

**LEAP Action Learning Report 2014**

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| Topic area(What) | What are children’s attitudes to learning a new language? |
| Context(Where and When) | Giles Campus K-8 French Immersion School – Windsor Ontatrio (Great Essex County District School Board). Windsor is 4 hours by train from Toronto and just across the border from Detroit.The school opened in 2011. The students were moved from their previous school to the new location, which was a vacant High School. There are many rooms and areas not used by the current school ie the bottom floor of the school, the old cafeteria. The current Principal has been at the school for 2 years and the founding Principal came from the previous school. About 95% of the students are bussed to school each day (including Kinder).The school started in 2012 with approx. 400 students and in 2014 the numbers had increased to over 600 students. In Kinder they have a Junior Kinder (JK) – children who may not be 5 yet and some may not be 4. They may spend 2 years in Kinder. They also have a Senior Kinder (SK) for those who have turned 5.Being a French Immersion School all lessons/subjects are conducted in French, especially in the early years. The content of subjects is blended with French language not just teaching French (ie as in a LOTE program). Students are encouraged to use French at all times ie when talking to teachers or explaining something. Once they reach Year 3 and up some subjects are taught in English. Teachers have to be proficient in French (this includes the Principal and Deputy) and teachers are evaluated on their language proficiency. They also have an annual review of their teaching.All French core teaching materials are supplied by the School Board. |
| Research methods(How) | I used observation and questioning to gather my findings about student attitudes to learning French.What did they like/dislike about the school?Why did they attend a French Immersion School?Did the students use French outside school?What did the teachers think about the school and the students? |
| Findings(So what) | Initially when the students were moved from their other school it was not met with favourably. Sensibly the School Board also moved the Principal of the previous school to the new school. He has since moved on to be a School Director. Attitudes have changed and everyone seems to like the surroundings and the school.Giles Campus is a very multicultural school. There are many students who speak multiple languages as well as English and FrenchMost parents want their children to learn French and there is an increasing number of French Immersion Schools. Not many families speak French at home as they do speak other languages as they sometimes have Grandparents who live with them and they don’t speak English or French.New students do arrive during the year and they are screened for their French proficiency before the school will accept their enrolment. If they come in in Kinder during the year they are automatically accepted.The students really enjoyed the school. They liked the teachers and learning French but sometimes it is hard. They have their favourite teachers who are nice and funny. All those that I talked to seemed to be able to cope very well with language learning.There is support for teachers, especially beginning teachers. They are allocated a Teacher Mentor who they can go to if they are having difficulties or problems. The teacher work hard as in most schools and they enjoy working at the school and the students who attend. There are TPL courses for teachers to attend but much of it is done in-school. Overall, Giles Campus was a really friendly school that focused on the welfare of the students and cared for the students. I also visited Tucumseh Vista School not far out of Windsor. It is a large K-12 with over 1500 students (1000 K-8 and around 500 9-12 students). The school is housed in one building and is called a Mega School. It is a new school with up-to-date technology in all rooms, 2 gyms (the High School gym has retractable seating), music and drama rooms and the gyms can be all opened up to have a large performance/hall area. In the K-8 School they have about 800 students in French Immersion and the others are in an English stream but do have core French lessons (a little like a LOTE program). |
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