



**TRANSLATION OF THE REPORT SECTION OF THE *STUDY ON PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR PARENTS OF EXOGAMOUS FAMILIES IN THE DIVISION SCOLAIRE FRANCO-MANITOBAINE* PRESENTED TO THE COMMISSION SCOLAIRE FRANCO-MANITOBAINE ON AUGUST 26, 2009**

*Study on Programs and Services  
for Parents of Exogamous Families in the  
Division scolaire franco-manitobaine*

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*Support Materials – Consultation* [not translated]

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The mission entrusted to the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM), from its very inception in 1994 and under the provisions of section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (21), cited in *The Public Schools Act* of Manitoba (Chapter 21) (22), is to establish a community education project for Manitoba's francophone minority and to provide the children of entitled persons with quality French-language education in schools run by the francophone community.

Over the past fifteen years, there has been a significant change in the demographic and linguistic profiles of Manitoba's francophone minority community. The realities of francophone immigration and exogamy (francophones marrying non-francophones) have played a part in altering the face of that community. These changes are most noticeable among the DSFM's clientele and in the linguistic composition of its families.

Ever mindful of its mission and of its responsibilities toward all its entitled parents, the Commission scolaire franco-manitobaine (CSFM) has therefore decided to conduct a study on the programs and services the school division has for its exogamous couples for the purpose of supporting their inclusion in the Franco-Manitoban school community. This initiative is part of the CSFM's strategic plan for 2006-12. The study was conducted by *Mosaik consultants inc.* with the following terms of reference:

- Consult the community on exogamy, including exogamous and endogamous households, DSFM staff, and community organizations;
- Make concrete recommendations to the CSFM subcommittee on exogamy to extend the inclusion of families within the Franco-Manitoban school community.

Recommendations arising from this study are the result of a pooled analysis of data collected from the community consultations, of the data and views expressed in various surveys, and the data compiled from an examination of relevant policies and administrative documents from the DSFM and other francophone school boards in minority situations elsewhere in Canada. These recommendations can be found in section 9 of the report. An analysis of the data can be found at the end of the report in the section titled *Support Materials—Consultation*.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology selected for this study was aimed at being as transparent as possible and ensuring that the school communities and community stakeholders were involved. The approach made every effort to take into account the views and recommendations set forth by parents of exogamous families as well as by those of endogamous families, by school principals and teachers, and by representatives of Franco-Manitoban organizations, always in light of the study's terms of reference and the school division's mission.

The following steps were included in the methodological approach:

- Analyze all the materials relevant to the study.
- Take stock of the services the DSFM is currently offering parents of exogamous families.
- Obtain relevant information from francophone school boards in minority situations elsewhere in the country regarding their language policies and the services they offer parents of exogamous families.
- Develop consultation tools (guidebooks, questionnaires, surveys).
- Consult and meet with the superintendent of schools, members of the internal administration and the CSFM subcommittee on exogamy regarding all issues relevant to the study.
- Consult and meet with the division coordinator in charge of services to parents of exogamous families regarding all issues relevant to the study.
- Consult and meet with the school principals.
- Consult with DSFM staff.
- Consult with parents of exogamous and endogamous families through community meetings:
  - 1- Urban meeting: eight urban schools
  - 2- Ste. Anne meeting: five schools in the eastern region
  - 3- St-Pierre-Jolys meeting: three schools in the southern region
  - 4- Notre Dame de Lourdes meeting: three schools in the western region
  - 5- St-Georges meeting: one school
  - 6- Shilo meeting: one school
  - 7- St-Lazare meeting: one school
  - 8- Laurier meeting: one school
  - 9- St. Laurent meeting: one school
- Consult with representatives of Franco-Manitoban organizations.
- Examine the CSFM language policy in light of the data gathered.
- Report on the findings of the study and develop recommendations.
- Draft a final report and submit it to the superintendent of the DSFM and to the CSFM.

### 3. EXOGAMY—A NEW REALITY

According to data received from the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM), the proportion of parents of exogamous families who have enrolled their children in DSFM schools for the 2007-08 school year stands at 57 per cent (57%) for preschool programs associated with the schools and 44 per cent (44%) for school programs from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Enrolments at Collège Louis-Riel and Collège régional Notre-Dame are excluded from these figures.

The trends observed within the DSFM these last few years signal a steady increase in school enrolment numbers of children from exogamous families in the coming years. By definition, these families are made up of one francophone parent and a spouse who does not necessarily understand French. In most of the DSFM's exogamous families, the non-francophone spouses are English-speaking. In recent years, some of these anglophone parents have been lobbying the CSFM for a language policy that includes them more extensively and is better aimed at having them become more actively involved in their children's education. Ever mindful of meeting the needs of its entire clientele while remaining dedicated to fulfilling its linguistic and cultural missions, the CSFM is therefore seeking to find new ways of ensuring that each one of its parents is included in the Franco-Manitoban community education project, without undermining its *raison d'être*.

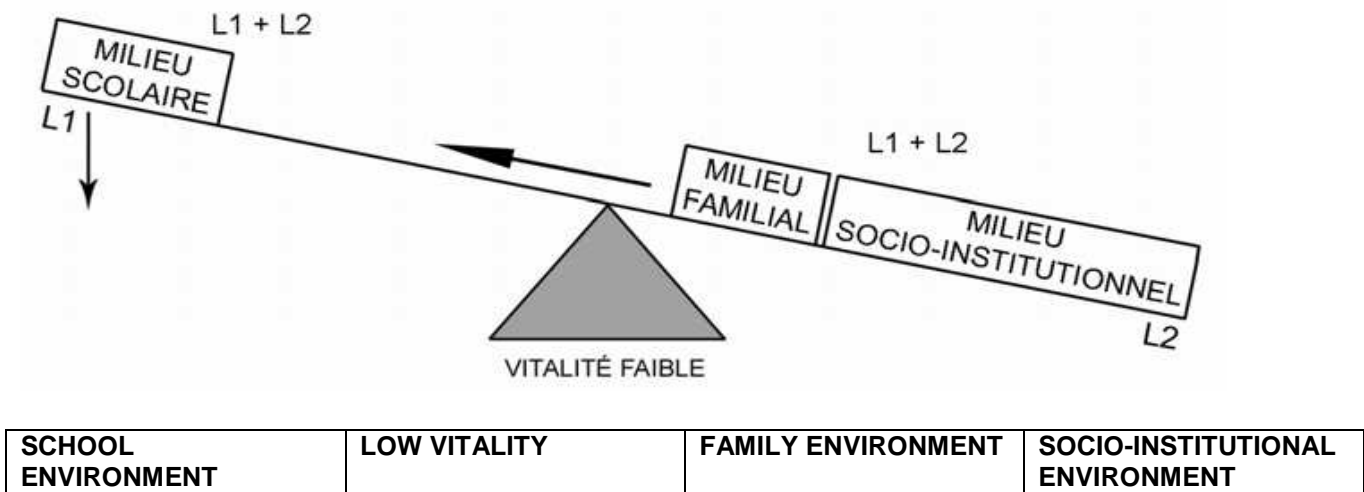
Exogamy is an emerging issue not only in French-speaking Manitoba, but also in most of the francophone communities in minority situations across the country. Much has been written recently about this phenomenon to gain a better understanding of the issue and its effects on francophone communities, and more particularly, on their school systems. (23, 25, 26, 27)

Schools are springboards for community development in minority situations. In addition to their educational mandate, they are expected to contribute to the linguistic and cultural vitality and development of the francophone community. In school governance and community development, exogamy is a new phenomenon, a new factor in the equation of the survival and enhancement of the linguistic minority. Exogamy raises new challenges and new opportunities. In his study titled *Libérer le potentiel caché de l'exogamie—Profil démolinguistique des enfants des ayants droit francophones selon la structure familiale*, Rodrigue Landry states:

[Translation]

Clearly the low participation of children eligible to attend French-language schools, coupled with the minimal use of French as the home language by many of these children, represents the greatest threat to the future vitality of francophone and Acadian communities. Over the years, access to French-language schools has been greatly improved. The challenge today is less one of access and more one of participation. Ironically, exogamy, which is the main (but not the only) factor in the low use of French as the home language, is also the source of a possible turnaround of the situation. (23, p. 17)

The needed turnaround in the situation that Landry speaks of is well illustrated in his counterbalance model. Based on Landry's work, Jules Rocque presents the model thusly (Figure 1):



TRANSLATION of Figure 1:

Figure 1 – Adaptation of the Counterbalance Model: Exogamy (27, p. 135)

*[Translation]*

The counterbalance model applied to minority situations is a good illustration of the compensation effort required from the family and school environments, which ensure the viability of the French language (L1), if we hope to counteract the dominant forces of the socio-institutional environment and those of the majority language (L2). (27, p. 133)

It is by increasing the use of French within exogamous households that we can hope to fully meet the school’s mandate. Thus, this adaptation of the counterbalance model shows the importance of establishing efficient communication between the school and the exogamous households to ensure that the school’s mandate is being respected and to offer parents the support they need to understand the important role they have to play in school governance. (27, p. 135)

In a sociocultural minority context where English is the dominant language, it is often the arrival of the first child that brings the parents to start thinking and make decisions, as parents, about the language to be used in the home and their children’s language of schooling. These reflections, especially in the case of parents of exogamous families, can be loaded with emotion.

*[Translation]*

When the first child is born into a family, the francophone parent sometimes develops an awareness and continues his or her personal reflection by pondering the role French will have in the family’s life. Sometimes the couple decides that French will have a certain role in the home, otherwise it may rely solely on the school to introduce French into the life of their child and maintain the language. (27, p. 132)

It is by displaying a positive attitude toward the French language and culture, trying to speak French, and taking part in school or community activities that the non-francophone parent can sustain the use of French in the family. (27, p. 133)

The phenomenon of exogamy poses a daunting challenge to the DSFM. Landry clearly identified the issues in his study *Libérer le potentiel caché de l'exogamie — Profil démilinguistique des enfants des ayants droit francophones selon la structure familiale*:

*[Translation]*

The “official” discourse of the school must remain a francophone one, while not precluding some accommodation to ensure that communication with all the children’s parents is effective and friendly. The goal of maintaining the francophone identity in a context where it is threatened may seem legitimate and fair, even to the dominant anglophone exogroup, if it is built on respect for the country’s two languages and the plurality of cultures. It is the welfare of the child and full acknowledgment of the heritage to be passed on that must constitute the core of any strategy to promote the full participation of the parents. (23, p. 22)

As Landry points out, the CSFM acknowledges that the low participation of children eligible to attend French-language schools, coupled with the minimal use of French as the home language by many of these children, represents a threat to the future vitality of the DSFM and to that of Manitoba’s francophone communities. The CSFM remains aware of the important role schools play in building the identity of its student, family, and community clientele. Mindful of the issues related to exogamy, the CSFM also seeks to ensure that its Franco-Manitoban school project includes all elements of its clientele.

#### 4. MISSION AND VISION

The mandate of the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM) is rooted in section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (21). Supreme Court of Canada rulings (the *Mahé* decision (34), the Manitoba Reference (35), the *Arsenault-Cameron* decision (32)) have determined the scope of the Charter and were the inspiration behind the development of the DSFM's mission and vision. The DSFM's provincial responsibilities are articulated in *The Public Schools Act* of Manitoba (22), amended in 1993. The mission of the DSFM reads as follows:

*[Translation]*

The Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, mindful of its unique role in Manitoba, in Canada, and in an ever-changing world, has the following mission: to ensure a high-quality education to Manitoba's francophone student population by promoting the development of self-sufficient, self-fulfilled, skilled individuals who are secure in their identities, and proud of their language and culture; to establish a community education project, run by Manitoba's francophone parents, that reflects the interests and values of the Franco-Manitoban community.

The introduction to the DSFM educational vision reads as follows:

*[Translation]*

Division scolaire franco-manitobaine schools are communities of learners dedicated to the education and development of citizens who are proud of their cultural and linguistic heritage and who are ready to make a commitment to their community, society, and the world. In order to assist learners to reach the highest possible level of development, DSFM schools shall be guided by the following principles: to create a stimulating climate in the school that enables each student to reach his or her potential; to deliver a basic program, as defined by the Department, that seeks to reach a superior level of learning and success; to offer optional programs that meet the needs of the clientele of each one of the schools; to ensure variety in programming in order to prepare the students for life in an ever-changing society; and facilitate their access to higher education, the work world, and entrepreneurship, in line with their choices and creativity; to establish partnerships with parents, the community, and private enterprise to ensure their involvement in the mission of the school community.

Two elements of the educational vision set DSFM schools apart from other schools where French is taught. The DSFM seeks to:

- Develop a sense of belonging to the Franco-Manitoban community while opening students' eyes to the multicultural world that surrounds them;
- Reflect in its programming the values, traditions, customs, and contributions of cultural and French-language communities to Manitoba's history from its very beginning, and its rich potential to contribute to the future.

## 5. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LANGUAGE POLICY

### 5.1 *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (21), enacted on April 17, 1982, was a landmark in Canada's history that changed the lives of all Canadians who share our fundamental Canadian values and principles. The adoption of the Charter reinvigorated and granted legitimacy to all Canadians who live in minority communities. It also became a source of pride for the members of the majority who decided to treat their minority communities with tolerance and respect. The Charter expresses and protects our country's fundamental values, and sets out a vision for a society in which these values are put into practice in everyday life. The values, on which our country was built, such as tolerance, respect, justice, linguistic duality, and the protection of the most vulnerable, provide a framework within which our country may achieve its full potential. The Charter is much more than a mere legal document; it frames and protects Canada's fundamental values and principles. Section 23 of the Charter recognizes the right of citizens to educate their children in the official language of their minority group and in minority-language educational facilities.

The wording of the section containing the constitutional guarantee of minority language education rights reads as follows:

23. (1) *Citizens of Canada:*

- (a) *Whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province in which they reside, or*
  - (b) *Who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province,*  
*have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province.*
- (2) *Citizens of Canada of whom any child has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in English or French in Canada, have the right to have all their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the same language.*
- (3) *The right of citizens of Canada under subsections (1) and (2) to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of a province:*
- (a) *Applies wherever in the province the number of children of citizens who have such a right is sufficient to warrant the provision to them out of public funds of minority language instruction; and*
  - (b) *Includes, where the number of those children so warrants, the right to have them receive that instruction in minority language educational facilities provided out of public funds.*

Canadian courts have played a vital role in the implementation of section 23. Supreme Court of Canada rulings have confirmed the scope of the Charter. Clearly, minority official-language groups have

benefited from a series of Supreme Court interpretations in various rulings on section 23 of the Charter. The rights section 23 conferred to parents belonging to an official-language minority group have been progressively recognized through a series of Supreme Court rulings. Beginning with the general right to have their children educated in the official language of the minority group to which they belong, where numbers warrant, the linguistic minority groups were given the right to manage their own educational institutions, then later the right to have their own schools. Even though official-language minority communities had understood for many, many years that schools could play a key role in their survival, it was section 23 of the Charter that guaranteed them the right to manage their own schools.

In the *Arsenault-Cameron* decision, the Supreme Court stated: “A school is the single most important institution for the survival of the official-language minority, which is itself a true beneficiary under section 23” (32)

The Supreme Court’s successive interpretations of section 23 enabled minority-language schools to become a reality and play a vital role in the community’s full development. The official language minority community is thus a beneficiary of section 23. In the *Manitoba Reference*, the Supreme Court indicated that implementing the guarantees “...requires a full understanding of the needs of the linguistic minority.” (35)

Again, in *Arsenault-Cameron*, the Supreme Court held that: “The majority cannot be expected to understand and appreciate all of the diverse ways in which educational practices may influence the language and culture.” (32)

Moreover, the Supreme Court added that: “Minority schools themselves provide community centers where the promotion of the culture can occur.” (32)

In the *Glenda Doucet-Boudreau* decision, the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia stressed the role that schools must play to counter assimilation: “School facilities are key instruments in preventing further assimilation ...” (33)

The connection between language and culture was underscored by the Supreme Court in the *Mahé* decision:

Language is more than a mere means of communication, it is part and parcel of the identity and culture of the people speaking it. It is the means by which individuals understand themselves and the world around them. (34)

Maintaining a language and building an identity comes about quite naturally for most citizens. Members of the majority group experience their language in symbiosis with their environment. Equality of language, culture, and identity requires that French-language educational milieus avail themselves of extraordinary measures to compensate for the flaws in the community environment. This could entail increased funding in certain instances. The court also asked that policies, forms, and procedures be adapted to the priorities of the minority:

This capacitation is essential to redress past injustices and guarantee that the specific needs of the minority language community are the primary consideration in all decisions involving linguistic or cultural issues. (32)

Since 1870, when Manitoba became a province, and even more so since Manitoba's French schools were abolished in 1916, the priority of the francophone community has always been French-language education. Thus, it was able to enjoy Canada's minority education rights guaranteed by the Charter, more particularly section 23. The establishment in 1994 of its own school system, the DSFM, was the crowning achievement of all the historical claims. This school system can now play a pivotal role in guaranteeing the full development and the vitality of Manitoba's francophone community.

## **5.2 The Public Schools Act of Manitoba**

*The Public Schools Act* of Manitoba (22) defines French-language education, carving out the DSFM territory and identifying its potential electors. The act provides for a governance structure made up of school trustees elected by the parents of children enrolled in a DSFM school. At the local level, the act provides for the creation of school committees having an advisory mandate. Some sections dealing with language of instruction, language of administration, the qualifications of school trustees and members of school committees are particularly relevant to this study:

### *Language of instruction*

*21.31(1) To ensure that its pupils master the French language, the francophone school board shall provide at least 75% of its classroom instruction in each grade in the French language.*

### *Language of administration*

*21.32(1) The administration and operation of the francophone school division shall be carried out in the French language.*

### *Exception*

*21.32(2) When circumstances warrant, the francophone school division may operate in a language other than the French language.*

### *Qualifications of francophone school trustees*

*21.38(1) Subject to subsection (2), a person is qualified to be nominated for and elected as a trustee of the francophone school division if*

*(a) the person*

*(i) is entitled to vote under section 21.37, and*

*(ii) is able to participate in the conduct of school division business in the French language; or*

(b) *the person*

- (i) *is able to participate in the conduct of school division business in the French language,*
- (ii) *is 18 years of age or older on the day of the election, and*
- (iii) *is a Canadian citizen who has been a resident of the electoral division for at least six months on the day of the election.*

Despite the fact that the act allows for a language other than French to be used when circumstances warrant, it is clear that the school board must operate in French. A degree of flexibility is allowed in the area of operating language, but the use of a language other than French is to be considered only as a special exception.

### **5.3 Language Policy**

The CSFM sets policies and passes by-laws in order to fulfill its legal obligations and meet its requirements on its territory and in its schools. The language policy (16), first adopted by the CSFM in 1996, was amended in 2003. This policy was adopted in order to meet the requirements of section 21.32 of *The Public Schools Act* dealing with the language of administration.

*[Translation]*

#### *I Policy*

*The Division scolaire franco-manitobaine recognizes and respects the unique nature as well as the diversity of all its members. The French language is the cornerstone and the raison d'être of the DSFM's specific character. It was created to administer French-language schools in the province of Manitoba. The Commission scolaire franco-manitobaine is a collective community project for Manitoba's francophones.*

#### *II Guidelines*

- 1. French is the official language of the administration, the elected representatives, the students, as well as the staff of the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine.*
- 2. The official language of communication is French, without prejudice to non-francophones.*
- 3. The administration's approach in its relations with those it addresses is a highly pragmatic one, its main concern being effective communications. In every instance where a language other than French must be used, it is understood that it is an extraordinary measure taken only to ensure the well-being of the students in its care.*
- 4. The phase d'accueil (transition phase) program was developed to integrate the children of "entitled" parents, with the aim of enhancing the use of French by these children and their families.*
- 5. When the administration addresses any of the three levels of government for academic or other services, it does so in French. Should this prove to be impossible, the DSFM shall indicate that, after a transition period, it will do everything in its power to obtain the French-language services it needs to ensure the well-being of the children entrusted to it.*

This policy specifies that French is the official language of communication of the DSFM administration, elected representatives, students, and staff.

While allowing for the use of a language other than French, the Language Policy points out that this is but an exceptional measure taken only to ensure the well-being of the children entrusted to it.

## **6. SUPPORT PROGRAM IN EXOGAMY**

Launched in 2003, the Support Program in Exogamy is a divisional initiative created to aid non-francophone parents of exogamous families. The program provides parents with the support, tools, and resources they need to become involved in the French-language education of their children. These programs and the support services being offered promote parents' active participation while maintaining one of the key elements of the DSFM mission—to ensure the linguistic and cultural vitality of its school community.

### **6.1 School division strategies and support tools**

#### *Newsletter*

Put out by the Division in a bilingual format, the newsletter provides parents with information about the strategies and tools that could assist parents of exogamous families who wish to support their children in their learning process. It is distributed to the DSFM's parents of exogamous families twice a year. These newsletters can all be found on the DSFM Web site at:

<http://www.dsfm.mb.ca/comitescolaire.php>.

#### *Guide for school principals*

Developed for school principals, this guide contains descriptions of school division initiatives along with descriptions of support strategies that could be implemented at the local level. It also contains a series of useful tools such as forms, samples of invitations, lists of available resources, and lists of local strategies that could be helpful in setting up local programs and services to support parents of exogamous families. Every school principal receives a copy of the guide and anyone who is newly appointed as school principal in the division is given training to become familiar with the contents and use of the guide.

#### *Training sessions for workshop leaders*

This one-day training session enables new workshop leaders to become familiar with the aims, content and organization of workshops specifically developed for parents of exogamous families. Workshop leaders are also given a leaders' kit that includes support materials and facilitation tools.

#### *Workshop—My Child Attends l'école française—What I Need To Know*

Held in English for parents of exogamous families, this workshop provides information on the DSFM's mission and the role non-francophone parents play in their children's education. It also recommends supports that could help parents meet the challenges they face.

### ***Workshop—Helping My Child with Homework***

Held in English for parents of exogamous families, this workshop is an evening of information about helping with homework. Suggestions about the tools and resources available to parents for helping their children with homework are also offered.

### ***Workshop—Helping My Child to Read en Français***

This workshop focuses on the role of parents in their children's reading development. It offers parents suggestions on ways to become involved in their children's reading development along with the tools to do so.

### ***Support kits for parents of exogamous families***

Produced in a bilingual format, this kit contains information about learning a second language, francophone community services, Franco-Manitoban culture, and francophone schools. Parents are given this kit when they enroll their children in a DSFM school.

### ***Support materials***

Various resources (software, books, dictionaries, CD-ROMs, cassettes, games, etc.) have been tested and evaluated by parents of exogamous families who volunteered to do so. An inventory of these resources is updated and distributed to DSFM school principals.

### ***Support group for parents of exogamous families***

Currently in the development stage, this initiative was given a test run during the 2008-09 school year. A group of parents of exogamous families met regularly to identify challenges and develop activities or services that could be helpful to them. The activities and services that are developed must at all times respect the DSFM's language policy.

## **6.2 Local strategies and support tools**

### ***Telephone support service***

A telephone support service, available evenings, makes it possible for non-francophone parents to obtain clarifications or information in English about the oral or written messages received from the school in French.

### ***Twinning endogamous families with exogamous families***

Implementing a twinning system makes it possible for volunteer francophone families to help out parents of exogamous families from the same school.

### ***Learning French***

Courses in French as a second language for parents of exogamous families may be offered in the community or a neighbouring one.

### ***Raising the awareness of teachers***

Teachers are offered information and awareness workshops on the support strategies, resources and services available for parents of exogamous families at the school division and local levels.

### ***Raising the awareness of school committees***

School committee members are offered awareness workshops on the support strategies, resources and services available at the school division and local levels for parents of exogamous families.

### ***Information given to parents when enrolling their children in a DSFM school***

Each DSFM school is responsible for giving parents of exogamous families a proper welcome and accurate information when enrolling their children in the school. The principal shall give these parents a kit made up for this purpose along with an inventory of the services the school has for them.

### ***Early childhood***

Information and awareness sessions on exogamy and the services available are given to the various stakeholders in the francophone preschool milieu. In-service days are offered to day-care workers. Early childhood and family centers have an exogamy resource corner for parents and an information booth on exogamy is set up at the Early Childhood Fairs.

## 7. COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

### 7.1 Parents

Parents in the school division were consulted by means of community meetings and a survey.

Nine (9) community meetings were held in the urban and rural areas as follows:

| DATE                        | SCHOOL COMMUNITIES   | MEETING VENUE                                      |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Tuesday, January 6, 2009    | École La Source  | École La Source, Shilo                             |
| Wednesday, January 7, 2009  | École Saint-Joachim, École Pointe-des-Chênes, École Lagimodière, École Noël-Ritchot, École /Collège régional Gabrielle-Roy                           | École Lagimodière, Lorette                         |
| Thursday, January 8, 2009   | École Taché, École Christine-Lespérance, École Précieux-Sang, École Lacerte, École Roméo-Dallaire, Collège Louis-Riel, Centre scolaire Léo-Rémillard | Centre scolaire Léo-Rémillard, St. Vital           |
| Monday, January 12, 2009    | École Saint-Lazare   | École Saint-Lazare, St-Lazare                      |
| Tuesday, January 13, 2009   | École Jours de Plaine  | École Jours de Plaine, Laurier                     |
| Thursday, January 15, 2009  | École communautaire Saint-Georges  | École communautaire Saint-Georges, St-Georges      |
| Tuesday, January 27, 2009   | École communautaire Aurèle-Lemoine   | École communautaire Aurèle-Lemoine, St. Laurent    |
| Wednesday, January 28, 2009 | École élémentaire Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, Collège régional Notre-Dame, École communautaire Gilbert-Rosset   | Collège régional Notre-Dame, Notre Dame de Lourdes |
| Thursday, January 29, 2009  | École Sainte-Agathe, École régionale Saint-Jean-Baptiste, École communautaire Réal-Bérard  | École communautaire Réal-Bérard, St-Pierre-Jolys   |

At each of the community meetings, following a presentation of the programs and services the DSFM already has to offer to parents of exogamous families, these two questions were put forward for discussion and debate:

- 1 – Do you have any concerns about the English-language services the DSFM has for the anglophone parents of exogamous families?
- 2 – What initiatives would you like to see the DSFM implement to better welcome and include parents of exogamous families in your school?

Where there were a great number people attending the meetings, two or more discussion groups were set up to give all parents an opportunity to express themselves. One hundred sixty-five (165) parents attended these consultation meetings.

School division parents were surveyed by means of a questionnaire distributed to parents attending the urban and rural community meetings. The same questionnaire was posted on the DSFM Web site for parents who were unable to attend the consultation meetings. One hundred seventy-nine parents (179) replied to the questionnaire. Those parents who attended the community consultations were also able to voice their opinions at the meetings.

The questionnaire gave parents the opportunity to a) express their opinions on various issues related to exogamy in the school division; b) make suggestions as to what new initiatives the DSFM might undertake to better meet the needs of the non-francophone parents of exogamous families; and c) raise their concerns regarding English-language services in DSFM schools.

Parents' comments shared orally at the community meetings and those written in the questionnaires can be found in the section of this report titled *Support Documents*.

## **FINDINGS**

### ***Respect of the mission and mandate of the DSFM and its schools***

Most of the parents' interventions categorically supported the mission and mandate of the DSFM and its schools. Apart from a few exceptions, francophone and anglophone parents strongly expressed their commitment to the raison d'être of the francophone school. A majority of parents worried that using English in the school context would undermine the objectives of francophone schools and water down their French-language ambience. The idea that parents had freely chosen to send their children to a francophone school was underscored, with all that entails as to expectations, attitudes, responsibilities, and behaviour toward the school's services, communications, and operations. It should be pointed out that, in the minds of some parents, the difference between immersion schools and francophone schools was not well understood.

### ***Welcoming parents, support and collaboration***

Welcoming and supporting parents emerged as being highly important. Parents, francophones and anglophones alike, hoped for a culture of welcoming and respect in the schools that would promote their involvement in their children's education project and strengthen their sense of belonging to the francophone school community. Parents emphasized that the decision of parents of exogamous families to enroll their children in a francophone school had to be valued and that the anglophone parent needed to feel accepted and respected at the school. Some parents wanted communications to be in English for this purpose, while others, even some anglophones, preferred that the school's French environment be steadfastly respected. It was found that schools need to demonstrate that they are prepared to reasonably accommodate anglophone parents of exogamous families and develop support mechanisms for those parents.

### ***Anglicizing francophone schools***

Among all the concerns expressed, that of the gradual anglicization of francophone schools seemed to be the leading one. Parents, anglophones and francophones alike, were unanimous in wanting to maintain the francophone school's linguistic and cultural identity.

### ***Parents' commitment to francophone schools***

Parents' comments highlighted the importance of their commitment to the mission and mandate of francophone schools. A number of parents raised the possibility that those who were not strongly supportive of the francophone school's mission could choose immersion for their children. However, some anglophone parents bemoaned the fact that their choosing francophone schools for their children limited their opportunities to take an active part in school activities and lowered their commitment toward the school.

### ***Oral and written communications with students and staff***

There seemed to be a consensus among the parents consulted that internal communications within the school and the DSFM should be in French. The consensus was clearer when it came to communications with the students or in the context of classroom instruction.

### ***Oral and written communications with parents***

The issue of oral and written communications with parents in English stood out as causing the most concern, on the one hand, but was the one that was most in demand from anglophone parents, on the other. The comments expressed on this subject reflected a whole variety and range of opinions. At one extreme was the position of parents who wanted no communication in English in the DSFM and its schools; at the other were the parents who wanted all communications and materials from school to be available and offered in English. There was some consensus that certain of the written communications, such as those relating to students' safety and health, be offered to anglophone parents who requested it. As for individual oral communications in English with anglophone parents, there seemed to be a consensus on this issue. Parents did not necessarily see any problem in having these communications in English, be it for information over the phone or in the context of parent-teacher conferences. In fact, this already happens to be current practice in the great majority of DSFM schools. A number of parents recommended that the DSFM and its schools adopt a uniform practice in this regard and that clear, specific guidelines be set for the whole of the school division. A number of parents recommended that the DSFM Web site make available certain documents in both French and English. A few parents requested that certain documents be translated.

### ***Programs and services for parents of exogamous families***

Over the last few years, the DSFM has developed and implemented a whole range of programs and services for parents of exogamous families. However, parents said they were not aware of these programs and services and asked for more information on them. It was clear that that these programs

and services must be better promoted and implemented more consistently in all the schools in the division.

### ***Support for parents of exogamous families***

Although this study dealt with programs and services for parents of exogamous families, a number of comments were raised during the consultations about the needs of francophone parents of endogamous families. Being uncomfortable with communications in French and needing support were most often cited.

### ***Promotion and recruitment***

A few interventions were aimed at establishing a link between English-language services in francophone schools and the issue of recruiting students and promoting the school to a greater number of entitled parents.

### ***Volunteer work***

The subject of volunteering at the school and in the classroom came up as an important issue during the consultations. Certain anglophone parents would like to do some volunteer work at the school and have difficulty understanding why the schools are reticent or refuse their help. On the other hand, most francophone and anglophone parents stated that volunteering could not take place to the detriment of the francophone ambiance in the school. Some of them suggested that the anglophone parent's volunteer work could take place in the context of activities that did not involve any direct contact with the students.

### ***Consistent practices—DSFM—schools***

A number of parents pointed out the lack of consistency from one school to another regarding the practices of school staff towards parents of exogamous families. This resulted in a suggestion that the DSFM and its schools need to adopt school division guidelines that are clearer and more consistent.

### ***Proposed initiatives***

Parents proposed the following initiatives that the DSFM could adopt to better meet the needs of the non-francophone parents of exogamous families:

- Offer information sessions to the parents and raise their awareness of their role regarding the DSFM's mandate and building a sense of identity.
- Provide parents with information on the programs and services the DSFM and its schools have for parents of exogamous families.
- Ensure a welcoming, inclusive, respectful climate in each of the DSFM schools.
- Ensure that the oral individual communications between school staff and parents of exogamous families take place in English when requested by the latter.

- Ensure that letters and documents relating to students' health or safety be offered in English to parents of exogamous families requesting it.
- Better define what the DSFM means by “extraordinary measures,” make its expectations for its schools explicit, and ensure consistency from one school to another.
- Set up support services for parents of endogamous families and francophone parents of exogamous families.
- Allow anglophone parents to do volunteer work at the school, provided that it not be in situations where they communicate directly with the students.
- Allow sub-committees of parents on exogamy to be set up in DSFM schools.
- Set up a telephone support service for anglophone parents of exogamous families.
- Ensure that the DSFM and its schools make a more efficient use of the Internet; post some relevant documents along with information about student registrations, the DSFM's mission, and school transportation, among others, in English on the DSFM and school Web sites.
- Ensure that courses to improve French, sponsored by the DSFM, are offered.
- Organize cultural and social activities for parents of exogamous families in order to have them take part in the cultural life of the school community as much as possible.

## **7.2 Fédération provinciale des comités de parents Provincial Committee on Exogamy**

A consultation meeting with members of the Fédération provinciale des comités de parents (FPCP) Provincial Committee on Exogamy took place on November 24, 2008.

The members of the FPCP Provincial Committee on Exogamy were unanimous in saying that the DSFM and its schools need to be more welcoming to parents of exogamous families. These parents want to be able to follow their children's progression at school and get involved in and contribute to their children's schools on the same basis as francophone parents. They indicated that the action plan they had submitted to the CSFM (see the background and action plan in the section of the report titled *Support Materials –Community Groups*) dealt with most of their concerns and requests. They stressed that the schools needed to show more respect toward and be more accommodating of parents of exogamous families. They identified the areas of school-parent communications and the volunteer work of parents who do not speak French as worthy of special attention. They asked for a climate of respect and communications in English for anglophone parents requesting it, and mentioned the following examples: parent-teacher conferences, written communications dealing with students' health or safety, translating documents such as the school's code of conduct and prospectus, and volunteer work in the classroom. They recommended that the schools develop creative approaches conducive to the inclusion of parents of exogamous families in the schools, and that the schools set up sub-committees of parents of exogamous families.

## **7.3 Organizations**

A consultation meeting with representatives of Franco-Manitoban organizations took place on January 14, 2009.

The number of anglophone parents lobbying for changes was questioned. Are most of the parents satisfied with the current situation in DSFM schools? How many parents are asking for programs and services in English and what services are being talked about? With everything that is being demanded to be done in English, it was pointed out that this was moving away from the idea of using English as an extraordinary measure.

Thus, organization representatives were wondering about the impact services in English would have on the use of French. They stated that the use of French should not be further diluted and it was already diminishing even without increasing the level of English-language services.

Lastly, organization representatives were asking about the language dimension of exogamous families. Are there any data on the French-language skills of anglophone parents of exogamous families? The representatives asked whether these anglophone parents had perfected their French-language skills in any way after their children had undergone thirteen years of French-language education. It was stressed that attitudes towards French were important and that what was needed was to encourage these parents' efforts to improve their French, not merely offer them programs and services in English.

## 8. STAFF CONSULTATIONS

### 8.1 School principals

Findings from the survey conducted among school principals and from the meeting with principals held on December 1, 2008, allowed for certain observations to be made regarding the measures currently in place to accommodate parents of exogamous families in DSFM schools and to include parents of exogamous families in the francophone school community, which are the following. The comments shared orally during the consultation meeting and written comments to the questionnaire can be found in the section of the report titled *Support materials–Consultation–School principals*.

#### ***FINDINGS***

##### ***School committees***

School principals indicated that in all schools the regular meetings of the school committees took place in French only. If needed, explanations were provided orally in English either by the school or by other parents.

##### ***Written communications***

According to the school principals, in all schools certain documents were available in French only: the school prospectus, the monthly calendars, and the yearly school plan. In certain schools, communications concerning other documents were offered in English: monthly letters and newsletters, consent forms for school trips, correspondence regarding student safety and health, and the report to the community. If needed, the schools gave parents explanations orally in English. Generally when documents were sent out in English to parents of exogamous families, it was upon request.

##### ***Activities and ceremonies***

According to the school principals, each of the following activities or ceremonies was conducted partially in English in at least one of the schools: graduation ceremonies, school trips, the open house, Remembrance Day, camping trips, school dances, public meetings for parents, and parent-teacher conferences. The use of English during parent-teacher conferences whenever necessary was a well-established practice in almost all schools. Open house and Remembrance Day activities were the ones that most often took place in French only. It should be noted that if certain activities were taking place partially in English, it was not to accommodate the parents of exogamous families, but rather because of a lack of resources in French. For instance, school trips and camps sometimes relied on non-francophone human resources. Likewise, English-language music at school dances was not being accepted solely to meet the needs of the students or the parents of exogamous families.

## ***Parents***

The schools have established certain practices regarding welcoming parents to the school and their getting involved in the schools. In the great majority of the schools, new anglophone parents were being greeted partly in English. Oral explanations in English were generally given to anglophone parents. These parents were allowed to do volunteer work in all schools. However, the schools wanted all direct communication with students in the classroom to be in French only, except for Language Arts courses. As for activities outside the classroom, in certain schools parents who do not speak French were being assigned tasks that did not involve direct communication with the students, while in other schools, they were being assigned tasks involving supervision of the students during school trips and transportation to various sports activities. In most schools, anglophone parents were not being allowed to supervise students during lunch hour and recess, or in the gym.

## ***Programs and services for parents of exogamous families***

A whole range of programs and services were available for parents of exogamous families. According to the principals, the school division's support kits for new exogamous families were being handed out at registration time and at the school's open house in the great majority of schools. Again, the great majority of the schools provided an oral follow-up in English with non-francophone parents after a presentation or meeting at the school. Informal meetings between the principal and non-francophone parents were being held in the great majority of schools. A little more than half of the schools indicated that they offered courses to improve French and a telephone support service. Information and awareness-raising sessions on the topic of exogamy were offered to staff members in half the schools.

## ***Staff***

According to the principals, there was a high level of awareness and understanding among staff members of certain concepts that were pertinent to the exogamy issue, including the following: the difference between francophone schools and immersion schools; the vision, mission and role of francophone schools within the Franco-Manitoban community; the DSFM's language policy; the principals' expectations regarding the use of English and the reception to be given to parents of exogamous families. However, the notion of "extraordinary circumstances" was less well known and understood, and was being interpreted very broadly by some.

## ***Proposed initiatives***

The principals made the following comments and suggested that the DSFM could adopt the following initiatives to better meet the needs of the non-francophone parents of exogamous families:

- Offer information sessions to the parents and make them aware of their role with respect to the DSFM's mandate and to building a sense of identity.
- Clarify the functions and responsibilities related to coordinating division programs and services being offered to parents of exogamous families.
- Apprise the schools of existing supports.

- Ensure that French refresher courses are being offered in the school communities that have expressed a need for them.
- Set up a link on the school's Web site that gives the information the school division has prepared and translated into English.
- Make the DSFM's translation services available for the following documents: the code of conduct, school regulations, and the prospectus, among others.
- Set up a local telephone support service at the school and a 1-800 line in the division to offer parents explanations in English.
- Set up a parents' sub-committee to give English explanations about communications sent out by the school in French.
- Promote the role of parents in francophone schools through an audiovisual tool.
- Offer help with homework by telephone or through a Web site.
- Provide support to the francophone parent of an exogamous family.
- Encourage non-francophone parents to take part in activities that promote francophone culture.

## **8.2 Teaching staff**

Findings from the survey conducted among school division staff and from the meeting with them held on February 3, 2009, allowed for certain observations to be made, which were the following. The comments shared orally during the consultation meeting and written comments to the questionnaire can be found in the section of the report titled *Support materials – Consultation – School staff*.

### ***Respecting the DSFM's mission and mandate***

Offering English-language services to parents of exogamous families in DSFM schools has caused a great deal of concern among staff members. A number of them raised the fear that DSFM schools would become too much like immersion schools. According to them, it was important not to lose sight of the DSFM's mission and mandate, and to maintain that which makes francophone schools different from immersion schools. The school community must not forget the Supreme Court of Canada rulings on minority French-language education. In addition to its educational role, the DSFM has a vital role to play in the development of Manitoba's francophone community.

### ***Quality of French-language education***

A few staff members bemoaned the fact that a rise in the number of students who did not understand French very well was leading to a decrease in the quality of education, especially when it came to learning French.

### ***Gradual anglicization of francophone schools***

Offering English-language services to parents of exogamous families was often perceived as yet another step toward the school's anglicization. Staff members witnessed, on a daily basis, the impact English had on the students who live in an Anglo-dominant world. They were fully aware of how

fragile French was in a minority situation and of the high rate of assimilation, and they did not want the school to further contribute to this phenomenon.

### ***Commitment of certain parents to francophone schools***

Staff members perceived that certain parents lacked commitment to francophone schools. According to them, parents who choose to send their children to francophone schools must do so knowingly, which means that they must subscribe to the philosophy of francophone schools, accept the fact that French is the official language of administration and communication, and make every effort to show their commitment to the DSFM mandate and mission. Moreover, certain staff members thought that anglophone parents did not know the history of Manitoba's French-speaking community well enough and that they needed to be better informed on the subject.

### ***Importance of working and communicating with parents***

Staff members acknowledged the importance of good communications between school and parents, including parents who do not speak French. They agreed that all parents have the right to be involved in their children's schooling. They did recognize that the school alone could do everything, and that the parents' support and cooperation contributed in a major way to the students' success in learning French.

### ***Oral and written communications with students and staff***

Staff members believed that oral and written communications that were addressed solely to students and staff must be in French. Communicating in French with students and among staff is a basic characteristic of the DSFM that needs to be respected. Doing otherwise would undermine the school division's mandate and its very raison d'être.

### ***Oral and written communications with parents***

There seemed to be general agreement among staff members regarding English-language oral communications with parents who could not speak French. A number of staff members mentioned that parents could always get in touch with them for explanations in English. Certain staff members indicated that they communicated in English orally or through informal notes only when they knew that the French-speaking parent would be away from home for some time. Also, communicating in English at parent-teacher conferences, when necessary, seemed to be established practice. However, staff was generally against written communications in English and did not agree that school documents should be translated into English.

### ***Communications in English***

Staff members did not think that communications in English should be offered to all parents; they should be limited to parents of exogamous families requesting it.

### ***Emergencies***

Staff members agreed that in certain emergency situations, such as those related to students' safety or health, written communications could be in English for parents of exogamous families.

### ***Proposed initiatives***

Teachers suggested a few initiatives that the DSFM should adopt to better meet the needs of parents of exogamous families. It should be noted that most of the activities that were being suggested were to be found in the list of programs and services already offered by the school division. It was therefore very likely that some were not aware of the existence of these programs and services or it may be that there were not enough resources to implement them in certain areas of the division.

### ***Increased workloads***

Staff members were concerned that offering services in English could increase their workload. For instance, translating documents requires time and skills that the teachers do not necessarily have. They mentioned that offering additional services would require additional resources.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

The number of parents of exogamous families who enroll their children in Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM) schools increase from year to year. According to division statistics, the percentage of parents of exogamous families has risen from thirty-seven per cent (37%) in 2003-04 to forty-four per cent (44%) in 2007-08. Taking into account these major demographic changes, the DSFM developed a whole range of programs and services to better welcome and support these parents of exogamous families. While completely fulfilling its educational and community mandate, the Commission scolaire franco-manitobaine (CSFM) seeks to better foster the inclusion of exogamous families in the Franco-Manitoban school community. Basically, the parents of exogamous families want what any parent wants, which is to feel they are well respected, accepted, and welcome in their children's schools. As much as possible, they want to be involved in their children's education and even to be able to help their children in this process. The great majority of the people consulted agreed that steps should be taken to ensure that parents of exogamous families were more included. On the other hand, they stressed that this heightened inclusion must be respectful of the DSFM's mandate and mission.

The recommendations coming out of this study are the result of an analysis of all the data gathered from community consultations, the data and opinions raised through various surveys, and the data from an examination of the relevant administrative policies and documents of the DSFM and other francophone school boards in minority contexts elsewhere in Canada. These recommendations seek to ensure that parents of exogamous families are more included while respecting the raison d'être of the DSFM. Implementing certain recommendations would require supplementary human and financial resources.

### **WELCOMING AND SUPPORTING PARENTS**

#### **Recommendation 1**

*That the schools, as part of their yearly planning, include the concrete measures they will be taking in order to ensure that parents of exogamous families are welcomed and supported..*

#### **Recommendation 2**

*That the schools offer training to all staff members on the measures they are taking to welcome and support the parents of exogamous families and on the role parents have to play in the French-language education of their children.*

#### **Recommendation 3**

*That school committees maintain or set up sub-committees on exogamy and that their role, mandate and composition be defined by the DSFM.*

During the consultations, certain parents expressed the desire to maintain or set up school committee sub-committees on exogamy (for the historical background of these sub-committees, see page 67 of

this report). In addition to providing support to parents of exogamous families, members of these sub-committees would represent parents of exogamous families before the school committee and the school principal. The sub-committees on exogamy could provide the principal with advice on how to welcome and support parents of exogamous families and propose initiatives to be implemented in order to better meet the needs of these parents. To ensure that the DSFM's mandate and mission are respected, a certain consistency in the operation of these sub-committees, while allowing for some flexibility at the local level, would be desirable.

## **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

### **Recommendation 4**

***That the DSFM undertake, on an annual basis, to increase awareness of the programs and services it has developed for parents of exogamous families.***

The DSFM has developed a whole range of programs and services for parents of exogamous families. The consultations showed that the great majority of parents, including the anglophone parents of exogamous families, find that the existing programs and services set up for parents of exogamous families generally meet the needs. However, a certain number of parents of exogamous families would like to see these programs and services improved and increased. The consultations also demonstrated that the programs and services developed by the DSFM were not always familiar to parents and, in a number of cases, even to staff members. In a number of schools, these programs and services were not necessarily available.

### **Recommendation 5**

***That the schools implement the programs and services developed by the DSFM that are likely to meet the needs of parents of exogamous families.***

The consultations have revealed that not only did a number of the parents who enrolled their children in DSFM schools ignore the existence of the programs and services developed for parents of exogamous families, but they were not very familiar with the mission and structure of francophone schools. Including parents of exogamous families is not limited to the issue of translating documents. In order to create sound, lasting partnerships between school and home, the DSFM needs to take measures that would enable parents to fully play their role in their children's education. Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* gives parents the right to have their children receive instruction in the minority language, provided one of the parents is an entitled person. If certain concrete measures are not in place, the anglophone parents of exogamous families may find themselves totally isolated and cut off from their children's education. Among the concrete measures that may be taken for parents of exogamous families are the translation of certain communications or documents, staff training, workshops, telephone support, courses to improve French-language skills, monthly newsletters, a support kit, and a Web site that includes resources tailored to meet their needs. By developing a climate of respect and a culture of inclusion, schools can help parents of exogamous families develop a positive attitude toward the French language and culture. In turn, this positive attitude could contribute to maintaining or enhancing the use of French in exogamous family households.

## **LANGUAGE POLICY**

### **Recommendation 6**

***That the DSFM amend its language policy to add a preamble that makes an explicit connection between the DSFM mandate and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.***

The provisions of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* allowed for setting up school boards managed by the country's linguistic minorities, including the DSFM. The preambles to the language policies of a number of school boards in minority situations contain a reference to the Charter. It would be important for the DSFM's language policy to refer to the constitutional document that is at the root of its very existence.

### **Recommendation 7**

***That the DSFM amend its language policy to add criteria and clarifications regarding the expression "extraordinary measure."***

The DSFM's language policy specifies that French is the official language of communication, of the administration, elected representatives, staff, and students of the school division. While allowing for the use of a language other than French, the language policy points out that that would be an extraordinary measure to be taken only to ensure the well-being of the students. Thus, the language policy complies with *The Public Schools Act* of Manitoba, which allows for a language other than French to be used where circumstances warrant. Clearly the school board must operate in French, but some flexibility is allowed as to the language of operation and using another language is to be considered only by exception.

The consultations have shown that the interpretation of the expression "extraordinary measure" in the language policy varies from one school to another. The expression has been used to justify a whole range of English-language services. The language policy is not administered consistently from one school to another and services available in English for parents of exogamous families can also vary from one school to another. English is to be used within the parameters set out in the DSFM's language policy, which allows for the use of English as an extraordinary measure.

### **Recommendation 8**

***That information regarding the DSFM's language policy, language of communication, and language of administration be presented and explained to parents when they enroll their children in the school division.***

The consultations have shown that many parents who enroll their children in DSFM schools are not very familiar with the mission and structure of francophone schools. These schools operate in a socio-cultural context where English is the dominant language. Moreover, English is the language used in many exogamous family households. Thus, the school is one of the few places where French is

important and pivotal. In order to promote the vitality of the French language and culture, schools must step up their efforts to help exogamous families maintain or increase the use of French in the household. Parents who choose to send their children to francophone schools must be fully aware of the mission and structure of these schools, thus making their choice a free and informed one. Parents who choose to become involved in francophone school management must also take on the responsibility of supporting the mandate of francophone schools in a society where English is clearly the dominant language.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Recommendation 9**

*That the oral and written communications meant only for students and school staff continue to be made in French, except under extraordinary circumstances*

Communication in French with students and among staff members is a fundamental characteristic of the DSFM that must be respected. It is an integral part of its mandate and raison d'être.

### **Recommendation 10**

*That individual meetings between parents of exogamous families and the school principal or a teacher be held in French or English, depending on the parents' wishes.*

The information gathered confirmed that meetings between a parent who does not understand French and the school principal or a teacher often take place in English already. However, some parents of exogamous families have requested that these meetings be held in French. The practice of having these meetings take place in French or English, depending on the wishes of the parents of exogamous families, is the one that seems to best meet the needs of the parents as a whole.

### **Recommendation 11**

*That the DSFM provide a division translation service and adopt guidelines and criteria regarding the choice of documents to be translated.*

There was a broad range of opinions regarding oral and written communications in English expressed during the consultations. A number of parents did not want any oral or written communication whatsoever to be offered in English while others wanted all communications from the school to be in English. Some schools did not provide any translated documents, while others offered quite a few. This practice shows that the issue of which documents should be translated needs to be dealt with. The DSFM needs to be concerned not only with the choice of documents to be translated, but also with the quality of these translations.

## **Recommendation 12**

***That communications written in French and translated into English, following the school division guidelines and criteria on choosing documents to be translated, be offered only to parents of exogamous families, upon request only, and in a bilingual format.***

In order to ensure that the anglophone parent of an exogamous family is included, certain communications must be in English. On the other hand, the great majority of people consulted also believed that all communications, be they oral or written, meant only for students and school staff, must continue to be in French. They also agreed that French must be the official language of DSFM elected representatives, administration, staff, and students.

The DSFM and its staff agreed that all parents had the right to be involved in their children's education. Mindful of the need to establish and maintain good communications with parents, the DSFM is seeking effective and respectful means to communicate with its anglophone parents of exogamous families. Since parents are entitled to be informed about their children's education and to contribute to it, it follows that certain communications should be offered in English to anglophone parents of exogamous families.

During the consultations, some parents indicated that there was a need for anglophone parents of exogamous families to make the effort to learn a little French in order to espouse the school's mission and follow their children's progress. Others have indicated that if the use of English in francophone schools is to increase, the use of French must not be allowed to decline. Indeed, a number of parents of exogamous families asked that written communications and documents continue to be offered in French. In order to maintain the status of French in francophone schools, no document prepared by the schools or the school division should ever be put out in English only. These documents should be put out in a bilingual format to ensure that French is present in all documents. The bilingual documents should be sent out only to parents of exogamous families and only upon request. However, it is possible that, in certain instances, unilingual English documents from external sources need to be distributed.

## **Recommendation 13**

***That a telephone support service be set up in the schools that feel the need for it in order to provide parents of exogamous families with oral information in English that comes from the schools in French.***

The people who were consulted thought that, in the context of school, oral communications in English were more acceptable than written communications. Some parents who had had access to a telephone support service in the past indicated that they were satisfied with the service and a number of other parents wanted such a service for their own school. This measure enables the school to communicate regularly with parents of exogamous families and provides them with information in an effective manner, without having to translate documents.

#### **Recommendation 14**

*That the DSFM develop its Web site to include all materials from the division offices translated according to its guidelines and criteria regarding the choice of documents to be translated, for parents of exogamous families.*

#### **Recommendation 15**

*That schools develop their Web site to include all materials put out by the schools that have been translated according to its guidelines and criteria regarding the choice of documents to be translated, for parents of exogamous families.*

The people consulted underscored the fact that Web sites for the DSFM and its schools were not being fully utilized and could provide more support to parents of exogamous families. They suggested that the Web sites be further developed to include tools, documents translated into English, and links to other sites that offer services for anglophone parents. The Web sites could contain communications in English for parents of exogamous families without affecting the mission of the school division or its schools. These sites could also include suggestions and information to help parents maintain or enhance the use of French in the home.

#### **Recommendation 16**

*That the DSFM establish guidelines and criteria for using English in activities and ceremonies organized by the DSFM or its schools.*

The survey of school principals showed that English was being increasingly used in ceremonies and activities organized by the schools. These activities and ceremonies included school outings, school dances, graduation ceremonies, the open house, and Remembrance Day, among others. The reasons English was being used varied from one school to another, the main one being to give parents of exogamous families a proper welcome to ceremonies and activities. At times, only a few words of welcome were given in English. In other instances, it was the speech delivered by a parent at a graduation ceremony that was entirely in English. This gradual increase in the use of English for school ceremonies and activities may well pose a threat to the DSFM's mission and mandate. Using French at ceremonies and activities organized by the DSFM or its schools is of critical importance as this practice confirms the central place French occupies in the schools.

#### **VOLUNTEER WORK**

#### **Recommendation 17**

*That schools encourage parents of exogamous families to volunteer and the schools find appropriate ways to include these parents in their activities.*

## **Recommendation 18**

*That the use of French be required for volunteer work involving direct contact with students in the school.*

The DSFM and its schools invite and encourage parents to do volunteer work in the schools. Survey findings showed that the majority of parents supported the involvement of anglophone parents as volunteers in the schools. However, out of concern for the school's mission, a majority of parents wanted parents who do volunteer work involving direct contact with the students to be able to communicate in French. They also wanted to ensure that communication with the students is in French during school outings. Survey findings showed that the people consulted found parent involvement as volunteers in the school and maintaining French in all activities for students to be very important.

## **Recommendation 19**

*That the use of French be required for volunteer work involving direct contact with students in activities outside school, except under extraordinary circumstances.*

It has to be acknowledged that, at times, schools have to deal with a lack of volunteers who can communicate in French. Moreover, certain school activities outside of the school rely at times on the involvement of resource persons who do not speak French. Under such circumstances, schools must choose between accepting that some communication with the students will occur in English or canceling the activity altogether.

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