

According to **Minister Hogan** (Dec. 15, 2022),

“ the government’s proposed program is based on a model used in Bathurst, NB in the late 1990’s to early 2000’s. ”

According to **Premier Higgs** (Dec 28, 2022),

“ the interesting thing about this program is that it worked very well in Bathurst for, I think, 10 years. All of the statistics show that program worked really well. ”

Is the Higgs government’s new “**French**” experiment like the 50/50 Partial Immersion Program that was discontinued in Bathurst, NB years ago?

Let’s look at some facts...

Following interviews conducted in December 2022 and January 2023, we have uncovered the following information:

50/50 Partial Immersion (Bathurst)

CONTEXT: Bathurst is a small city. It is officially bilingual. About 62% of Bathurst residents are bilingual. French is the first language of 51.3% of its residents and English 48.6%, while 2.5% cited a non-official language as their mother tongue (Census 2016). An optional French Immersion Program started in Bathurst in 1974.

The 50/50 Partial Immersion

This **optional** program delivered 50% of **instruction** in French and 50% of **instruction** in English on a **two-week cycle**.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
French	English	French	English	French
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
English	French	English	French	English

Major subjects were taught in French and in English. Students were taught how to speak, read, and write in both official languages.

During the time of implementation of the 50/50 model, several Anglophones and Francophones were dissatisfied with the upcoming end of bilingual schooling. This led to implementing this model of French Immersion programming in the Bathurst area. For example, the following 50/50 Partial Immersion program was offered at Parkwood Elementary School, in Bathurst, NB for a few years (1980-1981) before it was discontinued.

When first implemented the Immersion classes in the Bathurst area did not reflect the same classroom composition of other, more anglophone areas in the province. The class was made up of “about one third completely English, one third bilingual (French/English homes)... and one third should have been in the French school but their parents wanted them in Immersion.”

In 1983, a court ruling on a case in the Grand Falls District determined that parents have the right to place their children in Francophone or Anglophone schools if “the child has significant competence in the language of instruction in the school system”. This led to French Immersion no longer being an option for many Francophone children.

Later, the 50/50 Partial Immersion Program was replaced by another **optional** program that offered more instruction in French: the 75/25 model. The “increase of instructional time was required” in a more “English setting” to “becoming fluent in French”.

In 1994, the 75/25 French Immersion Program, in Bathurst, was ultimately replaced by the Early French Immersion (Gr.1) which was uniformly offered in all New Brunswick’s school Districts. (Policy 309, 1994)

About the author:

Léo-James Lévesque is an Assistant Professor with the School of Education at St. Thomas University, in Fredericton, New Brunswick. He has more than 35 years of teaching experience in immersion programs. An expert in literacy, Prof. Lévesque has published several educational resources which are used across Canada. He has authored several children’s books. Prof. Lévesque received the André-Obadia Award of Excellence from the Canadian Association of Immersion Professionals for his exceptional contribution to the promotion of French learning in Canada. Furthermore, Prof. Lévesque is a recipient of the Hilroy Fellowship Award presented to him by the Federation of Francophone Teachers of Canada to highlight his innovation in education. Prof. Lévesque is also a recipient of the Honorary Lifetime Membership Award presented to him by the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers to highlight his contribution to the advancement of second language education through his distinguished career.

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“French” for all (NB – Fall 2023)

CONTEXT: New Brunswick became the only formally bilingual province in Canada, in 1969. It is considered the second most rural region of Canada. About 34% of New Brunswick’s residents are bilingual. English is the first language of 64.8% of its residents and French 32%, and the members of the province’s First Nation language communities represent 4%. (Statistics Canada, 2017). The school system has separate sectors for French and English language groups, and most First Nations communities also have elementary schools. In 1976, the provincial Official Languages Act was expanded to give all New Brunswickers the right to education in their official language.

The “French” for all experiment

In this **mandatory** experiment, “Kindergarten to Grade 1 students will spend half their day in “**exploratory learning**” in French and the other half being taught in English for subjects such as math, reading and writing. Subjects such as science and social studies **could** be learned in French.” (Hogan, Dec. 15, 2022)

“Kindergarten to Grade 1 students, starting next year, would continue under the 50-50 model throughout their primary school years.” (Hogan, Dec. 15, 2022) Then “exposure” to French would drop to 40% in middle school.

The goal of this “French” experiment is, according to the Minister, “to have students achieve a “conversational level” of French.” (Hogan, Dec. 15, 2022)

“The new system will require an additional 60 educators.” (Hogan, Dec. 15, 2022)

CONCLUSION

The proposed “French for all” experiment that is planned to replace the Early French Immersion Program (Gr. 1) is unlike the 50/50 Partial Immersion Program that ran in the Bathurst area years ago. For leaders to state this is misleading and misinforming the public.

THE FACTS ARE CLEAR:

- Early French Immersion program (Gr.1) does not leave language learning to chance... it incorporates French language learning into subject learning.
- Early French Immersion has been proven to be a highly successful program. Almost 50 years of research indicates that students achieve a high level of French proficiency, learn various subjects as well as their peers in the non-immersion program, and are in no way hindered in their English language skills.
- Early French Immersion (Gr. 1) graduates know how to speak, read and write in both Official Languages of our province and our country.
- The Early French Immersion Program is a Canadian educational innovation! It has been exported around the world.
- French immersion should be protected so that parents have the choice to offer access to bilingualism to their children if they consider this program best suits the overall needs of their children.

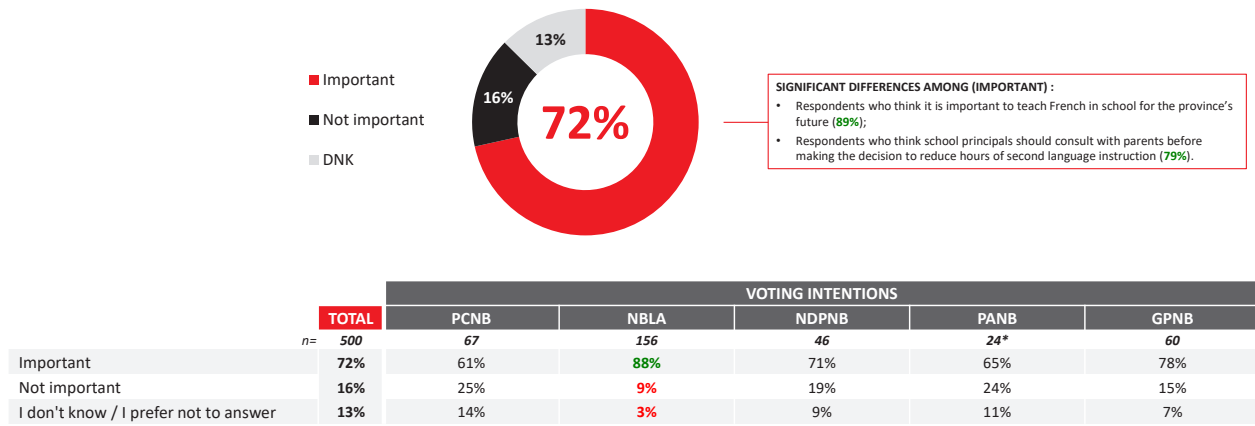
What the present government is trying to fix (i.e. having all children being able to hold a basic conversation in French) could be made worse by acting on inaccurate data, anecdotes, and political agenda or interference.

Early French Immersion (Gr. 1) in New Brunswick has proven to be the most effective of all French Second Language programs at producing the highest number of bilingual graduates.

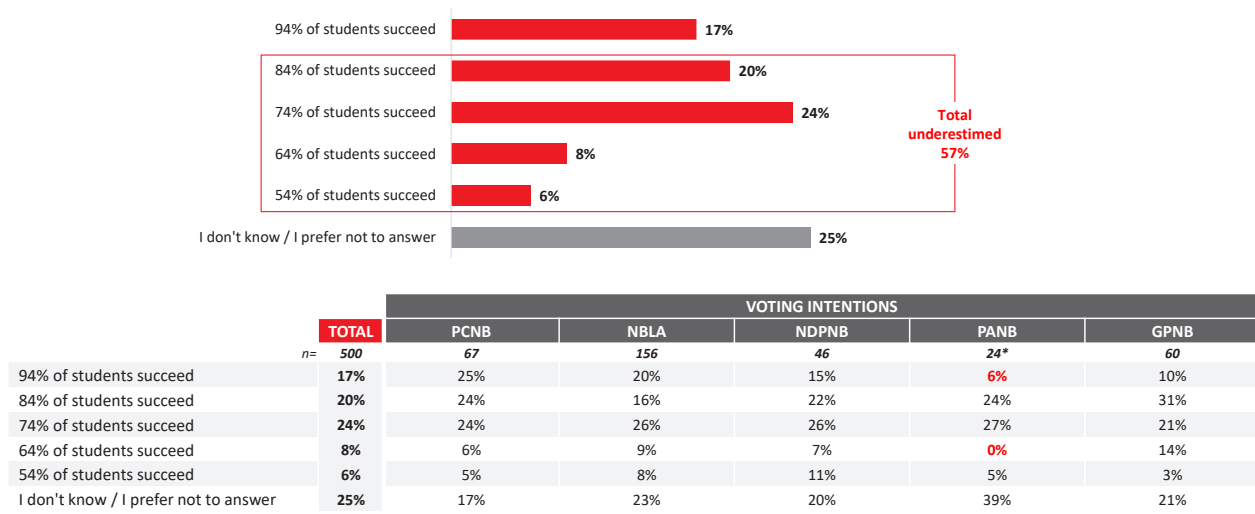
To ask that decisions be based on research is not preventing anyone from learning French, in fact, it is the opposite. If decisions were made based on research, the proposed “experiment” with children in New Brunswick would not even be considered given that the proposed “bain linguistique” and “exploratory learning of a second language” has already been proven to be unsuccessful. Shameful that politicians would use their position of power to mislead and misinform the public on such an important issue.

Canadian Parents for French recently commissioned a survey on the linguistic situation in New Brunswick. Some of the findings* include:

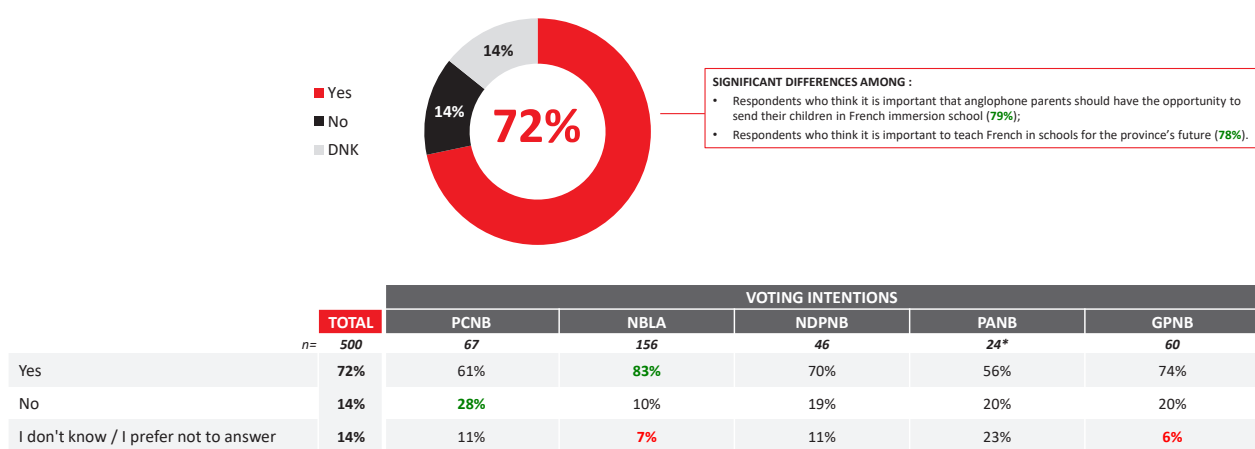
OPPORTUNITY FOR ANGLOPHONE PARENTS TO SEND CHILDREN IN FRENCH IMMERSION SCHOOL



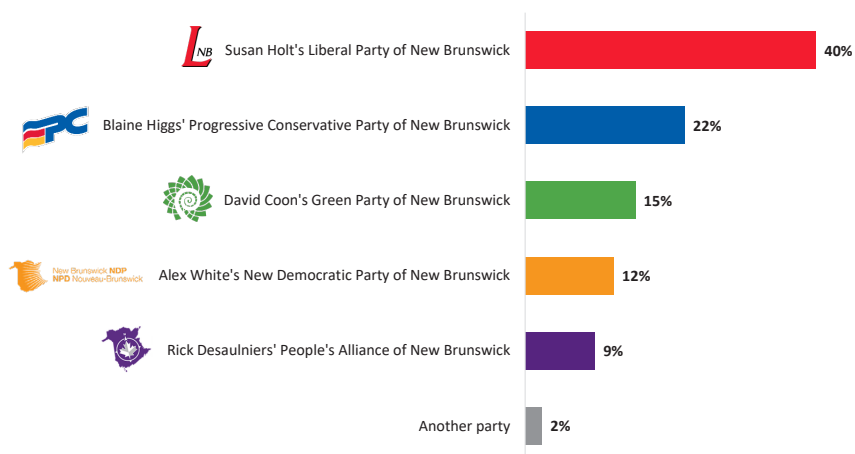
PROGRAM SUCCESS RATE



CONSULTING WITH PARENTS BEFORE MAKING DECISIONS



VOTING INTENTIONS (1/2)



*The full report is available in English and French from Canadian Parents for French New Brunswick



The survey was conducted among residents of New Brunswick and carried out by Leger, the largest Canadian-owned polling, market research and analytics firm.