

# 2014 Reports on French Immersion and Core French in British Columbia and Yukon: Summary of Findings

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## Introduction

Canadian Parents for French BC & Yukon has collected information about French second language programs in school districts across BC and Yukon to better support its advocacy efforts. Through an analysis of enrolment, popularity, and attrition trends, supplemented by a survey of district language coordinators and administrators, CPF BC & Yukon is able to offer some insight into the current state of FSL programs, common obstacles to FSL teacher recruitment and retention, and the creative solutions that school districts use to overcome these obstacles.

## Methodology

Enrolment statistics were collected from the British Columbia Ministry of Education and the Yukon Department of Education. Program popularity and attrition statistics were calculated based on enrolment numbers. The data was also used to create tables and graphs on Microsoft Office Excel and to produce maps on ArcMap.

Moreover, we conducted a survey to examine the challenges that school districts face and to identify the best practices that they have developed regarding teacher recruitment and retention in French second language programs. A link to the online survey was sent to the representatives responsible for French programs at each BC school district that offered French Immersion and at the Yukon Department of Education. Follow-up emails were sent and phone calls were made up to three weeks after the initial email.

Of the 154 district representatives contacted, 49 completed the survey, representing an individual response rate of 32%. Of the 47 school districts, including Yukon, 45 of them completed the survey, amounting to a district response rate of 96%.

## French Second Language Programs

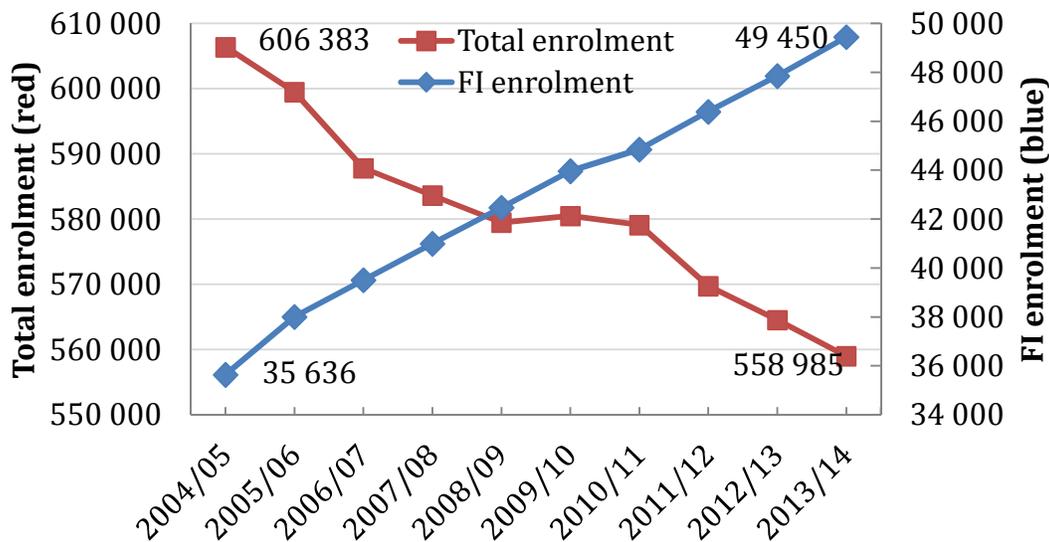
In the 2013-2014 school year, 58 out of 60 BC school districts offered Core French in public schools, and 46 of those school districts also offered French Immersion. French Immersion student enrolment has been steadily increasing despite a decline in total enrolment; however, Core French enrolment has been declining at a faster rate than total enrolment since the school year 2005/06.

## French Immersion

### Enrolment in British Columbia

- 49,451 students were enrolled in French Immersion programs in 2013/14, accounting for 8.8% of the total public school student population
- 39 school districts offered Early immersion entry, 25 school districts offered Late immersion entry, and 19 school districts offered both programs
- Since 2004, student enrolment in French Immersion has increased by 38.8%, while public school enrolment has fallen by 7.8%
- Both the school districts with the fastest growth in FI enrolment and the few with declines are located in rural BC
- Smaller school districts have more extreme changes in FI enrolment while larger school districts have stable FI enrolment growth
- Almost all SDs with total enrolment growth also have FI growth. Inversely, FI decline happens almost exclusively in SDs with declining enrolment

### FI and Total Enrolment in BC Public Schools (2004/05 – 2013/14, 10 years)

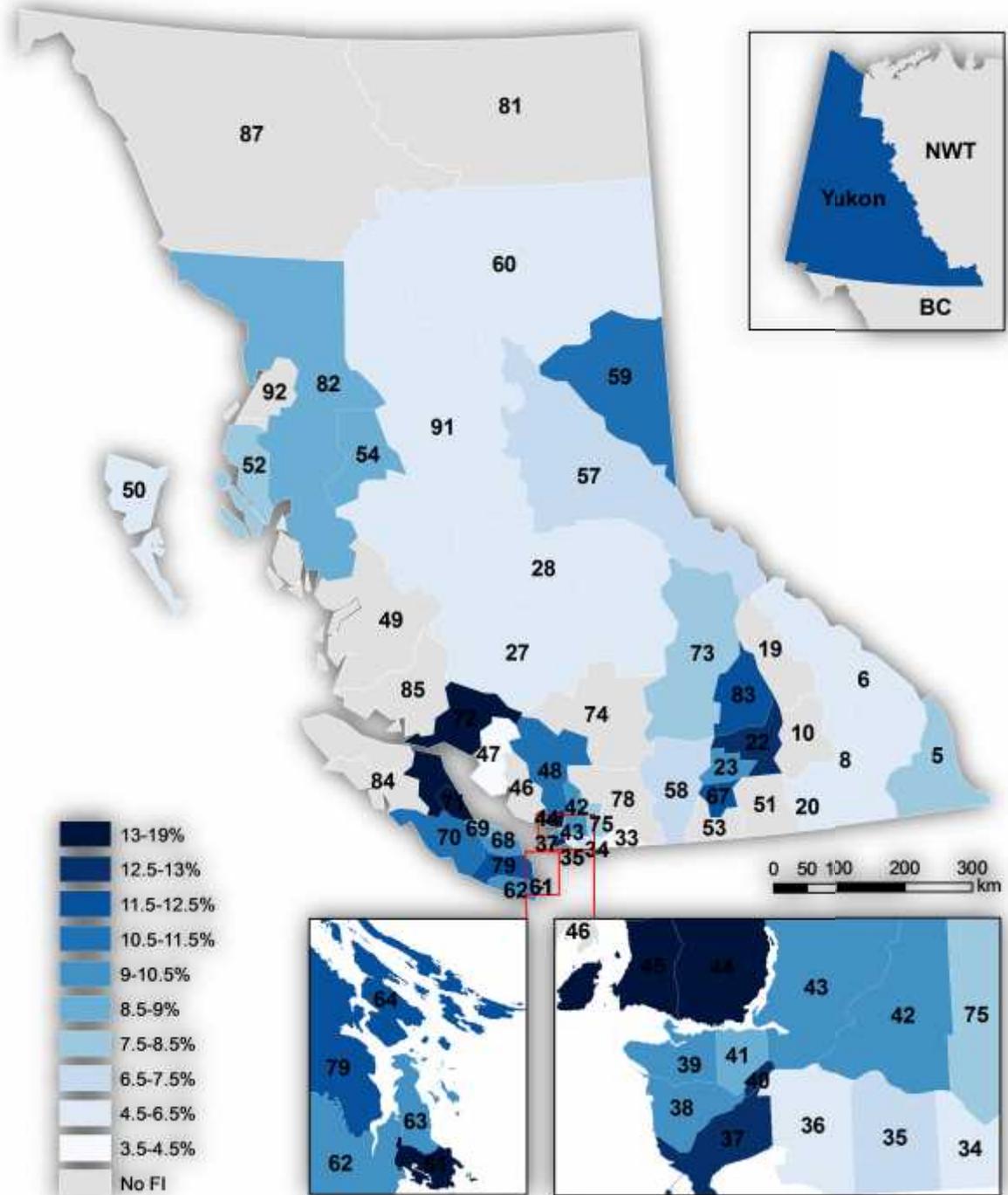


Note: Actual FI enrolment numbers may be higher than reported due to possible missing data.

### Enrolment in Yukon

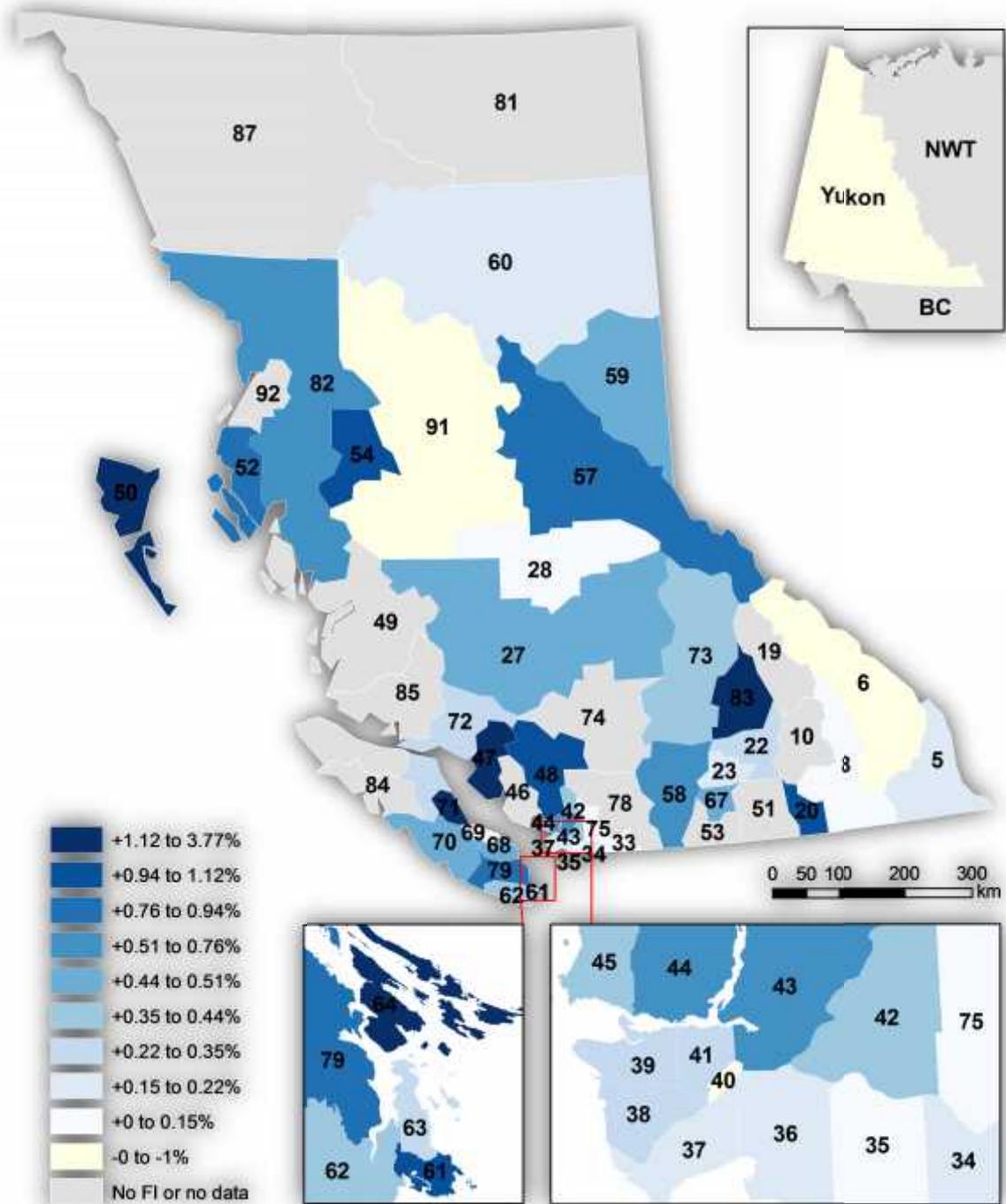
- In 2013/14, 609 French Immersion students constituted 11.7% of the total student population
- French Immersion enrolment has increased by 50.4% between school years 2004/05 and 2013/14, while total enrolment has fallen by 3.1%

**Proportion of Students Enrolled in French Immersion (2013/14). Labels indicate SD numbers.**



Sources: BC Ministry of Edu., Yukon Dept. of Edu. Projection: NAD 1983 BC Environment Albers.  
 Note: Actual FI enrolment numbers may be higher than reported due to possible missing data.

**Change in Proportion of Students in FI (2012/13--2013/14, 2 years). Labels indicate SD numbers.**



Sources: BC Ministry of Edu., Yukon Dept. of Edu. Projection: NAD 1983 BC Environment Albers.  
 Note: Actual FI enrolment numbers may be higher than reported due to possible missing data.

### Attrition in British Columbia

- The attrition of students from French Immersion programs has remained relatively constant at the provincial level over the past ten years
- Average attrition between Gr. 1 and 5 of the past seven cohorts was 16.9%
- Average attrition between Gr. 7 and 12 of the past six cohorts was 42.4%
- The highest attrition occurred between Grades 7 and 8, where 640 French Immersion students (14.3%) did not continue on to Grade 8 Immersion

### BC SDs with Five Lowest Grade 1-5 FI Attrition Rates (2012/13--2013/14)<sup>1</sup>

SD	District Name	Total FI enrolment	% Change in FI enrolment	% of students in FI	Gr 1-5 attrition %
45	West Vancouver	938	3.42%	13.15%	7.59%
42	Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows	1 474	3.00%	10.08%	9.66%
69	Qualicum	379	0.53%	8.95%	10.26%
73	Kamloops/Thompson	1 132	3.57%	7.83%	10.42%
36	Surrey	3 295	3.94%	4.56%	10.74%

Source: Author's calculations using British Columbia Ministry of Education data.

Note: Actual FI enrolment numbers may be higher than reported due to possible missing data.

### BC SDs with Five Lowest Grade 7-12 FI Attrition Rates (2012/13--2013/14)

SD	District Name	Total FI enrolment	% Change in FI enrolment	% of students in FI	Gr 7-12 attrition %
71	Comox Valley	1 157	3.58%	13.35%	0.00% <sup>2</sup>
73	Kamloops/Thompson	1 132	3.57%	7.83%	19.30%
52	Prince Rupert	176	9.32%	8.37%	20.00%
28	Quesnel	194	-2.02%	5.75%	21.43%
23	Central Okanagan	2 191	1.58%	10.29%	22.02%

Source: Author's calculations using British Columbia Ministry of Education data.

Note: Actual FI enrolment numbers may be higher than reported due to possible missing data.

### Attrition in Yukon

- The highest attrition numbers occurred between Grades 9 and 10, where 12 students (24%) did not continue with French Immersion
- The highest attrition rates were for students entering Grades 10 and 12, at 24.0% and 23.3% respectively, representing 12 and seven students

<sup>1</sup> This ranking excludes SD 5 Southeast Kootenay, SD 54 Bulkey Valley, and SD 83 North Okanagan-Shuswap due to their negative or null attrition caused by unusual intake.

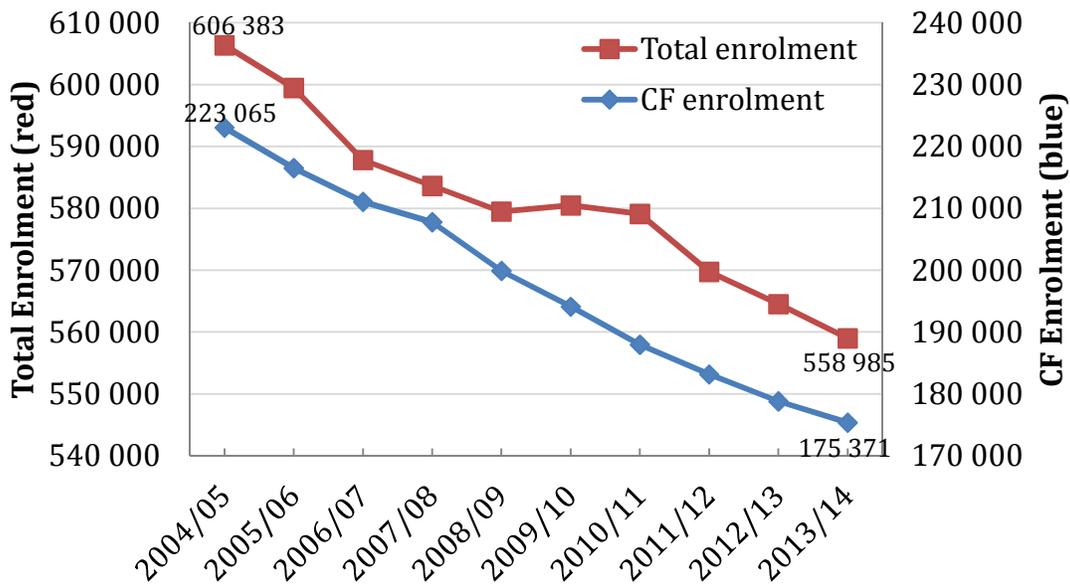
<sup>2</sup> Due to eight additional students in grade 7, cancelling out the attrition of eight students.

## Core French Highlights

### Enrolment in British Columbia

- 175,371 students enrolled in Core French in 2013/14, making up almost one third (31.4%) of all public school students
- Between 2004/05 and 2013/14, Core French enrolment has declined by 21.9%, while total enrolment has declined by 9.1%
- The Grade 8 to 9 transition is where the program loses the majority of its students, as 13,687 or 46.7% of Grade 8 Core French students did not continue on to Grade 9 French in 2013/14. This may be due to the fact that this is usually the year when Core French becomes optional
- Increasing FI popularity can explain all or nearly all of the decrease in CF popularity in a number of districts, but can only explain part of the decrease in other districts because CF decreases faster than FI increases

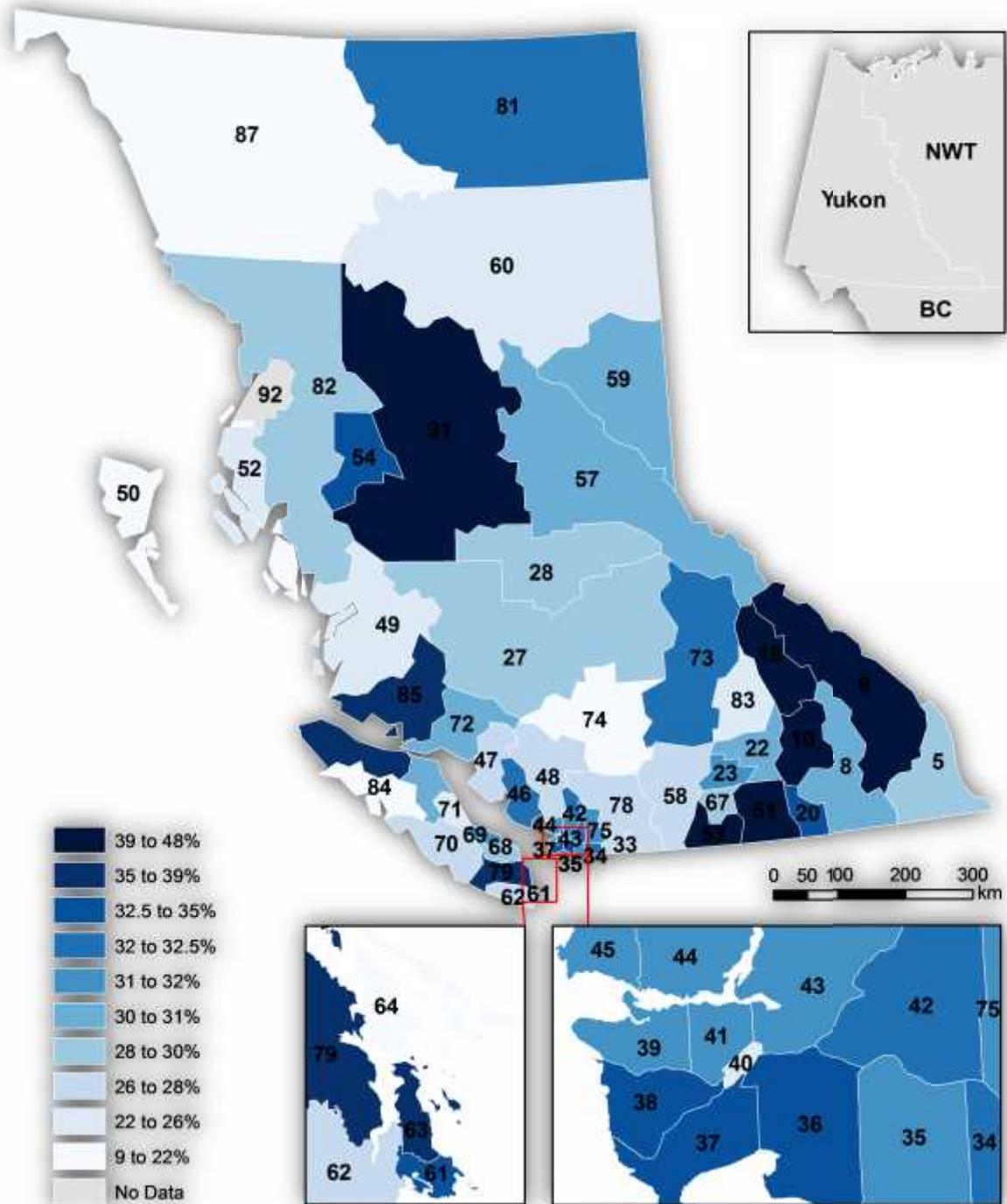
### Core French and Total Enrolment in BC Public Schools (2004/05—2013/14)



### Enrolment in Yukon

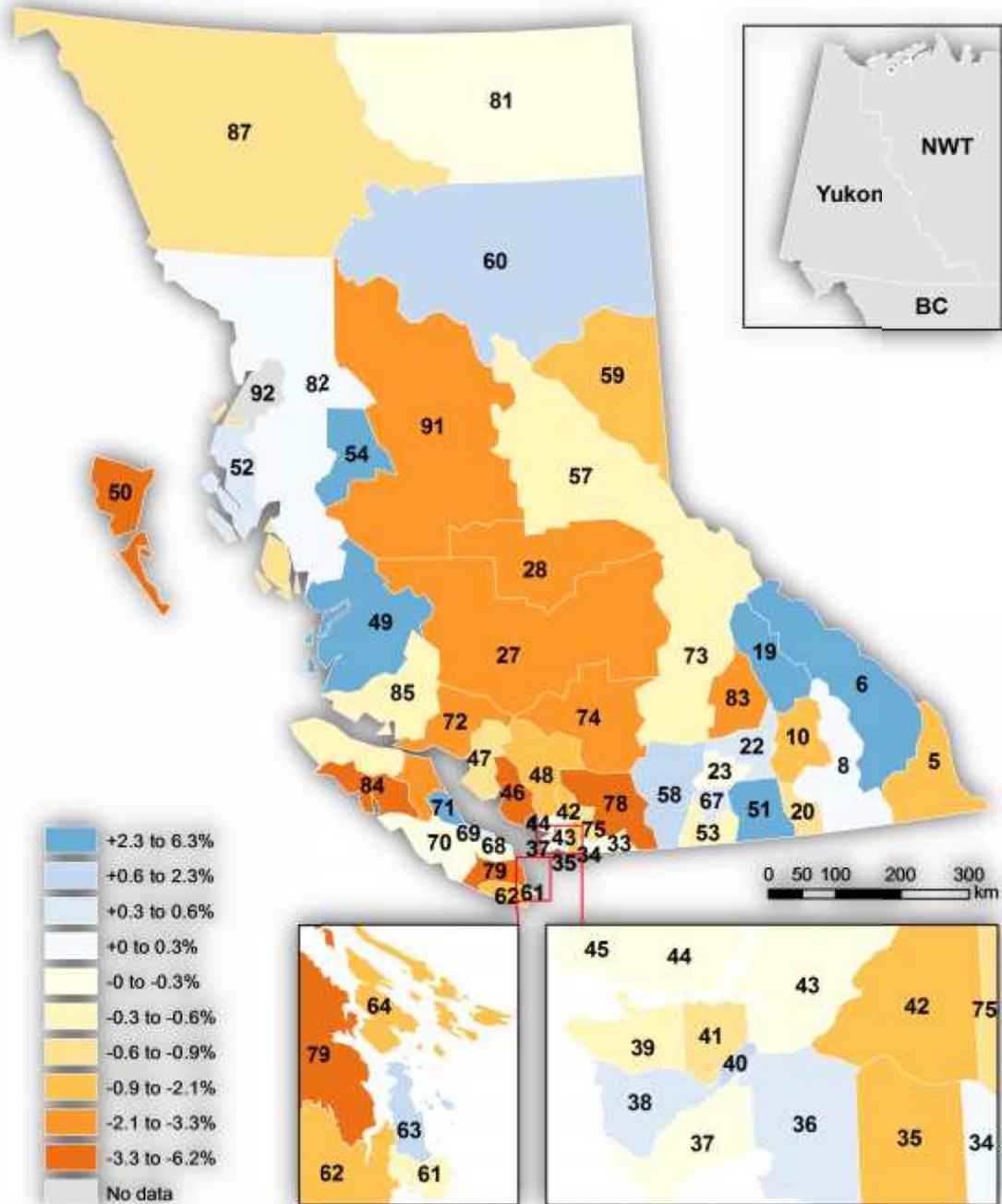
- In Yukon, an estimated 33.87% of students were enrolled in Core French in 2011/12
- Between 2004 and 2012, Core French enrolment dropped by an estimated 29.8% while total public school enrolment decreased by 6.3%

**Proportion of Students in CF (2013/14). Labels indicate SD numbers.**



Source: BC Ministry of Education. Projection: NAD 1983 BC Environment Albers.

**Change in Proportion of Students in Core French (2012/13--2013/14, 2 years).  
Labels indicate SD numbers.**



Source: BC Ministry of Education. Projection: NAD 1983 BC Environment Albers.

### Attrition in British Columbia

- The attrition of students from Core French programs has remained relatively constant at the provincial level over the past ten years
- Average attrition between Grades 7 and 12 of the past six cohorts was 88.1%
- The highest attrition rate in Core French occurred between Grade 11 and 12, where 62.4% of Grade 11 Core French students did not go on to finish Grade 12 French in 2013/14

### BC SDs with Five Lowest Grade 7-12 CF Attrition Rates (2012/13--2013/14)

SD	District Name	Total CF enrolment	% Change in CF enrolment	% of students in CF	Gr 7-12 attrition %
19	Revelstoke	424	-0.47%	44.21%	59.34%
49	Central Coast	57	32.56%	24.15%	66.67%
6	Rocky Mountain	1260	17.76%	40.88%	78.87%
45	West Vancouver	2274	0.13%	31.89%	79.61%
38	Richmond	7582	-0.49%	34.76%	80.59%

Source: Author's calculations using British Columbia Ministry of Education data.

Note: Actual FI enrolment numbers may be higher than reported due to possible missing data.

### Attrition in Yukon

- The highest attrition in 2011/12 occurred for Grade 4 students entering Grade 5, where an estimated 55.2% did not continue on to Grade 5 French
- The highest attrition rate was in Grade 12, where an estimated 70.6% of students did not continue on to Grade 12 French

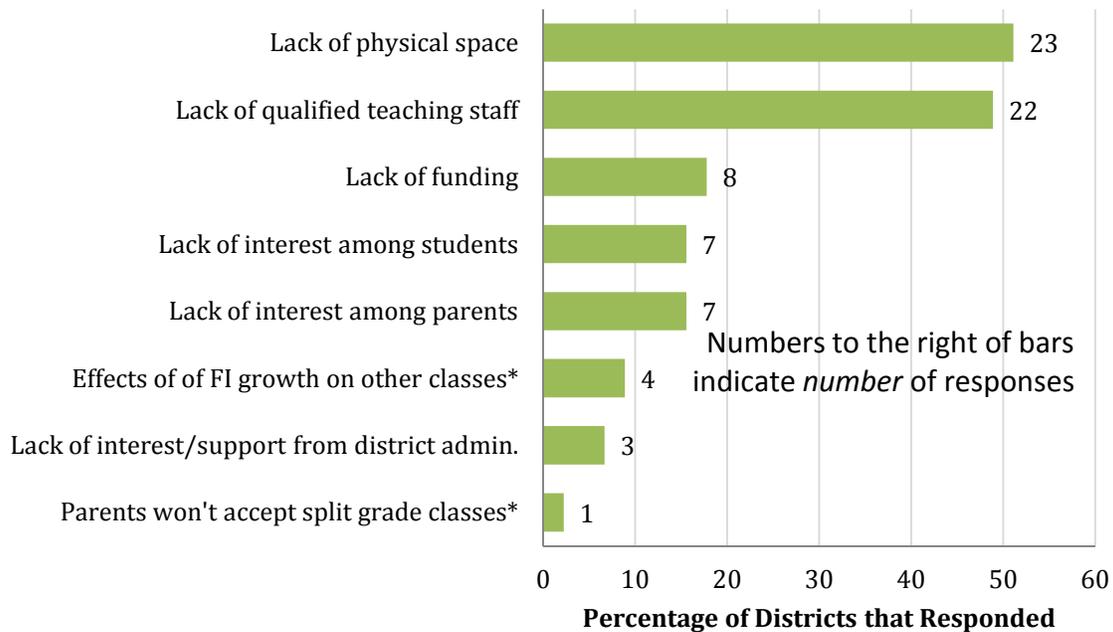
# French Teacher Shortages in BC and Yukon

## French Immersion

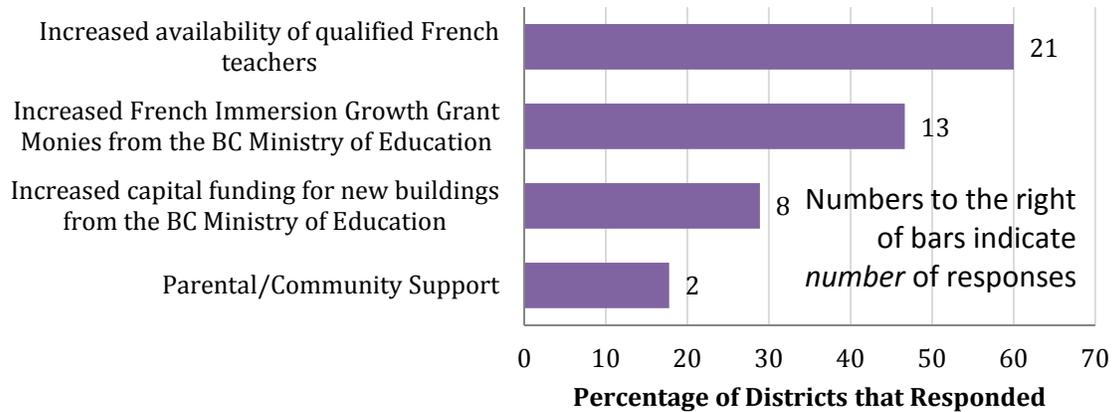
### Shortage

- The FI teacher shortage is real, and it is serious
- An overwhelming majority (85%) of districts that responded found it “Challenging” or “Very challenging” to find sufficient qualified FI teachers
- “Lack of qualified applicants” is the number one obstacle to FI teacher recruitment, reported by 78% of responding SDs
- Competition for qualified FI teachers from other school districts was the second most commonly reported challenge facing FI teacher retention, with 29% of responding districts citing it
- “Lack of qualified teaching staff” is the second most serious reported obstacle to FI program expansion, selected by nearly half (49%) of all responding SDs
- Other serious problems hindering the expansion of FI programs include “Lack of physical space” (51% of responding SDs), “Lack of funding” (18%) and lack of interest among students or parents (16%)
- While increasing the supply of FI teachers might enable the expansion of FI programs in several districts, more support is needed to incite growth in other districts

**Responses to “What challenges does your school district face in expanding French Immersion programs?” (choose all that apply). Asterisks (\*) indicate responses aggregated from comments to “Other.”**



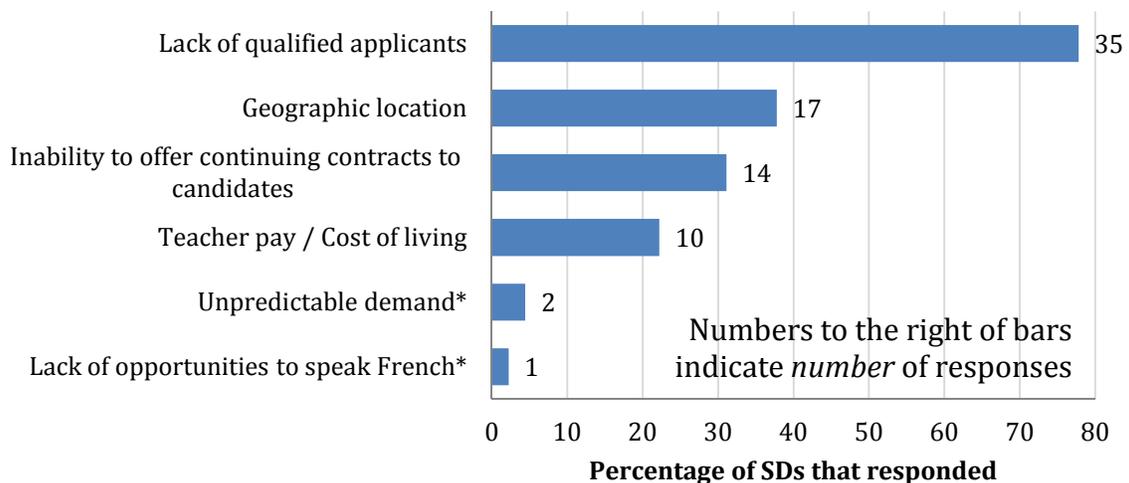
**Responses to “What external support would be useful to enable the expansion of French Immersion programming in your school district?” (choose all that apply).**



**Recruitment**

- The most commonly cited challenges to recruitment of FI teachers were “Lack of qualified applicants” (78% of responding SDs), “Geographic location” (38%), and “Inability to offer continuing contracts” (31%)
- The most commonly cited methods to effectively recruit FI teachers were “Proactive hiring of teacher candidates on practicums” (60%), “Partnership with a university” (40%), and “Recruitment from other provinces” (38%)
- The most commonly cited single most effective method to recruit FI teachers were “Proactive hiring of teacher candidates on practicums” (27%); online advertising (18%), which mostly refers to the Make A Future website; and “Advertising/promotion in education-related magazines” (13%)

**Responses to “What challenges does your school district face in recruiting French Immersion teachers?” (choose all that apply). Asterisks (\*) indicate responses aggregated from comments to “Other.”**



## Retention

- The most commonly cited challenges to retaining FI teachers were social factors and geography (31% of responding SDs), competition with other school districts (29%), and low job security (20%)
- The most commonly cited best practices for retaining FI teachers were various activities related to mentorship (22%), job security (20%), and professional development (20%)

## Recommendations

- To solve the FI teacher shortage, 33% of responding SDs recommended more, varied, better, or expanded FI teacher training programs. These include FI-specific training programs, courses delivered in French, immersion in francophone environments, training native French speakers in BC, and online training, among others
- 20% recommended better connecting job-seeking teachers with potential jobs. Ideas include advertising, linking districts with universities, and provincial HR personnel for FI teachers, among others
- 20% recommended incentivizing FI training and teaching, including full-time contracts, legal protection from lay-offs, financial incentives, stronger connections between FI teachers, and provincial online teaching resources.

## Core French

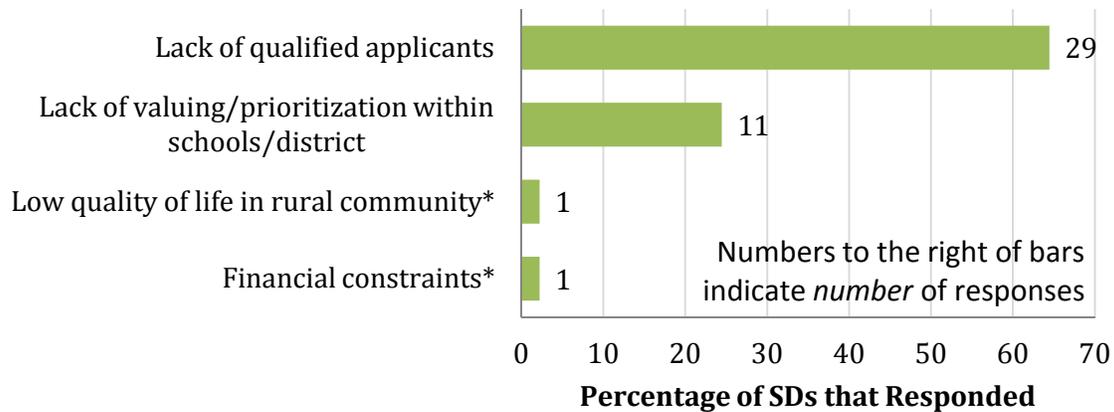
### Shortage

- There is a shortage of specialist CF teachers in high school and a shortage of teachers who can teach CF properly in elementary and middle school
- “Lack of qualified applicants” was the most commonly reported challenge to CF teacher recruitment, cited by a majority (64%) of responding SDs
- A number of respondents complained about the fact that K-7 Core French is taught by generalist teachers, implying a shortage of qualified teachers to teach CF from Kindergarten to Grade 7

### Recruitment

- The most commonly cited challenges to recruitment of CF teachers were “Lack of qualified applicants” (64% of responding SDs) and “Lack of valuing/prioritization within schools/district” (24%)
- Similar to FI, the most commonly cited methods to effectively recruit CF teachers were “Hosting and mentorship of teacher candidates on practicum” (44%), “Partnership with a university” (22%), online advertising (13%), and “Recruitment from other provinces/other countries” (13%)
- Instead of recruiting, many SDs train existing CF teachers’ French language skills. The most popular methods are professional development (38%), mentorship (16%), and providing teaching resources (13%)

**Responses to “What challenges does your school district face in recruiting Core French teachers?” (choose all that apply). Asterisks (\*) indicate responses aggregated from comments to “Other.”**



### Retention

- CF teacher retention did not seem to be a problem. The majority (69%) of responding SDs did not cite a challenge
- However, among the reported challenges in CF teacher retention, the most common one was social factors and geography (11% of responding SDs)

### Recommendations

- Similar to FI, the most common (27%) recommendation for solving the CF teacher shortage was increasing qualified supply. Ideas include training native French speakers in BC, immersion in francophone environments, partnerships with universities, and training generalist teachers better
- 13% recommended creating a specialist CF position for elementary and middle school
- 13% recommended incentivizing CF training and teaching. Methods include dedicated classrooms, more resources, higher wages, legal protection from lay-offs, financial incentives, and prioritization of the program in schools

## More Information

For more detailed analysis, please refer to the full reports:

- *2014 Report on French Immersion and Core French in British Columbia and Yukon: Trends in Enrolment, Popularity, and Attrition*
- *Falling Behind: 2014 Report on the Shortage of Teachers in French Immersion and Core French in British Columbia and Yukon*

They can be found on our website (bc-yk.cpf.ca) by following “Research and Advocacy,” then “Advocacy,” and finally “Advocacy Documents.”



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Nos deux langues, notre fierté