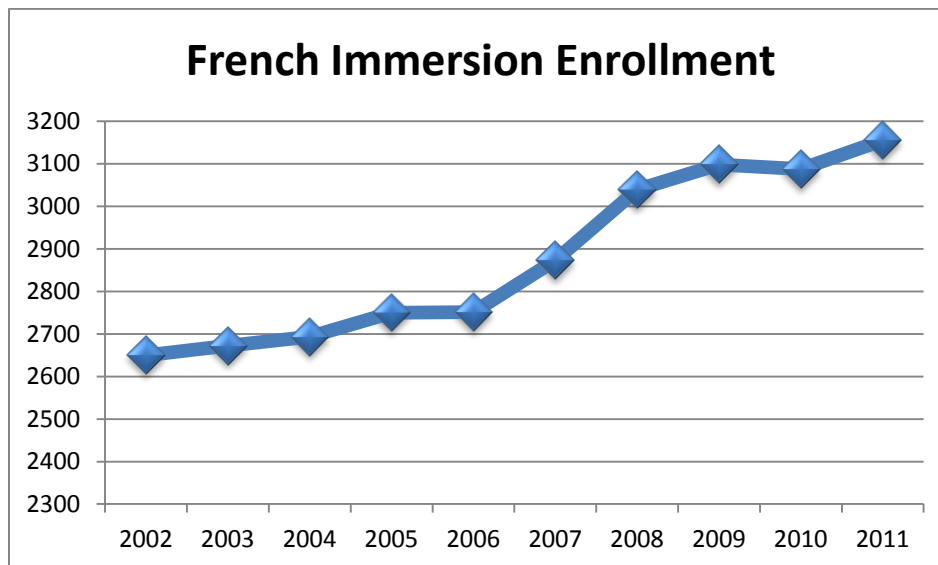


Table 1.1 identifies the 13 schools in which the District currently provides French Immersion programming. Single-track French Immersion programs are offered at four schools; dual-track programs are offered at the remaining nine.

High school-level French Immersion is provided at three schools: J.H. Picard, Archbishop O’Leary and St. Francis Xavier. J.H. Picard is a single-track school which provides a full range of K-12 programming. Archbishop O’Leary and St. Francis Xavier are dual-track schools which provide partial French Immersion programming.

**Table 1.1 French Immersion Schools**

School	Grades	Model	FI Enrollment
Archbishop O’Leary	10-12	Dual-track	52
Bishop Savaryn	K-6	Dual-track	196
Father Leo Green	K-6	Dual-track	238
Frère Antoine	K-6	Single-track	444
Grandin	K-6	Dual-track	130
Holy Cross	K-9	Single-track	363
J.H. Picard	K-12	Single-track	658
Monsignor William Irwin	K-3*	Dual-track	181
Our Lady of the Prairies	K-6	Dual-track	169
St. Angela	K-6	Dual-track	157
St. Cecilia	7-9	Dual-track	165
St. Francis Xavier	10-12	Dual-track	66
St. Stanislaus	K-6	Single-track	336
<b>Total Enrolment</b>			<b>3,155</b>

\* New school. Will provide K-6 French Immersion program by 2014-2015 school year.

## 1.2 Consultation Process

The consultation process was focused on gathering input from parents of children currently enrolled in the District’s French Immersion programs. It included community consultation meetings, a survey and an invitation to provide written submissions to the District or consultants.

## 1.2.1 Community Consultation Meetings

The consultation process included a series of six community consultation meetings held over a period of three weeks at five District schools:

- Archbishop MacDonald (November 16 and 23, 2011);
- Monsignor William Irwin (November 24, 2011);
- St. Stanislaus (November 29, 2011);
- J.H. Picard (November 30, 2011); and
- Frère Antoine (December 2, 2011).

Parents of students currently attending a District French Immersion program were invited by letter to attend one of the six community consultation meetings. Invitations were mailed to over 2,000 households and meeting notices were included in school newsletters. While each of the community consultation meetings were intended to provide an opportunity to gather input from parents from a particular catchment area, no restrictions were placed on which session parents chose to attend. Nor were there any restrictions placed on who could attend a community consultation meeting. Many of the meetings included a mix of parents, students and interested community members. A number of people with a particular interest in the future of J.H. Picard attended each of the six meetings.



It is estimated that in total approximately 300 people participated in the community consultation meetings.

All of the meetings were facilitated by Nichols Applied Management and involved a presentation on the two proposals by the District's Assistant Superintendent of Educational Planning. Opportunities were given to participants to provide input on:

- what the District should be doing to promote French Immersion programming;
- the perceived benefits and negatives of the two proposals;
- how the District could address the perceived negatives;

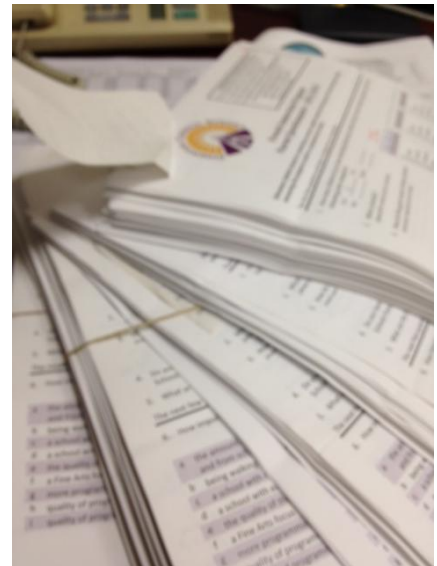
- the factors Trustees should consider in making decisions regarding the two proposals; and
- the factors which are most important to parents and students in choosing schools and educational programs.

Participants at each of the community consultation meetings were also given an opportunity to ask questions regarding the proposals.

## 1.2.2 Survey

A two-page survey and explanatory letter were mailed to 2,200 households on December 5, 2011. A copy of the survey is included as Attachment 1 of this report. Survey respondents were encouraged to complete and return surveys to Nichols Applied Management by December 23, 2011. The surveys asked parents to:

- rate the importance of a number of factors, including:
  - the amount of time required for children to get back and forth from school;
  - access to recreational facilities;
  - the quality of the Catholic education provided; and
  - modern school facilities;
- comment on the proposal to phase out the partial French Immersion programs at Archbishop O’Leary and St. Francis Xavier schools; and
- comment on the proposal to replace J.H. Picard School with a new facility in the Meadows community in southeast Edmonton.



Respondents were also given an opportunity to provide additional comments regarding each of the proposals.

Surveys received by Nichols Applied Management prior to January 14, 2012 were analyzed. A total of 561 surveys were completed and analyzed, a response rate of just over 25%.

While surveys were received from parents with children in each of the 13 District schools which offer French Immersion, it should be noted that almost a third of the surveys submitted were from parents of J.H. Picard students. Another third of the

surveys came from parents with children at either Frère Antoine or St. Stanislaus. Only three per cent of the surveys received were from parents with children at O’Leary and St. Francis Xavier.

### **1.2.3 Written Submissions**

A number of written submissions to the District were reviewed by the consultants and considered along with input received through the community consultation meetings and survey. A delineation of these submissions is provided as Attachment 2 to this report.

## 2. Input Received at the Community Consultation Meetings

### 2.1 Archbishop MacDonald Proposal

The first proposal presented to parents at the community consultation meetings involved the phase-out over three years of the partial French Immersion High School programs at Archbishop O’Leary and St. Francis Xavier and the concurrent establishment of a more comprehensive High School French Immersion program at Archbishop MacDonald.

It should be noted that while this proposal was presented at all six of the meetings, most of the input received came through the two sessions held at Archbishop MacDonald.

#### 2.1.1 Support for the Proposal

A minority of the participants at the community consultation meetings expressed strong support for the proposal. Parents and students spoke very highly of the quality of education at Archbishop MacDonald (e.g., breadth of programming, reputation of academic excellence and quality of staff and facility) and felt that the introduction of a French Immersion program at the school was a good idea. A number of parents noted that the location of Archbishop MacDonald was advantageous to them vis-à-vis O’Leary, Francis Xavier and J.H. Picard.

A majority of the participants expressed only qualified support for the proposal. While these participants acknowledged that the replacement of partial French Immersion programs with a more comprehensive program at Archbishop MacDonald is “a step in the right direction”, they also highlighted several concerns.

- Many of these participants expressed a strong belief that the District should be doing more than what is contemplated in the proposal to improve French Immersion programming on the city’s north side. Several argued that options similar to those available at J.H. Picard should be available in north Edmonton. Several people expressed strong interest in the development of a single-track French Immersion high school on the north side of the city. Others thought that French Immersion programming should be provided at all three high schools.
- In a similar vein, a number of parents expressed concern with the fact that the proposal wasn’t presented within the context of an overall plan for the development of French Immersion in the District. Several participants indicated

that they would appreciate being more involved in the development of French Immersion in the future.

- The academic requirements for entrance to the proposed French Immersion program at Archbishop MacDonald were a concern for many of the meeting participants. Several parents expressed serious concerns with what they perceive to be the “exclusivity” of a French Immersion program with stringent academic requirements. Several parents and students commented that “it wasn’t fair that someone with lower marks wouldn’t be able to continue in French Immersion on the north side”.
- Several parents noted that it might be very difficult to attract a sufficient number of students to Archbishop MacDonald and expressed concerns that the new French Immersion program might be reduced or eliminated in the future.

### 2.1.2 Opposition to the Proposal

A minority of the participants at the community consultation meetings expressed outright opposition to the proposal. These participants reiterated the concerns reflected above and raised a number of other concerns.

- A number of parents are satisfied with the French Immersion programs at O’Leary and St. Francis Xavier. They emphasize that these schools offer the benefit of reasonable access, a good blend of academics and access to competitive sports programs. Several parents indicated that they would prefer to keep their children at O’Leary or Francis Xavier regardless of where French Immersion is provided.
- A couple of parents expressed a concern that a relatively small French Immersion program would be “lost” within a large, English school like Archbishop MacDonald.
- Finally, a number of parents indicated that the location of Archbishop MacDonald was less convenient for them vis-à-vis O’Leary and St. Francis Xavier.

## 2.2 J.H. Picard Proposal

This proposal involves the construction of a new school in southeast Edmonton to replace J.H. Picard. The replacement school would provide single-track French Immersion programming for Grades 7-12 as well as an outreach centre.

It should be noted that a majority of the time at each of the community consultation meetings was devoted to discussing this proposal. It was almost the sole focus at the four sessions held on the south side of the city.

### 2.2.1 Support for the Proposal

In response to questions regarding the perceived benefits of a new school in southeast Edmonton, many community consultation meeting participants acknowledged that a new facility would:

- be built to new standards and would provide access to modern resources, technologies and amenities;
- create a healthy learning environment;
- be an attractive option for many students;
- provide good access to new recreational and library services currently being developed by the City of Edmonton;
- allow the District to avoid the “unknown costs” of a modernization project and to build a facility with a long lifespan and room to accommodate growth;
- be located close to a number of growing neighbourhoods; and
- be an option for French Immersion students from Beaumont.

A minority of participants also spoke to the following benefits:

- Better public transit service vis-à-vis the current J.H. Picard site;
- Proximity to the local parish; and
- Separation of the K-6 program from the school.

It should be pointed out that most participants at the community consultation meetings accepted the notion that many of the benefits associated with a new school (e.g., modern equipment, amenities, healthy learning environment, etc.) could also be achieved through the modernization of the existing school.

The strongest support for the proposal to construct a new school in the Meadows came from the participants at the Frère Antoine community consultation meeting. The locational advantages associated with a new school were obviously important to a majority of these parents. It should also be noted however that several parents at other community consultation meetings also indicated support for the proposal despite

increased travel times and issues. These people argued that they were already experiencing long commutes and would be “willing to drive further to gain the benefits of a new school”.

## 2.2.2 Opposition to the Proposal

Many strong arguments against the proposal to develop a new school in the southeast were raised at each of the community consultation meetings. While it is acknowledged that a group of parents advocating against the proposal attended each of the meetings, it would be unfair to say this group dominated proceedings. Each of the following points of opposition to the proposal was discussed at length at the community consultation meetings.

- **Location.** The location of a school is obviously a critical consideration for students, parents and the District.
  - A strong argument was made at the community consultation meetings for “schools of choice” like J.H. Picard to be centrally located. The argument put forward emphasized that as the only single-track French Immersion high school in Edmonton, J.H. Picard should be located in an area that considers accessibility for students from across the city. Many of the participants at the community consultation meetings were adamant that they could not support the relocation of J.H. Picard to the southeast corner of the city.
  - A second locational argument put forward at the community consultation meetings focused on the proximity of J.H. Picard to Edmonton’s francophone community. Several participants indicated that they valued the connection to the amenities at Campus Saint-Jean far more than a connection to recreational and community facilities being built in the southeast.
  - Many of the meeting participants reacted negatively to the increased transportation times associated with the proposed replacement school. Many parents, particularly those from north and southwest Edmonton emphasized that the extended transportation times associated with a new school in the Meadows would force them to move their children out of French Immersion or into the public school system. A number of parents argued that long commute times negate students’ ability to make full use of the recreational and community facilities associated with the southeast site. In their words, “students with long commute times would not benefit from the recreational facilities in the Meadows”.

- **Loss or risk of loss.** Many of the participants at the community consultation meetings emphasized that the proposed replacement school would result in the loss of the “very unique and very successful program” currently offered at J.H. Picard.
  - Many J.H. Picard parents spoke strongly about the sense of community that has developed at the school over the years. These people pointed to the long tradition of J. H. Picard and argued that it would be very unlikely for this type of community spirit to develop within the proposed replacement school.
  - A number of parents and students spoke out against the loss of the K-12 program at J.H. Picard. These people emphasized that a “school without transitions” is better positioned to attract and retain French Immersion students. Several parents noted that this approach has often been cited as a model for French Immersion learning.
  - The argument was made that while J.H. Picard draws students from across the city, it is in many ways a “community school”. Several people emphasized that the K-6 program is undoubtedly community-based.
  - Many opponents of the proposal emphasized that they were concerned that the proposal could potentially result in the loss of high school single-track French Immersion within the District. Their argument suggested that a new school in the Meadows would not attract enough students to meet utilization standards and, as a result, the District would eventually be forced to introduce English language programs at the school.
  
- **Community impact.** A number of participants emphasized that the District needs to do a better job assessing the impacts of their decisions on the communities and neighbourhoods in which schools are located, closed or opened. Several people referenced the ongoing work of the Mayor’s Task Force on Community Sustainability and argued that the proposal to build a new school in the Meadows was counterintuitive to the goals and objectives of the task force.
  
- **Lack of evidence to support the proposal.** Many of the participants at the community consultation meetings suggested that the District has not gathered sufficient evidence to support the proposal. These people emphasize that:
  - the number of school and pre-school aged children is growing within the communities around J.H. Picard;
  - enrolment and retention rates at J.H. Picard are healthy, particularly in relation to other schools; and

- no research has been done (or presented) to assess the local demand for Catholic or French Immersion programming in southeast Edmonton.
- **Cost.** A number of participants emphasized that the cost of a modernization project is significantly lower than the construction of a new school.
- **Benefits of modernization.** Supporters of the modernization of J.H. Picard at its current site emphasized that many of the benefits of a replacement school in the Meadows described in the District’s community consultation meeting presentations could also be achieved through a major modernization project, including:
  - state-of-the-art classrooms;
  - access to technology; and
  - clean and healthy facilities.
- **Flaws in the consultation process.** A number of participants at the community consultation meetings, particularly the one held at J.H. Picard, expressed strong concerns with the consultation process itself.
  - Many reflected on the process the District used earlier in the year to “inform rather than consult” on the decision to change its capital plan priorities. It was pointed out by several participants that the decision to identify a replacement school in the Meadows within the capital plan resulted in people leaving or not coming to J.H. Picard. People who had worked with the District in the past to develop a modernization plan were particularly upset with the earlier process.
  - Many people voiced strong objections to the fact that the consultation process did not include the modernization of J.H. Picard as a “third proposal”. Several people noted that they believed they had a commitment from the District to consider the third option during the consultation process. Many of these people felt that the District was being disingenuous in “limiting the number of proposals being considered”.
  - Finally, many people at the community consultation meetings commented on what they perceive to be a “lack of transparency” in the District’s planning processes. Many parents clearly want to play a larger role in planning for French Immersion within the District. A case to broaden consultation processes to include students, school staff (teachers and administrators) and community representatives was also made by several participants at the community consultation meetings.

- **Proposed outreach program at the new school.** A number of people at the meetings questioned the implementation of an outreach program at the proposed replacement school. Some expressed a degree of discomfort with the co-location of this type of program with a mainstream junior and senior high program. Others indicated that the existence of an English-based program at the school compromises the integrity of the single-track French Immersion program.
- **Unlikelihood of receiving provincial funding for a new school.** Several meeting participants noted that the provincial government's fiscal outlook would suggest that large investments in new schools over the next few years will not occur, particularly if they are not fully supported by parents and communities. These people argued that the District should be very forthright with the provincial government in recommending a less costly approach to providing single-track French Immersion in Edmonton.

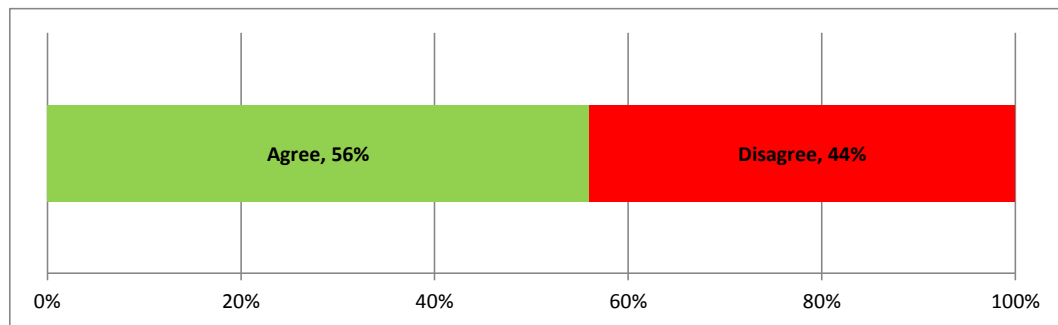
### 3. Survey Results

#### 3.1 Archbishop MacDonald Proposal

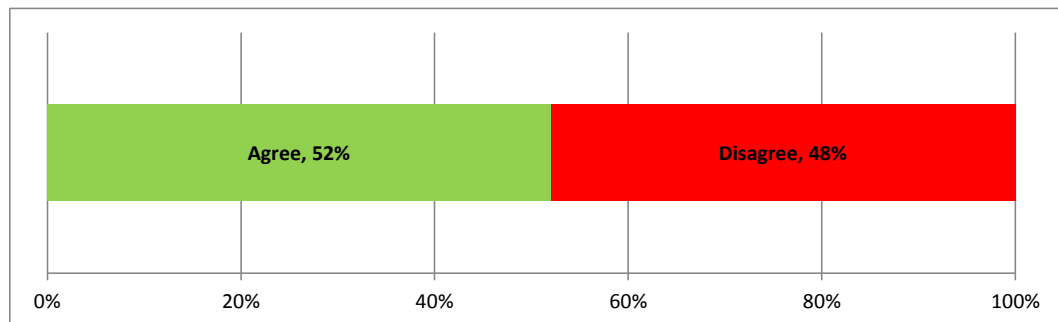
As indicated above, this proposal involves the phase-out over three years of the modified French Immersion High School programs at Archbishop O’Leary and St. Francis Xavier and the concurrent establishment of a more comprehensive High School French Immersion program at Archbishop MacDonald.

Survey respondents were generally split on this proposal. As illustrated in Figure 3.1, just over half (56%) of the parents who completed a survey indicated that they agreed with the proposal. Figure 3.2 illustrates that the split is even more balanced amongst parents who indicated that they were both familiar with the proposal and believed that it would affect their children.

**Figure 3.1 I am in Favour of this Change (all respondents)**



**Figure 3.2 I am in Favour of this Change (informed and affected respondents)**



When queried about how the proposal would affect them, 43% of survey respondents indicated that it would be less convenient for them. Just over half (53%) of respondents agreed that a more comprehensive French Immersion program at Archbishop MacDonald would provide better educational options for their children. These ratings have both locational and academic dimensions. The following statements drawn from

the surveys are representative of the type of input parents provided through the survey and are consistent with the sentiments expressed at the community consultation meetings.

- *“I support an option for a more comprehensive French Immersion in the north/west Edmonton. Currently only the public system provides this at Ross Shepard. We would use the Archbishop MacDonald option.”*
- *“Archbishop MacDonald is very far from our home, not a realistic option to be commuting to.”*
- *“This Mac Proposal is not immersion and it detracts from true quality immersion education at ECSD.”*
- *“I agree with the combining of these two modified programs, however, do not agree with the programs being combined in a school only offering dash-1 and not all levels of classes.”*
- *“The new program at Archbishop MacDonald is only for honours students and so excludes many others. Also, it is not total French Immersion and so dilutes out the French component.”*
- *“If my child is to continue in the French Immersion program when he reaches Grade 10, my preference would be to send him to St. Francis Xavier because of other options available there (i.e., sports).”*

The differences of opinion regarding the proposal to develop a more comprehensive French Immersion program at Archbishop MacDonald are more pronounced when survey responses are analysed by school.<sup>2</sup> Table 3.1 emphasizes the range of support for the proposal across the nine schools on the north side of Edmonton.

**Table 3.1 School by School Comparisons**

School	Agree	Disagree
Holy Cross (n=38)	89%	11%
St. Francis Xavier (n=4)	75%	25%
St. Angela (n=11)	64%	36%
Our Lady of the Prairies (n=19)	58%	42%
St. Cecilia (n=23)	48%	52%
Bishop Savaryn (n=17)	41%	59%
Grandin (n=13)	31%	69%
Archbishop O’Leary (n=10)	30%	70%
Father Leo Green (n=26)	27%	73%

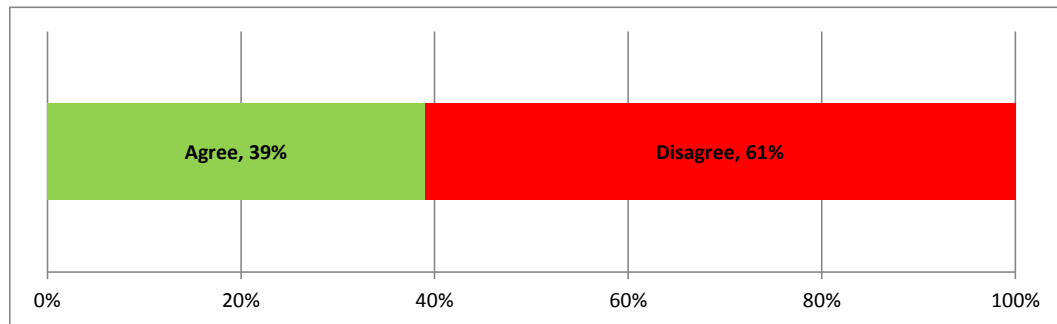
<sup>2</sup> Low survey response rates from particular schools necessitate caution in comparing survey responses across schools.

## 3.2 J.H. Picard Proposal

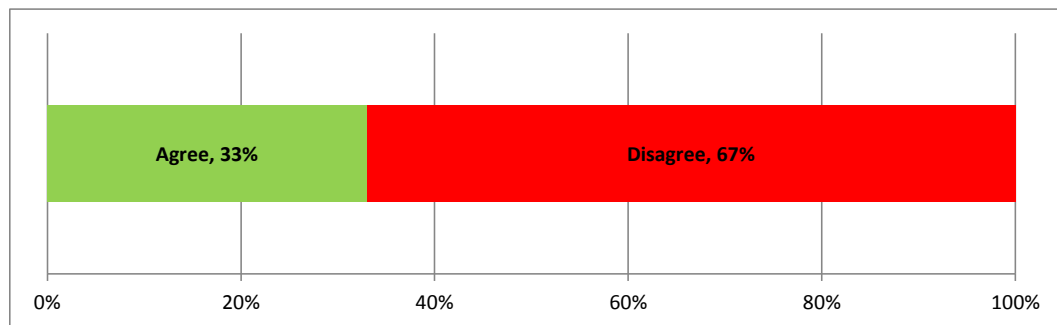
As indicated above, this proposal involves the construction of a new school in southeast Edmonton to replace J.H. Picard. The replacement school would provide single-track French Immersion programming for Grades 7-12 as well as an outreach centre.

A majority of parents surveyed indicated that they disagreed with the proposal. As illustrated in Figure 3.3, over 60% of parents indicated that they disagreed with the proposal. Figure 3.4 illustrates that the level of disagreement rises amongst parents who indicated that they were both familiar with the proposal and believed that it would affect their children. Two-thirds of these parents are opposed to the proposal to construct a replacement school in the Meadows.

**Figure 3.3 I am in Favour of this Change (all respondents)**



**Figure 3.4 I am in Favour of this Change (informed and affected respondents)**



When queried about how the proposal would affect them, 56% of survey respondents indicated that it would be less convenient for them. Only 41% of respondents agreed that a replacement school in the Meadows would provide better educational options for their children.

Most of the open-ended comments provided by parents through the survey focused on locational issues. The following statements drawn from the surveys are representative

of the type of input parents provided through the survey and are consistent with the sentiments expressed at the community consultation meetings.

- *“It will be more inconvenient for us (and for almost everybody in the city) since the proposed location is on the fringes of the city. J.H. Picard, as a specialized magnet school should stay in a central location with city-wide access.”*
- *“I am not happy with recent trend of closing central schools and shipping kids outwards. This further degrades the “community” atmosphere and devalues property.”*
- *“We are very much in favour of a new school. The junior high program at Picard gets the majority of students from Frère Antoine and St. Stanislaus. The new school is close for Frère Antoine students and our children.”*
- *“It [the Meadows school] is too far to commute for the French Immersion students and in an area that never requested a French Immersion school.”*
- *“The school [J.H. Picard] is the reason we have moved to Argyll community. It is an extraordinary school community and a treasure being the only Catholic school in western Canada that provides complete French Immersion from K-12. It would be a shame if J.H. Picard falls victim to urban sprawl.”*
- *“I think this is a good decision overall for the future of French Immersion education in Edmonton. I am not in favour of an outreach centre at the school. The current school is in terrible shape.”*
- *“Way too far for people who live in the north end of the city.”*
- *“We feel strongly that J.H. Picard should stay in its present location on 99<sup>th</sup> Street. Having a K-12 French Immersion provides an amazing community experience for our children.”*
- *“Change is imminent and the future is always changing for the better. This new school will be a positive change for our children.”*

The differences of opinion regarding the proposal to construct a replacement school in the Meadows are very pronounced when survey responses are analysed by school.<sup>3</sup> Table 3.2 emphasizes the range of support for the proposal across the four schools on the south side of Edmonton. It also shows that there is very little support for the proposal from parents with children currently attending one of the nine District schools that offer French Immersion programming.

<sup>3</sup> Low survey response rates from particular schools necessitate caution in comparing survey responses across schools.

**Table 3.2 School by School Comparisons**

School	Agree	Disagree
Frère Antoine (n=49)	94%	6%
St. Stanislaus (n=66)	32%	68%
J.H. Picard (n=127)	27%	73%
Monsignor William Irwin (n=24)	21%	79%
North Side FI Schools (n=97)	15%	85%

## 4. General Findings

### 4.1 Community Consultation Meetings

Participants at the community consultation meetings offered a range of comments not directly associated with either of the two proposals.

- Many participants stressed that they are dissatisfied with the lack of transparency within the District’s decision-making processes.
- Not surprisingly, the parents who attended the community consultation meetings spoke strongly about the importance of French Immersion. Many implored the District to do more to enhance and promote French Immersion programming. Many urged the District to take a more strategic approach to growing French Immersion programming in the future. A number of suggestions for improved programming were put forward at the community consultation meetings.
  - Modernization at J.H. Picard
  - Expansion of French Immersion programs at O’Leary and Francis Xavier
  - Single-track French Immersion in north Edmonton
  - Dual-track French Immersion in southwest Edmonton
  - French Immersion at Louis St. Laurent
  - Single-track facility in centre of the city
- Several people at the community consultation meetings stated that the District should be doing more to solicit the opinions of students and staff regarding the proposals and the development of French Immersion in the future. Many of these people argued that the District needs to do more to understand why students and parents choose to leave French Immersion after grades six and nine.
- Several parents argued that the District needs to be more evidence-based in its decision-making. These parents emphasize that the District needs to monitor and forecast population growth on a neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis.
- A number of parents argued that the District should be more cognizant of the impact its decisions have on the communities and neighbourhoods in which schools are located. These parents emphasized the importance of working with the Mayor’s Task Force on Community Sustainability.

- It is clear that parents want the District to develop and implement long-term plans to enhance French Immersion. A number of people argued that the lack of a long-term plan detracts from the capacity of the District to attract and retain French Immersion students.
- Access to French Immersion programs is very important to parents and students. While parents generally understand that the District cannot afford to provide French Immersion High School programs in every quadrant of the city, they would certainly prefer that programs be located closer to them. Parents at each of the community consultation meetings argued for greater access to French Immersion programming in their respective areas.
- Different opinions exist with respect to the debate around the advantages and disadvantages of single-track and dual-track French Immersion. For many parents, single-track programs are an absolute necessity. Others much prefer the opportunities afforded through dual-track schools.
- Different opinions exist with respect to K-12 program delivery within a single facility. Many parents emphasized that they believe that the advantages of this approach are significant. Others expressed strong concerns with co-locating elementary, junior high and senior high students.

## 4.2 Importance of Dimensions to Education

The survey provided an opportunity for parents to rate the importance of a number of factors, including the:

- time required to get children to and from school;
- quality of programming;
- access to recreational facilities; and
- quality of Catholic education.

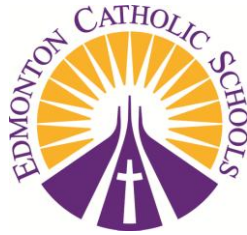
Table 4.1 illustrates how parents ranked these factors. Parents were asked to rate the factors on a scale of one to five, one being “very unimportant”, three being “neutral” and five being “very important”.

As illustrated in the table, the quality of programming in French was the highest rated factor. It should be noted however that six of the nine factors were rated higher than 4 on the scale.

**Table 4.1 Importance of Various Aspects of Education**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Quality of programming in French	4.71
Quality of programming in English	4.58
Time required for my child to get to and from school	4.40
The quality of Catholic education provided	4.23
More programming in French	4.22
A school with modern facilities	4.05
A school with easy access to recreational facilities	3.53
A Fine Arts focus	3.39
Walking distance to school	2.94

## ATTACHMENT 1 – Parent Questionnaire



**Instructions for Responding to the Survey**

- The attached letter provides helpful background. Please read it prior to completing the survey.
- One survey per household only please.
- Enclose the completed survey **by December 23, 2011** in the postage-paid envelope and mail it to:  
Nichols Applied Management Inc.  
#2401, 10104 – 103 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, AB T5J 0H8

### French Immersion Program Parent Questionnaire – 2011/2012

Edmonton Catholic Schools is conducting a survey to gather input from the parents of French Immersion students concerning the program as well as a proposed new school.

The first few questions will help to categorize your responses.

1. How many children do you have attending Edmonton Catholic Schools French Immersion programs in each of the following grade categories?

k-3 \_\_\_\_\_ 7-9 \_\_\_\_\_  
4-6 \_\_\_\_\_ 10-12 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which school(s)?  
*(please fill in names of up to 3 schools)*

print school name above

walk  
 City bus  
 Yellow bus  
 other

print school name above

walk  
 City bus  
 Yellow bus  
 other

print school name above

walk  
 City bus  
 Yellow bus  
 other

3. How do they get to each of these schools?  
*(mark your response for each school)*

4. Do you have younger children who you would like to send to an Edmonton Catholic Schools French Immersion program in the future?      **yes**      **no**  
<sub>1</sub>      <sub>2</sub>

5. What are the first three digits of your postal code?    \_ \_ \_

The next few questions will help us to understand what is important to you and your family.

6. How important are each of the following to you? *(select only one response per question)*

	very unimportant	somewhat unimportant	neutral	somewhat important	very important
a the amount of time required for my child to get to and from school	<input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>5</sub>
b being walking distance to school	<input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>5</sub>
c a school with modern facilities	<input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>5</sub>
d a school with easy access to recreational facilities	<input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>5</sub>
e the quality of the Catholic education provided	<input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>5</sub>
f a Fine Arts focus	<input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>5</sub>
g more programming in French	<input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>5</sub>
h quality of programming in French	<input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>5</sub>
i quality of programming in English	<input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="radio"/> <sub>5</sub>

**CONTINUED ON REVERSE . . . 2/**



**Edmonton Catholic Schools has proposals for two changes to French Immersion high school programming in Edmonton.**

The first one is to phase out the partial French Immersion programs at Archbishop O'Leary and St. Francis Xavier schools and replace these programs with a more comprehensive French Immersion program at Archbishop Macdonald School.

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- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Are you familiar with this proposal?                                | yes<br><input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub> | no<br><input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub> |
| 2. Will this change affect your child's (children's) education at all? | yes<br><input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub> | no<br><input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub> |
| 3. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?     | agree                                     | disagree                                 |
| a it will be more inconvenient for my children                         | <input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>        | <input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>       |
| b it will provide better educational options for my children           | <input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>        | <input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>       |
| c overall I am in favour of this change                                | <input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>        | <input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>       |

**Additional comments:**

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The second change is the possible closure of J.H. Picard School. This proposal includes a new French Immersion Junior/Senior high school in the Meadows in Southeast Edmonton (17<sup>th</sup> Street and 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue). This could result in the relocation of elementary students to other schools and the relocation of junior and senior high school students to the new school.

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- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| 4. Are you familiar with this proposal?                                | yes<br><input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub> | no<br><input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub> |
| 5. Will this change affect your child's (children's) education at all? | yes<br><input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub> | no<br><input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub> |
| 6. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?     | agree                                     | disagree                                 |
| a it will be more inconvenient for my children                         | <input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>        | <input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>       |
| b it will provide better educational options for my children           | <input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>        | <input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>       |
| c overall I am in favour of this change                                | <input type="radio"/> <sub>1</sub>        | <input type="radio"/> <sub>2</sub>       |

**Additional comments:**

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*Thank you for completing the survey.*

