Why are new French immersion and French as a second language teachers leaving the profession?

Results of a Canada-wide survey

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Use of masculine pronouns throughout the work is done for simplicity and is not intended to
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I assembled the teachers and told them: Make no mistake about it; I have entrusted you with the children of men, not to weigh the sum of their subsequent knowledge, but to celebrate in good time how high they can soar.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
[Translated from the French]
A ccording to the Canadian Parents for French / Conseil des parents francophi-
les (CPF, 2006), most of the provinces are coping with a shortage of qualified
teachers for French immersion programs. As reported by the Canadian Council on Learn-
ing (2007),

**in areas where demand for French-immersion services is growing, this shor-
tage means that many districts are unable to provide spaces for all children who wish to enroll in French-immersion programs**

(p. 10). Various members of the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers / Association canadienne des professeurs d’immersion (CAIT / ACPI) have repeatedly pointed out that this teacher shortfall forces many school boards to limit the number of admissions to new immersion classes. Some boards even use a lottery system in an attempt to find a fair solution for all the parents who want to enroll their children in immersion programs.

While many Canadian educators are deplo-
ing the lack of French immersion and French as a second language (FSL) teachers, others are wondering why so many are leaving the profession in the first few years. What’s going on? Are they badly prepared? Are the students too difficult? Has teaching French become such a demanding and time-consuming job that so many are deserting so rapidly? What are the main problems that teachers have to deal with? What can school systems do to help retain teachers? Based on these research questions, CAIT, jointly with the Centre de recherche sur la formation et la profession enseignante (CRIFPE), undertook a Canada-
wide survey funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage to explore an issue that is of vital importance to many educational ministries in Canada.

The first section of this report presents the research objectives. A brief definition of French immersion in Canada is then provided, followed by a status report on attrition rates among Canadian teachers. A literature review of studies conducted in North America and elsewhere is then presented to deepen our understanding of why teachers are abandoning the profession in the first few years of service. The research methodology, or how the answers to the questions in this important survey were gathered, is then described. The study results are given in two main parts: presentation and analysis of the statistical survey data, comprising primarily descriptive and inferential statistics; and presentation and analysis of the qualitative data. The conclusion of this report includes recommendations to school systems and directions for future research, i.e., what remains to be achieved under this ambitious project.
2. Survey objectives

The initial overall objective of this Canada-wide survey was to better understand why new French immersion teachers are leaving the profession in the first few years of service. However, due to the particular context of French as a second language teaching programs in Canada, where immersion programs are sometimes used to teach French as a second language, it was deemed relevant to include French as a second language teaching in the survey. The overall research objective was therefore the following:

To better understand why new French immersion and French as a second language teachers are leaving the profession in the first few years of service.

A number of specific objectives contribute to this overall objective, as follows:

1. To present a profile of the survey respondents;
2. To document the main reasons why new teachers are leaving the profession;
3. To better understand the level of satisfaction of young teachers with the teaching profession;
4. To better understand the opportunities that new teachers have to collaborate with experienced teachers;
5. To better understand the relationship between the professional aspirations of new teachers and their departure from the profession;
6. To identify the persons to whom new teachers turn when problems arise;
7. To identify what schools could do to help retain new teachers in the profession.

These objectives cover the primary concerns of the educators we have talked with in recent years, who motivated us to carry out this Canada-wide survey. These objectives are also consistent with the literature review presented in section 5.
For Rebuffot (1993), the definition of an immersion program varies with the political, social and linguistic context. In general, we can say that French immersion is a form of bilingual education, in which French as a second language is used to teach different subjects to all the students in a given class (in Canada, the students are usually English-speaking). This teaching of different subjects in French as a second language imparts a unique flavour to immersion teaching compared to other language teaching and learning formats. A general distinction is made between “early immersion” and “late immersion.” In the first case, intensive teaching in French begins in kindergarten (age 1 to 5 years) or grade one. In the second case, teaching in French usually begins in the first year of high school, with one or two additional subjects taught in French in the final years of high school. It is not a question of extra French courses; instead it is a program in which subjects (mathematics, sciences, history, etc.) are taught in French as a second language.

Many authors, including Hautin (2004), regard Évelyne Billey as a pioneer in the immersion field. Hautin relates that, in 1965, a few years after her arrival from France, where she was born, Billey was asked by a group of English-speaking parents to set up a unique French program (early immersion, as it is now known), which she taught to English kindergarten students in the city of Saint-Lambert, Quebec. Accordingly, Billey established the first Canadian immersion class. Drawing on her innovative pedagogical approach, innate good sense, tremendous creativity, and outstanding and legendary professionalism (Hautin, 2004, p. 10), Billey introduced a new education style that would revolutionize...
French as a second language teaching. From 1965 to 1971 she continued teaching in kindergarten immersion programs, first at the Margaret Pendlebury School, then at Victoria Park School and finally at the Saint-Lambert Elementary School. Margaret Pendlebury Elementary School is known as the cradle of Canadian immersion. However, Évelyne Billey’s immersion class at the Saint-Lambert Elementary School was the most heavily publicized. The Saint-Lambert school was also where Lambert and Tucker (1972) carried out most of their pioneering work on the potential of immersion programs for second-language learning. Interest in Canadian bilingualism received a further shot in the arm in 1969 when the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism released its final report recommending, among others, that French be made an official Canadian language, and that French and English be accorded equal status. Since Évelyne Billey’s experimental program, which was extensively documented in the study by Lambert and Tucker (1972), all the Canadian provinces and territories have adopted French immersion programs. Most of these were established in response to parental dissatisfaction with previously offered basic French programs or because they wanted to have their children speak both languages. In 1975, there were 52 immersion programs in nine Canadian provinces. In the space of 10 years, 18,500 students have enrolled in immersion programs in the province of Quebec (see Heyworth, 1999). Today, all the provinces offer such programs, accommodating over 300,000 students in 2,375 schools. Currently, a range of immersion programs are available, the most frequent formats being total immersion, or 100 % teaching in French, and partial immersion, or 50 % teaching in French and 50 % teaching in English, as well as countless variations. For example, the number of subjects taught in French in elementary school may vary from year to year, depending on the program.

In general, the research conducted in Canada over the last 40 years clearly shows that students in French immersion programs achieve higher scores on all types of French exams than students in basic French programs (see Cummins & Swain, 1986; Genesee, 1987; Lambert & Tucker, 1972). Moreover, students in immersion programs achieve grades equal to those of students in English programs, despite the fact that they are studying in a second language (see Turnbull, Lapkin & Hart, 2001). Furthermore, a recent report by the Canadian Council on Learning (2007) concludes that French immersion is quite simply the best educational program to promote bilingualism. Although students rarely develop equal competencies in both languages, French immersion has proved an effective method to promote linguistic duality across Canada.
4. Teacher drop-out: portrait of a worrisome situation

4.1 What is teacher drop-out?

The term “drop-out” usually refers to students who leave high school before graduating. However, in Canada’s elementary and secondary schools and in various school commissions and school boards, the term is increasingly used to refer to young teachers who leave the profession. What does leaving the profession mean? What is a drop-out teacher? Drop-out among young teachers is generally understood as a voluntary and premature departure from the teaching profession (Macdonald, 1999). The term “voluntary” in Macdonald’s definition raises a problem, however. After talking with many teachers across Canada and sitting in on focus groups, it is increasingly evident that this turnover is not always as voluntary as might first appear. On the contrary, some teachers are dealing with more and more challenges and problems, until the only option is to abandon the teaching profession. In this survey, therefore, the issue is teacher drop-out, defined as premature departure from the teaching profession (before 7 years), whether voluntary or not.

4.2 Who are the teachers who drop out?

The studies we consulted clearly show that teacher attrition, far from being confined to retiring veterans, is connected with the issue of induction into the teaching profession. In this perspective, novice teachers, not experienced veterans, are the ones who are quitting. What is the period of professional induction in which the teacher is considered a novice? For Vonk and Schras (1987), the induction period lasts about seven years (from entry to acquisition of a feeling of competence and security). This period comprises a series of tendencies (Kagan, 1992): a tendency toward idealization, when the beginning teacher has a simplified perception of the profession and relationships with students; a tendency toward realism, when the teacher readjusts these preconceptions of teaching and its function; and a tendency toward stabilization, when the teacher evolves from a self-centered perception as a teacher to a perception centered on teaching practices and student learning (Kagan, 1992, p. 154–155). Under this typology, the tendency toward
realism would be particularly conducive to drop-out in that it is motivated by an awareness of a disconnect between the perception of teaching and the reality.

It is also worth mentioning that a (small) portion of teacher attrition might be necessary. The teaching field should benefit if teachers who realize that they lack what it takes to work with students turn to other careers. At the same time, it would be preferable for teachers who do not want to work with elementary and secondary students for a long time to leave the field early. In this respect, we should point out that the current trend to globalization and national and international mobility appears to both encourage and reward career change. Consequently, “single careers” are increasingly rare, and teaching is sometimes viewed as a short-term job (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003, p. 585; OECD, 2005). In sum, teacher attrition has always existed, for various reasons, as pointed out by Lessard and Tardif (1996). Nevertheless, it should not be dismissed as a normal process, particularly because it comes with a cost, both quantitative and qualitative.

4.3 Drop-out cost and teaching quality

Teacher drop-out is becoming problematic in two respects: the cost incurred and the consequences for the quality of teaching.

In the United States, the Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE) estimated the cost of teacher attrition at almost three billion American dollars in 2004. Losses are felt at the levels of initial training, recruitment, hiring and professional development. The OECD (2005) reported on the same financial issue.

The consequences of teacher attrition for teaching quality are another major concern that is documented in the literature. On the one hand, a high attrition rate implies a heavy turnover of teaching staff, which makes it difficult to establish a cohesive school team (AEE, 2004). In addition, teacher attrition involves a large proportion of novice teachers (OECD, 2005; Stoel & Thant, 2002), i.e., teachers who leave the profession prematurely when they have not fully mastered their professional skills. Consequently, we could assume that the teaching quality they provide is lower than that of teachers who have reached the stabilization stage (AEE, 2004; OECD, 2005). Add to this the fact that attrition necessarily entails hiring more novice teachers, who are also in the skills-building stage. Teaching quality is therefore doubly affected, on the one hand because novice teachers who quit have not achieved optimal teaching skills (remember, they are still in the induction phase), and on the other hand because this turnover requires the hiring of more novice teachers, who are also building their expertise. At the end of the day, the students are the ones to bear the cost of teacher attrition, in that the quality of the teaching they receive is lower than if the teachers had persisted (AEE, 2004; OECD, 2005).
4.4 The drop-out teacher: an international problem

Another worrisome issue is that teacher attrition is an international problem affecting northern and southern countries alike. In the United States, Ingersoll (2002) noted that the attrition rate is higher among teachers than in many other professions: 46% of new teachers leave the school in the first five years of service. The comparative study by Stoel and Thant (2002) in eight industrialized countries shows that in the United Kingdom, 40% of beginning teachers abandon the profession in the first three years of service (while Dolton & Van der Klaauw, 1995, found a rate of almost 44%). Meanwhile, Australia has seen 18% drop-out in women aged 25 to 29 years, the data for men being unavailable (Stoel & Thant, 2002). However, some countries such as France, Germany and Portugal have reported attrition rates below 5%. The hypotheses put forward by Stoel and Thant (2002) to explain this include centralized education systems and teaching programs, the non-accountability of teachers when students fail, and more formative than summative evaluations of teaching staff. Nevertheless, attrition was a growing trend in these same countries from 1995 to 2000 (OECD, 2005, p. 191), and we could reasonably assume that the rates are higher today.

There is little data available in Canada, and it is equivocal. In 2004, the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF) (Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants – FCE) estimated teacher turnover at approximately 30% in the first five years of service. On the other hand, the Ontario College of Teachers predicted a 6.7% turnover for its members after the third year of teaching (OCT, 2004). Elsewhere, the OECD (2005, p. 191) ranked Canada’s public elementary and secondary schools with a 3-6% attrition rate in 1999 (including departures and retirements), and estimated that this rate was more or less the same in 1995. It is therefore difficult to get a clear picture of the extent of teacher attrition across Canada, given that the available statistics vary from 3% (OECD, 2005) to almost 30% (CTF, 2004).
5. Why are teachers leaving the profession?

Why are teachers leaving the profession in the first few years of service? What does the literature have to say on this subject? This section presents the main factors underlying teacher attrition. The typology used for the teacher attrition factors is borrowed in part from Borman and Dowling (2008), who conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis on teacher career trajectories and attrition. It was also inspired by Kirsch (2006), who carried out a study called L’abandon volontaire de la carrière chez des enseignants débutants du primaire et du secondaire au Québec (Voluntary departure among novice primary and secondary teachers in Quebec).

Kirsch (2006) presents three main factor types for teachers who leave the profession. He differentiates between (1) task-related factors, (2) individual factors and (3) environmental factors. He also presents a fourth category, “other,” to include attrition factors that are external to teaching. Borman and Dowling (2008) identify as many as 34 teacher attrition factors, classified into five main categories: (1) teacher demographic characteristics, (2) teacher qualifications, (3) school organizational characteristics, (4) school resources and (5) school student body characteristics.

From an exhaustive review of the literature, it appears that both the three main factor types proposed by Kirsch (2006) and the five categories proposed by Borman and Dowling (2008) are representative of the typologies found in studies on teacher attrition, and may be combined to analyze this phenomenon. We therefore decided to merge them into a third typology:

a) Task-related factors (including Borman and Dowling’s fourth category and Kirsch’s first factor);

b) Individual factors (including Borman and Dowling’s first two categories and Kirsch’s second factor);

c) Social environment factors (including Borman and Dowling’s third and fifth categories and Kirsch’s third factor).

We also decided to add a fourth, more general category called socioeconomic conditions. Macdonald (1999) notes that socioeconomic conditions can be more or less conducive to attrition in young teachers. In other words, tough economic times might compel some young teachers to remain in the profession, despite any difficulties encountered. Alternatively, very positive economic conditions, in which other jobs are easy to find, might encourage teachers to quit.
The literature review uncovered some methodological differences that sometimes lead to diverging conclusions about a same factor. For example, some studies on attrition do not account for full-time teachers, while others include job changes within a same school system. Moreover, some studies are based on pre-existing national databases, while others, including the present study, are based on data obtained directly from participants connected with the drop-out phenomenon. For Macdonald (1999), these differences partly explain the variation in results across studies.

5.1
Task-related drop-out factors

Attrition factors related to teaching tasks are by far the most numerous cited in the literature. They cover a wide range of teaching aspects such as lack of time, management of difficult classrooms, unsatisfactory working conditions, subject(s) assigned to new teachers, overly restrictive administrative aspects, unappealing tasks, etc.

5.1.1
Teaching: a demanding and time-consuming job

The first task-related factor concerns the daily workload (Chaplain, 2008; MEQ, 2003; OECD, 2005), particularly outside classroom hours. Kirsch (2006) describes two types of extracurricular work: daily tasks, such as preparing classes and correcting assignments, and occasional work such as planning open-door days, filling out report cards, writing reports, meeting with parents, etc.

To this heavy workload we may add insufficient time to accomplish it (CTF, 2004). In fact, several studies have noted the lack of time for planning and preparing lessons (Certo & Fox, 2002; Macdonald, 1999; Romano, 2008).

Incursion into rest periods at the workplace is another attrition factor connected to lack of time (Kirsch, 2006). Attending meetings with parents and colleagues, reserving rooms, and monitoring and intervening with students are all time-consuming activities that erode into break times.

Finally, the workload and the time it requires to accomplish interfere with recreation and personal interests, which tend to be neglected (Kirsch, 2006; Macdonald, 1999), thereby contributing to teacher attrition.
5.1.2 Management of difficult classrooms

Classroom management is a destabilizing feature that confronts new teachers from the start (Romano, 2008). Furthermore, new teachers generally prioritize this aspect over teaching the subject or getting the students to learn (Kagan, 1992).

Classroom management appears to be directly connected to the students in the teacher’s charge. In other words, a more difficult group demands greater classroom management skills. This means that some beginning teachers are doubly penalized in terms of classroom management, first because they have not yet mastered the requisite skills, and second because they are forced to develop these skills because they have to cope with particularly difficult students. The fact is that novice teachers usually inherit the most difficult classes (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

5.1.3 Unsatisfactory work conditions

Another frequently mentioned attrition factor concerns the work conditions (Guarino, Santibañez & Daley, 2006), be they material, administrative or financial. The low salary (Billingsley, 2004; Certo & Fox, 2002; Clotfelter, Glennie, Ladd & Vigdor, 2008; Gonzales, 1995; Gonzalez, Brown & Slate, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez & Daley, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001; Macdonald, 1999; McCreight, 2000) appears to contribute to teacher attrition. This low salary is usually combined with the low social prestige of the teaching profession. Nevertheless, some studies consider salary a relative factor (e.g., Brill & McCartney, 2008; CTF, 2004; McCreight, 2000; OECD, 2005; Ondrich, Pas & Yinger, 2008; Podgursky, Monroe & Watson, 2004).

Following salary in importance is job insecurity (Kirsch, 2006; MEQ, 2003), including replacement positions, short-term contracts and inadequate physical conditions (Buckley, Schneider & Shang, 2004, 2005; CTF, 2004; Gonzales, 1995; Kirsch, 2006; OECD, 2005) such as lack of instructional materials. In practice, veteran teachers seem to have plenty of teaching materials (handouts, books, dictionaries, etc.), whereas new teachers must develop or buy them (see Richardson, 2001).

5.1.4 Inappropriate teaching subjects

When they enter their career, teachers are rarely assigned the subjects they have studied in their teacher training programs (Kirsch, 2006), which causes them to lose interest, especially when their subjects are often considered “unimportant” (Kirsch, 2006). This is corroborated by some studies that report fewer departures when the teacher’s interests are taken into account, among other factors (Macdonald, 1999).
5.1.5  
Restrictive administrative aspects

At the periphery of teaching as such, the administrative attributes of the job, because they impose heavy constraints, constitute a recurrent factor in attrition. Over-structured tasks resulting from curriculum changes, school projects, ministerial exams and school board evaluations (Billingsley, 2004; Certo & Fox, 2002; CTF, 2004; Macdonald, 1999) are just some of the features that limit the teacher’s room to maneuver in the classroom (OECD, 2005) and that tighten administrative control. These administrative attributes are not only constraining but also time-consuming, and they generate anxiety in new teachers, who are not always aware of the traditions and practices of the school or school board.

5.1.6  
An unappealing task

A final task-related factor in attrition concerns the unappealing nature of the task. In a society that favours continuous mobility and flexibility, some people view teaching negatively, as a routine job (Kirsch, 2006). From a more career-oriented standpoint, an inflexible career path, few opportunities for advancement (CTF, 2004; Macdonald, 1999; McCreight, 2000; MEQ, 2003) and limited professional development (Billingsley, 2004; Gonzales, 1995; McCreight, 2000) are further aspects that could induce novice teachers to abandon the profession.

5.2  
Individual attrition factors

The second type of attrition factor is connected to the teacher as an individual. Included are emotional and psychological characteristics as well as sociodemographic and professional factors.

5.2.1  
Emotional and psychological characteristics that are incompatible with the teaching profession

Individual attrition factors refer primarily to the teacher’s personal character traits, or psychological and/or emotional profiles, that are incompatible with the teaching profession. Kirsch (2006), for example, mentions an inability to mentally detach from the job, perfectionism, over-accountability, fear of repeating a traumatic experience, difficulty in assuming an authoritative role, difficulty in handling rejection by students and inability to think ahead.

These character traits that hinder teachers tend to generate anxiety, stress and job dissatisfaction (Brownell, Smith, McNellis & Miller, 1997; Chaplain, 2008; CTF, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; MEQ, 2003), and eventually a gradual withdrawal (Billingsley, 2004).
5.2.2
Sociodemographic and professional factors

The sociodemographic and professional factors presented in this section do not explain why teachers drop out. Instead, they identify certain characteristics of drop-out teachers. First, recall that the literature concurs on the fact that more young and relatively inexperienced teachers are leaving the profession than experienced teachers (Billingsley, 2004; Boe, Bobbitt & Cook, 1997; Guarino, Santibañez & Daley, 2006; Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001, 2002; Macdonald, 1999; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple & Olson, 1991; OECD, 2005), although this relationship is neither simple nor systematic (Kirby, Grissmer & Hudson, 1991). Age and number of years of experience are therefore factors to be taken into account. Sex and ethnic group are also considered in some studies, and the results tend to show that attrition is significantly higher among white females (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Training and qualifications are further attrition factors. In fact, uncertified and unqualified teachers drop out less readily than certified teachers (Guarino, Santibañez & Daley, 2006). This is a contentious issue, however, as some studies (e.g., Miller, Brownell & Smith, 1999) conclude that more uncertified than qualified teachers quit the profession. Moreover, other authors, such as Marso and Pigge (1997), found no significant association between qualifications and teacher persistence.

Ineffective initial training appears to act at the periphery of the attrition factors, in that teachers are poorly or only partially prepared to cope with the realities of the job (CTF, 2004; McCreight, 2000; Romano, 2008; Stoel & Thant, 2002), which indirectly increases the likelihood of dropping out. Consequently, some authors (Chapman, 1994; Hammerness, 2008; OECD, 2005) feel that a sound training that provides the requisite skills is needed to prevent teacher attrition.

5.3
Social environment factors

The factors related to the social environment primarily involve the relationships between the teacher and the educational and social actors at the school, as well as the type of students in their charge and the school’s work conditions.

5.3.1
Failed relations with educational and social actors

Lack of collaboration and networking with colleagues is a primary factor in attrition (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Gonzales, 1995; Guarino, Santibañez & Daley, 2006; Romano, 2008). Without these means of contact, integration into the school team takes longer and is harder to do. The direct consequences are isolation and alienation, which new teachers frequently have to bear (Billingsley, 2004; Kirsch, 2006; Macdonald, 1999). The relationship with the school administration
is another aspect of the social environment that, when negatively experienced, can eventually drive novice teachers to quit (Borman & Dowling, 2008). The literature identifies primarily a lack of support (or unavailability) on the part of the central administration (i.e., the school board) (Billingsley, 2004; Certo & Fox, 2002; Chaplain, 2008; CTF, 2004; Gonzales, 1995; Gonzalez, Brown & Slate, 2008; Hudson, Beutel & Hudson, 2008; Ingersoll, 2001; OECD, 2005; Romano, 2008) as well as the exclusion of new teachers from educational decision making (CTF, 2004; Gonzales, 1995; Ingersoll, 2001). On this last point, one measure proposed to lessen new teacher attrition is to increase their input into the decision-making process (Macdonald, 1999). Poor school climate is associated with the two previous factors, because it is usually measured in part by collaboration with colleagues and relations with the central administration (Billingsley, 2004).

Parents of students, and more broadly the society in which the internning teacher participates, are also attributes of the social environment. Issues with parents of students and their failure to recognize the work performed by the teacher can influence the decision to abandon the profession (Certo & Fox, 2002; Gonzales, 1995; Macdonald, 1999; OECD, 2005).

5.3.2 Difficult students and workplace conditions

Student characteristics and work conditions appear to be compelling explanations for teacher attrition (Borman & Dowling, 2008). The new teachers we talked with usually complained about the difficult students in their schools, which suggests a certain disconnect between their expectations and the realities of the job (Hammerness, 2008; Hudson, Beutel & Hudson, 2008; Kagan, 1992). Three types of difficult student bodies are reported in the literature on teacher attrition:

- Classes containing a large number of students with behaviour problems or learning disorders (CTF, 2004; Kirsch, 2006; MEQ, 2003);
- Heterogeneous classes presenting diverse learning needs (CTF, 2004; Kirsch, 2006; Macdonald, 1999);
- Classes containing students whose behaviour is non-conducive to teaching and learning, including students who are unmotivated (Ingersoll, 2001; Kirsch, 2006), insubordinate (Chaplain, 2008; Gonzalez, Brown & Slate, 2008; Ingersoll, 2001; Kirsch, 2006; OECD, 2005) or even violent (Macdonald, 1999).

We should mention that the three above types of difficult students are not mutually exclusive. Given the inequities between advantaged and disadvantaged schools, it is not unusual to find classes containing a large number of unmotivated students who also have behaviour problems. These classrooms are frequently assigned to new teachers (Borman & Dowling, 2008), who have no choice in
the matter, unlike veteran teachers, who get the first pick. Class management is therefore an enormous challenge for new teachers who are still building their skills.

Giving new teachers difficult teaching assignments also affects the persistence of young teachers (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Kirsch, 2006). In fact, some schools actually compound the problems of beginning teachers, thereby driving them to quit. The placement of new teachers is all the more important because they generally feel isolated during the induction phase (Gonzales, 1995; Schlagal, Trathen & Blanton, 1996).

Teaching therefore appears to be a job where difficult assignments and tasks are too often given to novices, and where experienced teachers enjoy greater privileges (seniority, unionization, etc.) that enable them to secure the best classes and situations. Under such a system, which characterizes a good number of schools not only in Canada but around the world as well, it is clear that there are many challenges that drive beginning teachers to drop out.

### 5.4 Factors related to socioeconomic conditions

On a larger scale, certain socioeconomic conditions can also foster teacher attrition (Gonzales, 1995; OECD, 2005). For instance, national economic recessions can influence the decision to quit teaching. However, this influence depends on the country’s developmental status.

In a recession, developed countries generally experience less teacher attrition, because teachers have fewer alternative job opportunities. In contrast, economic development creates new job opportunities, and teachers tend to seek better jobs (Macdonald, 1999). Meanwhile, developing countries show the inverse trend. Economic recessions and serious financial and political crises (Chapman, 1994) are associated with more teacher attrition, because the state cannot pay its public employees. In contrast, fewer teachers quit in times of economic development because they receive a steady salary paid by the state.

Aside from economic recessions, sudden demographic changes produce more attrition because teaching conditions become tougher. For example, classes are larger, instructional materials are in short supply, etc. (Chapman, Snyder & Burchfield, 1993; Gonzales, 1995).
5.5 Other factors

Other attrition factors are reported in the literature, for instance by Borman and Dowling (2008). However, they are associated with causes that are external to the teaching profession, which means they are beyond the scope of education policies. For example, changes in individual and family life cycles, such as pregnancy, can favour turnover if the pregnant teacher chooses to interrupt her career to raise her children (Stinebrickner, 2002). Finding a new job is another obvious attrition factor (Kirsch, 2006).

5.6 Teacher attrition: synthesis

From this overview of teacher attrition factors, we see that task-related factors are the most compelling, given their recurrence in the literature. We also note that attrition factors appear to be closely associated, i.e., a given factor may be associated with another or several other factors. For example, age and number of years of experience (individual factors) are often associated with the type of students and the work conditions assigned to the teacher (social environment factors). This interdependence of attrition factors suggests that teacher attrition is more the result of a set of factors than a single factor, which only increases the likelihood that teachers will drop out.
6. Methodology

It is important to emphasize at the outset that teacher attrition is a particularly difficult phenomenon to study, because the participants of interest (drop-out teachers) are by definition “out of touch” with the teaching profession. In other words, we know where they aren’t, but we don’t know where they are. It is therefore difficult to obtain a large sample of participants and to consequently better understand the real reasons for dropping out. For Kirsch (2006), the problem in tracking down drop-out teachers largely explains why few researchers have broached this topic. On this issue, we quote from the study by the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (2004) in a sample of 25 drop-out teachers:

“We have always been curious to know what teachers who actually quit their profession have to say about their reasons for doing so. This is a difficult sample to obtain. […] the process has proven much more problematic than expected, and so far, we have received only 25 completed surveys.” (CTF, 2004, p. 4) [Translated from the French]

6.1 Data collection and participants

The first measure concerns the data collection procedures, which were designed to address the geographic and professional dispersion of drop-out teachers. We used a brief online questionnaire (n = 201), which has the advantage of being administered via the Internet, thereby transcending the usual limitations of time and space. We then held telephone interviews (via the Internet, using Skype) with volunteer drop-out teachers (n = 8). Finally, we conducted group interviews in each of five Canadian regions with experienced teachers and other school actors who had witnessed the events surrounding the departures. The groups comprised from three to seven individuals, for a total of 26 participants.

Second, like the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, we mobilized all our members so that the questionnaire would be widely distributed. To complete the initial distribution procedure, we published ads in five newspapers in two languages (French and/or English) in the cities of Halifax, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver and Montreal. In this way we managed to reach participants across the country, for a Canada-wide survey. The questionnaire was posted online for three weeks from March to April 2008. This collection procedure enabled us to include 34 drop-out teachers in our study. We considered only participants who duly answered all the questions.
Third, we introduced an innovation in terms of the study participants. To enrich the data collection, we decided to open up the questionnaire and interviews to other school actors, who served as key informants, having witnessed the departures of their colleagues. One hundred and sixty-seven informants responded to the online questionnaire. The questionnaire therefore comprised two mutually exclusive parts: one destined for the drop-out teachers (A respondents) and another reserved for school actors, or informants (B respondents), for a total of 201 participants. The questions from the questionnaire were repeated at the individual and group interviews to induce the participants to provide the underlying reasons for their answers.

The two questionnaires are based primarily on our literature review, from which we retained the most frequently cited attrition factors. The questionnaires were tested on 26 teachers and 11 education actors (school principals and pedagogical counselors), whose comments helped us improve the questions. Several themes are addressed, such as reasons for quitting, requirements for preventing attrition, human support available to drop-out teachers experiencing problems, teaching as a career choice, professional aspirations to become a teacher, and the degree of satisfaction of drop-out teachers prior to leaving the profession.

6.2 Data analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires comprise both Likert-type scores and open responses. Accordingly, the analysis of results is mixed. The quantitative analysis includes descriptive and inferential statistics, developed using SPSS 13. This analysis allowed us to draw a sociodemographic portrait of the participants and uncovered some interesting points associated with teacher drop-out. The initial analysis results were further investigated by a qualitative analysis using QDAMiner. It consists of a content analysis (see Huberman & Miles, 1991; L'Écuyer, 1990) with semi-open coding, initially constructed from the various factors influencing attrition. The qualitative analysis aimed to highlight the relationships between the different moderators of attrition identified in the quantitative analysis.

We should keep in mind that the two types of analysis, for A respondents (drop-out teachers) and B respondents (informants), were systematically compared to determine differences between the two groups and account for bias in subsequent analyses.
6.3 Methodological strengths and limitations

The major strength of this study is certainly the particular research method used. Thus, combining the online questionnaires with individual telephone and group interviews constitutes a key methodological advantage. The originality of this study resides in its Canada-wide nature, i.e., data was collected from similar pedagogical situations (French immersion and French as a second language programs) but in completely different geographic regions. Moreover, according to Merriam (1988), an investigation conducted in different settings enables a more global, complete and rich view of a phenomenon. Using a mixed approach also provides a valuable triangulation of data. Indeed, according to Bogdan and Bilken (1992), research validity consists primarily of knowing whether the data that the researcher collects genuinely corresponds to the phenomenon studied. Triangulation is a current, practical and relevant method to prevent validity bias. It is defined as the use of diverse methods to verify the researcher’s observation-based hypotheses in order to validate them.

The available methodological choices are not unlimited, however. In fact, it is possible that perceptions of teacher attrition would differ significantly between drop-out teachers and informants, who would have an outsider’s viewpoint. Moreover, perceptions of a same fact could differ between drop-out teachers and informants, depending on individual interests (e.g., school principals would surely be reluctant to admit that they failed to support teachers who were having problems). Finally, although the informants were in a position to discuss the behavioural variables (what the drop-out teachers did) and the status variables (who the drop-out teachers were), they appeared less able to provide information on the thinking variables (what the drop-out teachers thought).

To mitigate this methodological bias, our analyses systematically included a comparison of the two groups to highlight any differences. By comparing the A and B respondents, we were also able to put forward interesting hypotheses about how the drop-outs were perceived by the various school actors. Furthermore, the analyses of variance performed between the two subsamples do not show any significant differences. This suggests, among others, that the two respondent groups hold essentially the same views on teacher attrition, or at least on certain underlying problems.

The temporal variable also represents a potential bias in that it moderates the quality of the recalled events. In other words, the respondent’s perceptions of the drop-out are liable to vary with the amount of time separating the teacher’s departure and the reporting of it. This bias was taken into account by specifically asking the respondents to indicate when the departure under discussion took place.
The results of the study are presented in three main parts: a quantitative analysis, or descriptive statistics, of the responses to the online survey questionnaire; a qualitative analysis of the responses to the online survey questionnaire; and the results of the qualitative analysis of the individual and group interviews.

7.1 Quantitative analysis

This section presents a summary of the results on the statistical analysis (descriptive and inferential) obtained from the online survey questionnaire.

7.1.1 Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics presented in this section are divided in two parts: the first one deals with the drop-out teachers’ answers, whereas the second one focuses on informants’ answers.

7.1.1.1 Drop-out-teachers

A total of 34 drop-out teachers participated in the survey, 65.5 % of whom are women. A large proportion of the respondents report having a teaching diploma, i.e. a bachelor’s degree (55.2 %) or master’s degree (41.4 %). Half of them had quit teaching within two years (10.7 %) or less (39.3 %) of the time of the study (Figure 1), which suggests that the experiences related in this study were relatively recent, at least for most respondents.
At the time of dropping out, 70.3% of respondents had five or fewer years of teaching experience. These results confirm the idea that teachers are particularly inclined to abandon the profession during the induction period, which lasts for the first seven years of teaching (Vonk & Schras, 1987). On the other hand, it would be instructive to attempt to understand the reasons why the remaining 29.6% quit. Unfortunately, our limited sample makes it difficult to make this distinction.

The respondents taught in equal proportions at primary (48.1%) and secondary (51.9%) schools, under average socioeconomic conditions (48.1%) or advantaged socioeconomic conditions (33.3%). This suggests that the socioeconomic conditions in which teachers work is not a priority factor for significant attrition, as only 18.5% of respondents left the teaching profession under disadvantaged conditions. Nevertheless, we note that the immersion schools were not located in particularly disadvantaged socioeconomic communities, which leads us to believe that disadvantaged schools are underrepresented in our sample, the great majority of respondents having been in immersion schools at the time of the reported departures.

According to the responses to the online questionnaire, 66.6% of drop-out teachers report low (29.6%) or moderate (37%) satisfaction with their profession (Figure 2), which supports their decision to quit teaching. Note nonetheless that 33.3% of respondents report good or even high satisfaction with the teaching profession. The question therefore arises as to why this subgroup of respondents dropped out, particularly when they were well satisfied. The qualitative analysis clarifies this point further.
The results on professional aspirations to become a French immersion or French as a second language teacher are mixed. Although the majority of respondents (53.8%) agree somewhat (19.2%) or moderately (34.6%) that they had professional aspirations to go into teaching (Figure 3), at least 46.1% of the drop-out teachers surveyed agree strongly (42.3%) or completely (3.8%) (Figure 3). We may cautiously advance the notion that, for about half the respondents, their departure could be explained by a disconnect between their initial perception of teaching and the realities of French immersion or French as a second language teaching.

Similarly, 50% of respondents agree strongly (35.7%) or completely (14.3%) that teaching was their first career choice (Figure 4).
A majority of respondents (63.2 %) state they had worked sometimes (33.3 %) or often (29.6 %) in cooperation or collaboration with their colleagues, which can be viewed as an alternative to teacher isolation (Britzman, 1986; Harris, 1995; Lieberman & Miller, 1984; Lightfoot, 1983; Lortie, 1975). However, the proportion of drop-out teachers who seldom or rarely worked in a team is 29.6 %. Moreover, the fact that teachers do not work in isolation does not necessarily mean that they enjoy support. In other words, working in a team does not automatically imply being able to ask for help when it is needed. It was therefore instructive to observe the relationship between these two aspects in the qualitative analysis.

The main difficulties that drop-out teachers had to cope with in their jobs were structural and organizational requirements: the amount of work to be done at home, which 80 % agree was too much (Figure 5), and the workload, which 77.8 % of respondents agree was too heavy (Figure 6). Overall, it seems that new French immersion and French as a second language teachers found the job too time-consuming.
The other difficulties mentioned feature less prominently in the results analysis. With regard to professional relations, 40.7% of respondents agree that they had a difficult relationship with the school board (Figure 7). This result is explained in the qualitative analysis. At this stage of the analysis, we note that novice teachers who were dealing with problems sought help to cope with them, but this help was not always forthcoming by the school principal, at least in the form that the new teacher wanted or needed at the time. Relations with colleagues are also reported as problematic by 51.8% of respondents (Figure 8), but to a lesser degree than relations with the administration. Moreover, the relative importance of these results must be considered, insofar as relations with the administration and colleagues were not a problem for 29.6% and 37.1% of respondents, respectively. Re-
lations with parents, albeit less problematic, are generally similar to relations with the administration and colleagues (Figure 9). These points appear to be relatively well matched, which could mean that professional relations are at least partly dependent on the individual characteristics of each actor, whether drop-out teachers or other education actors.

Figure 7: Main difficulties of drop-out teachers in teaching: relations with the school administration.

Figure 8: Main difficulties of drop-out teachers in teaching: relations with colleagues.
Classroom management, as many have reported in the literature, is a frequently cited explanation for teacher attrition. Directly linked to classroom management is a lack of respect by students, which is noted as very problematic by 26.9% of respondents, but surprisingly, as only somewhat of a problem by 34.6% of respondents. Moreover, poorly motivated students appear to have been a challenge for 33.3% of respondents, while 29.6% were apparently not bothered by this problem.

In sum, aside from the amount of work to be done at home and the heavy workload – challenges on which the respondents agree – ratings of other difficulties diverge widely. It would seem that the factors vary greatly across the individual drop-out experiences, which leads us to believe that specific characteristics of teaching conditions and/or individual teachers play an important role in explaining this phenomenon.

### 7.1.1.2 Key informants on teacher drop-out

The informants who witnessed the events surrounding the teacher drop-outs are more numerous in this study, comprising 167 respondents, the great majority of whom are women (82.7%). Most have teaching diplomas, and 67.3% have a bachelor’s degree. Almost 40% of the respondents had taught for 9 years or less, 32.3% had from 10 to 19 years of teaching experience, and the remainder had 20 or more years of experience. The informants are therefore relatively uniformly divided in terms of length of teaching service. Half the respondents referred to a drop-out that occurred two years previous (17.3%) or less (34.6%) to the time of the survey. Like the drop-out teachers, a portion of the informants reported on relatively recent teacher departures.
At the time of the drop-out, most respondents were working in primary schools (60.2 %), followed by secondary schools (38.5 %), under average (50.6 %) or advantaged (39.5 %) socioeconomic conditions. This point harks back to our previous hypothesis that the socioeconomic conditions in which teachers work are not inherent factors for significant attrition.

It is interesting to note that the informants perceive that the drop-out teachers had lower job satisfaction. Although, as we saw earlier, about 65 % of the drop-out teachers express moderate or low satisfaction with the profession, 90.4 % of the informants report that the drop-out teachers had none or low job satisfaction (Figure 10). Similarly, 80.9 % of the informants agree not at all (1.9 %), somewhat (31.2 %) or moderately (47.8 %) that drop-out teachers had professional aspirations to become a teacher, based on their observations (Figure 11), a much stronger trend than for the drop-out teachers. These two points indicate that the informants have a more negative perception of the drop-out experience than the drop-out teachers themselves. An alternative suggestion is that the drop-out teachers tended to “save face” by downplaying the reality of the drop-out experience in their questionnaire responses. Because drop-out is usually associated with a feeling of failure, some people might find it difficult to talk about.

Figure 10: Satisfaction with the teaching profession.
Paradoxically, 63.7% of the drop-out informants agree strongly (40.1%) or completely (23.6%) that teaching was the first career choice of the drop-out teachers (Figure 12), showing a stronger trend than the drop-out teachers themselves. We can discern a contradiction here, in that low aspirations to enter a profession is not very compatible with first choice of the same career as a profession.

Figure 11: Professional aspirations to become a teacher.

Figure 12: Teaching as the first career choice.
Of the informants, 80.1% agree that drop-out teachers worked sometimes (53.4%) or often (26.7%) in cooperation or collaboration with their colleagues. This trend is also present in the drop-out teachers, but to a lesser extent.

Among the difficulties that the drop-out teachers had to cope with, the informants agree that too much work to be done at home and a too heavy workload were the main causes (respectively 72.5% and 65.8%) of their eventual departure from the teaching profession (figures 13 and 14). These findings corroborate the statements of the drop-out teachers.

Figure 13: Main difficulties of drop-out teachers in teaching: amount of work to be done at home (too much).

Figure 14: Main difficulties of drop-out teachers in teaching: workload (too heavy).
Note also that other aspects related to classroom management, such as student misbehaviour (34.6%), poor motivation (48.1%) and lack of respect for the teacher (30.7%), are frequently cited as being very problematic for the drop-out teachers (Figure 15).

As for relational aspects, relations with the administration (50.3%) and colleagues (44.1%) are reported at slightly lower levels than by the drop-out teachers. On the other hand, the informants report more difficulties in relations with parents of students (56.6%).
Figure 16: Main difficulties of drop-out teachers in teaching: relations with the school administration.

Figure 17: Main difficulties of drop-out teachers in teaching: relations with colleagues.

Figure 18: Main difficulties of drop-out teachers in teaching: relations with parents of students.
In other words, we observe an inverse trend: whereas relations with the administration and colleagues constitute the main relational difficulty for drop-out teachers, the informants attribute more difficulties to relations with the parents of students. Knowing that almost all the informants are teachers or school principals, we wonder whether this might be a case of offloading responsibility. By this we mean that teachers and principals are probably loathe to assume responsibility for their colleagues’ departures, and might therefore unconsciously “scapegoat” the students’ parents. We must emphasize that this could be an inherent bias in the methodology of the present study. Conversely, it could be that teachers and the administration, overwhelmed by day-to-day challenges and not enough time to deal with them, are not in a position to come to the aid of beginning teachers, even if they wanted to. In this case, these inverse trends are explained by the fact that drop-out teachers are placing too much blame on their colleagues and the administration, who do not deserve it.

7.1.2 Inferential statistics

To deepen the descriptive statistical analysis, we performed an inferential statistical analysis (analysis of variance) of certain responses to the questions, particularly the difficulties encountered, job satisfaction, professional aspirations and teaching as the first career choice. These variables were initially applied to all the participants. We then confronted the drop-out teacher group with the informant group to identify significant variations in perceptions of the drop-out phenomenon between the two groups. The outcome was no notable significant differences, indicating that perceptions of teacher drop-out do not differ significantly between those who experienced it and those who witnessed it.

7.1.3 Synthesis of the quantitative analyses

The descriptive and inferential statistical analyses performed on the participants’ responses to the survey uncover several noteworthy points.

First, we should keep in mind that most of the respondents in this Canada-wide survey were informants who witnessed the events surrounding the teachers’ departures, due to the fact that the drop-out teachers were, by definition, particularly hard to reach. We should also keep in mind that no significant differences were found between the two groups of respondents, which suggests that perceptions of the drop-out phenomenon do not differ significantly, although they are noteworthy in certain respects.
The results show that most of the drop-out teachers who responded to the survey report had left the profession in the first five years of service, supporting the idea that the professional induction phase is particularly conducive to attrition.

An interesting result of the survey is that the school’s socioeconomic conditions in which the departure occurs do not appear to be a substantial factor, contrary to the literature. Nevertheless, this result should be viewed in perspective, in that immersion is a pedagogical format found more often in advantaged than disadvantaged communities. In other words, it is possible that disadvantaged schools are underrepresented in our sample due to the chosen research scope.

The drop-out teachers show a difference between their aspirations to teach and their choice of teaching as a career as well as the satisfaction they drew from it. This leads us to hypothesize a disconnect between their initial perceptions of teaching and the realities of the job. This result also leads us to question the different teacher training programs in Canada and their ability to build the requisite teaching competencies, both preparatory and in practice, even though this point did not feature particularly prominently in our results.

The results also reveal that, compared to the drop-out teachers, the informants seem to have a more unambiguous view of teacher drop-out. This difference might be attributable to the drop-out teachers themselves, who would later tend to rationalize their responses to the questionnaires, thereby lessening the sense of failure associated with the quitting experience. However, some contradictions emerge in the informants’ testimonies as well: although they agree that the drop-out teachers showed little satisfaction in the teaching profession, a majority nevertheless perceived that teaching was the drop-out teachers’ first choice of profession. How then to explain the choice of a profession for which one has little aspiration? Is teaching a «default» career that young people choose for reasons that are external to the profession?

It is interesting to note that the drop-out teachers had opportunities to work jointly or in collaboration with their colleagues, which would partly lessen the isolation inherent in the induction phase of teaching. However, at this analysis stage, we must be careful to distinguish between working in collaboration with other teachers and genuine support, or mentoring, when the novice teacher has serious problems. The qualitative analysis was intended to clarify this aspect of professional induction, which is liable to cause teachers to drop out.

In terms of difficulties, both drop-out teachers and informants report excessive amounts of work to be done at home and a too heavy workload as the main problem.

On the other hand, we note the inverse trend for professional relations: drop-out teachers feel that relations with the administration and other teachers are the primary relational difficulties. In contrast, these two problems are downplayed by the informants, who feel that relations with parents are the primary relational difficulties. We conclude that these divergent trends could be due to the fact that the drop-out teachers were not aware of the actual problems of other teachers or the school principal, who must cope with daily time constraints and heavy workloads. An alternate hypothesis would be that the infor-
mants, being school principals or teachers, are reluctant to take the blame for their colleagues’ departures, and might subconsciously attribute the problem to a third party, in this case the parents of the students. These hypotheses are verified by the qualitative analysis, below. Finally, the informants report more classroom management problems than the drop-out teachers do.

Taken together, the secondary problems mentioned by the drop-out teachers are relatively dispersed, which suggests that specific attributes of the teaching environment and/or individual teachers play a substantial part in explaining teacher attrition. This overall portrait of teacher drop-out enabled us to identify several points, which we explored further in a qualitative results analysis.

7.2 Qualitative analysis

The qualitative analysis presented here complements the above-presented quantitative analysis. Here, we focus on the relationships between the various coding percentages. Two content analyses were performed: one was applied to the open responses to the online questionnaire, which produced a semi-open coding (see Huberman & Miles, 1991) using QDAMiner; the other, based on the method developed by L’Écuyer (1990), analyzed the interviews (individual telephone interviews with eight drop-out teachers and five group interviews with key informants who witnessed the events surrounding the teachers’ departures). The results are presented under the various themes covered in the questionnaire, i.e., reasons for quitting, requirements for preventing teacher attrition, human support available to drop-out teachers experiencing problems, and teacher’s satisfaction with the job, choice of teaching as a career and professional aspirations to enter the teaching profession prior to quitting. The first subsection (7.2.1) discusses the analysis of responses to the questionnaire and the second subsection (7.2.2) discusses the analysis of the interviews.
7.2.1 Qualitative analysis of responses to the survey questionnaire

7.2.1.1 Reasons for leaving the profession

One of the most important goals of this Canada-wide survey was to better understand why French immersion and French as a second language teachers leave the profession in the first few years of service. This first section addresses the reasons for dropping out, and is central to this report.

The first reason stated by the drop-out teachers concerns difficult students, especially those with discipline problems, combined with learning disorders and the multiplicity of students’ needs (Figure 19).

The workload is also a repeatedly cited reason for quitting. Extracurricular work (e.g., planning and correcting) and occasional work (newsletters, meetings, organizing special events) are deemed particularly time-consuming when added to the teaching hours per se. Moreover, beginning teachers feel they were sometimes assigned subjects that they had not been prepared to teach (Kirsch, 2006). For example, some teachers had to teach English, even though they had been trained to teach French as a second language or French immersion. This resulted in a lack of time, not only in their jobs but also in their personal lives. Several respondents state that, in order to fulfill their professional duties, their social and family lives had to suffer.

The lack of support in general, and by the school administration in particular, is another key reason for leaving the field. The support that appears to have been missing is perceived by the novice teachers in different ways.

Several respondents mention the general lack of support at entry into the profession. This is particularly true for beginning teachers, and all the more so for beginning immersion teachers, a context in which the shortage of instructional materials – another reason cited for dropping out – only compounds the problem.

The lack of support in when problems occur is also a recurrent theme in the responses to the questionnaires. The respondents repeatedly blame the school administration, especially because they tend to dissociate themselves from the teachers when they have problems with the students or their parents, providing a further incentive for some respondents to quit teaching.

As a final reason for quitting, we note stress and fatigue, which may be interpreted as caused by the above-mentioned problems.
To summarize the main reasons for leaving the profession as perceived by the drop-out teachers, we must emphasize that difficult students and their parents, personal investment (in time and energy) and the consequent lack of time, as well as a lack of support in general and administrative support in particular, appear to form the cornerstone of teacher attrition. This situation appears to be conducive to stress and fatigue, which in turn contributes to teacher drop-out. Other reasons, such as shortage of instructional resources, are more specific to the immersion context.

It is worth noting that the informants, although they report the same reasons as the drop-out teachers overall, give much more importance to the shortage of instructional materials (first reason), stress and fatigue (second reason), workload (third reason) and low salary (fourth reason), even though low salary is not a predominant reason for the drop-out teachers (Figure 20).
The strongest divergence between the drop-out teachers and informants concerns the instructional materials. A few hypotheses may be advanced to explain this. First, because the drop-out teachers had never really had access to a range of instructional materials, it is possible that their absence did not bother them all that much. In contrast, the experienced teachers seemed to be very used to working with more materials and could not imagine how teachers could manage without them, which would lead them to posit this lack as the greatest difficulty for beginning teachers. It is also possible that experienced teachers are more aware of certain annoying aspects of immersion teaching, including the shortage of instructional materials, because immersion teachers have to teach in French using mostly English teaching materials. However, we could also argue the reverse, that experienced teachers are liable to pay less attention to these annoying aspects, because they have adapted to them. Otherwise, we could suggest that the drop-out teachers do not share the same concerns as the experienced teachers. Indeed, at the beginning of the induction period, novice teachers focus more on themselves, their status and their professional duties, rather than their teaching practices and student learning (Kagan, 1992). In this perspective, instructional materials are much less important in their perception of the difficulties they have to cope with.

Figure 20: Main reasons for leaving the profession according to the informants.
What can be done to prevent teacher attrition?

The requirements for preventing teacher attrition are partly related to the reasons for the attrition, as mentioned above. Thus, instructional materials and support in general and administrative support in particular are the most often cited needs, by all respondents (figures 21 and 22). There are also requests for specific teaching conditions, such as a lighter workload and time for daily preparation, or the chance to teach the same grade two years in a row, especially for beginning teachers. This is all the more understandable when we know that new teachers are usually asked to change grades several times during the induction period. Reducing isolation, for instance by more communication and collaboration with colleagues and other school actors, is a frequently mentioned need. It appears to be directly connected to lack of support as a reason for quitting.

However, this is far from the concept of mentoring, for instance by an experienced colleague rather than a member of the administration, and this seems to be the most important requirement to prevent beginning teachers from quitting. Along the same lines, classroom observations are suggested, albeit less often. Also noted less often is the fact that university training does not always provide teachers with the requisite skills. The respondents therefore feel that teachers-in-training need to be better prepared for the realities of the classroom, including practical training and the development of concrete know-how, for example, how to manage a classroom.

Figure 21: Requirements for preventing attrition according to the drop-out teachers.
We should specify that, unlike the previous section, which presents some differences between drop-out teachers and informants, the responses on the needs of drop-out teachers who are having problems are largely shared by all participants, both drop-out teachers and informants.

To recap the requirements for preventing teacher attrition, we should note at the outset that the drop-out teachers and key informants appear to converge on the same requests. Moreover, the use of professional induction, including mentoring, is by far the most often suggested method to prevent teachers from quitting. Note also that some of the needs raised by the respondents, such as instructional materials and support in general, and administrative support in particular, are directly related to the reasons for dropping out. Finally, other needs, for instance specific teaching conditions and lessening isolation, are mentioned as well.
7.2.1.3 Human resources available to drop-out teachers who are having problems

Support for drop-out teachers who are having problems was partially addressed above. In this section, this support is related to the relationships between the drop-out teachers and other school actors.

First of all, the drop-out teachers say that they turned to the administration to resolve their difficulties (Figure 23). Although some respondents report receiving unconditional support from the administration, others begrudge the lack of involvement in their problems, which is directly connected to the above-mentioned lack of support. Some teachers in immersion programs also note a lack of understanding on the part of the school administration, which was usually English-speaking, the absence of specific immersion teaching conditions, or else a poor understanding of what immersion teaching was. In other words, the drop-out teachers seemed to primarily seek the help of an interceder – the school administration – who did not seem to be prepared to help them.

Figure 23: Support for drop-out teachers having problems according to the drop-out teachers.
Another point is frequently brought up by the informants: drop-out teachers hesitated to go to the school administration when they were having problems because they were afraid to look incompetent. This fear probably also involved job insecurity. Going to see the school principal to talk about problems in the classroom somehow means admitting that one is not yet ready for a permanent job. Therefore, it is probably not so much a question of lack of support as a lack of trust between the administration and the drop-out teacher.

Fellow teachers also provided support in order to deal with problems, particularly because they were closer to the drop-out teachers and were less in a position to judge. In this case, experienced colleagues are often cited as the preferred contact persons. However, albeit to a lesser extent, some respondents feel that lack of team spirit and time were obstacles to collegial support. This resulted in a kind of isolation for the drop-out teachers, as reported by both drop-out teachers and informants. Recall that for new immersion teachers, this isolation may be compounded: it is both inherent in entry to the profession and reinforced by teaching in French in an English-speaking environment. In these circumstances, mentoring would be highly appropriate, as the respondents frequently state.

As for support by the school administration or peers, we see a noteworthy variation in trends between drop-out teachers and informants: informants report colleagues first followed by the administration as support contacts in case of problems (Figure 24). Indeed, according to the informants – who are mostly teachers – the administration is not in the best position to support drop-out teachers who are having problems. This is confirmed by the reasons they give for the attrition, as presented earlier. Consequently, drop-out teachers would be more inclined to turn to their colleague first. In practice, a fellow teacher in an immersion program would be in the best position to help a beginning teacher handle problems.

Note also that support by the administration and support by colleagues are often connected in tandem. In other words, the drop-out teachers turn first to their colleagues and afterwards to the administration when problems persist. Or inversely, they appeal first to the administration when they are having a problem and then to their colleagues when they do not receive the help they want.

Friends and family are mentioned as a third source of support when problems arise. In this case, the idea is not to be judged, which some respondents give as a reason.
It emerges that the school administration and colleagues are the first line of support for the drop-out teachers. However, the support they seek is not always forthcoming, particularly by the school administration. Let us clarify that this is a perception, in that the blame directed toward the administration could be abusive and might not account for the difficulties inherent in this particular position as the school's spokesperson. Moreover, to the lack of requested support we may add a fear of looking professionally incompetent, and even the fear of losing one's job, which is already uncertain, implying a lack of trust between the drop-out teacher and the other school actors, particularly the school administration. Another option that was mentioned to avoid the fear of being judged was support by family and friends, who appear to be in a position to help new teachers deal with their problems.
7.2.1.4 Choice of teaching as a career, professional aspirations and job satisfaction of drop-out teachers prior to quitting

Teaching as a career choice and professional aspirations to become a teacher are two aspects of the initial motivations of drop-out teachers toward their profession. At the same time, satisfaction with the teaching profession enables us to address the quality of the drop-out teachers’ experience prior to quitting.

Teaching as a career choice and professional aspirations show contrasting results. First of all, the drop-out teachers show a lack of initial interest in the teaching profession (Figure 25). For some of them, teaching was a possibility among many professional interests, while for others, it was a temporary “starter” job. In another case, teaching was a default profession because there was little choice at the university. This last point appears to be connected to the lack of recognition given to the teaching profession – a secondary aspect – which means that drop-out teachers might not embrace a job that they do not value very much.

In opposition to this initial lack of interest, and with almost equal frequency, their motivation to teach appears to indicate that the drop-out teachers chose this profession voluntarily. How then to explain the subsequent departure of these respondents? Two explanations are considered, and are mainly raised by the drop-out teachers themselves (Figure 26). The most often cited is a disconnect between the initial perception of teaching and the harsher realities of the job. That is, teachers tend to idealize teaching, as suggested earlier in the quantitative analysis and confirmed here. To a somewhat lesser extent, a lack of teaching skills is also mentioned to explain initial motivation and subsequent departure. On this point, note that some participants refer to teaching not as a profession but as a vocation, which requires personal attributes that are almost inherent, rather than professional skills that can be built through initial training and developed through professional induction. In this perspective, drop-out is the fate of those who are not “made” for teaching.

Whether a poor perception of the realities of teaching or a lack of skills is involved, initial training is sometimes blamed, primarily by the informants. The argument is that university teaching programs do not prepare, or poorly prepare, new teachers for the realities of the job, recalling the debate between theory and practice. As mentioned previously, an initial training program that provides the requisite skills would be a requirement for preventing teacher attrition.
Figure 25: Professional aspirations and choice of teaching as a career according to the drop-out teachers.

Figure 26: Initial professional aspirations and choice of career according to the informants.
Satisfaction with the job is partly related to the reasons for teacher attrition, but also to other salient aspects. One of the greatest satisfactions is the teaching itself, which is ranked equally with relations with students (Figure 27). In other words, it appears that drop-out teachers could eventually be professionals who are not only initially motivated to teach, but are also satisfied with their teaching practices. In addition, they report that they appreciated the relationships with the children. In this case, the reasons for their departure seem to lie outside the classroom.

On the other hand, stress and fatigue were causes of dissatisfaction, at the same level as the demands of the teaching job and relations with students. It might be that stress and fatigue, even though they cause the most dissatisfaction, are merely the result of other sources of dissatisfaction, as suggested earlier. In this respect, the workload outside classroom hours (planning and correction), lack of support, overall work conditions and students in difficulty are secondary sources of dissatisfaction, but are liable to explain the stress and fatigue noted.

Figure 27 : Satisfaction of drop-out teachers prior to leaving the profession according to the drop-out teachers.
Few discrepancies between drop-out teachers and informants emerge, other than that the informants add the demands of the students’ parents as a cause of dissatisfaction (Figure 28). This point appears to support the hypothesis we proposed in the quantitative analysis that the informants – who are mostly teachers and school principals – tend to blame teacher attrition on third parties rather than themselves, thereby (and surely somewhat unconsciously) avoiding personal responsibility for the problem.

Figure 28: Satisfaction of drop-out teachers prior to leaving the profession according to the informants.
To recap, the choice of teaching and professional aspirations present two patterns: the drop-out teachers either report a lack of initial interest in the profession, or they were motivated to teach. In the second case, the informants report that the teachers’ idealization of the profession, and to a lesser extent, their lack of teaching skills, are possible explanations for their initial motivation and eventual departure from the job. These two explanations are linked to inadequate university training.

Satisfaction with teaching is mainly linked to teaching practices and relations with students. On the other hand, stress and fatigue are caused by dissatisfaction, and appear to be the result of the workload, particularly the amount of extracurricular work, as well as the lack of general support, overall work conditions and difficult students. In other words, the drop-out teachers might be satisfied professionally in terms of their teaching practices in the classroom, but at the same time dissatisfied with some of the more peripheral attributes of the job.

### 7.2.1.5

**Summary**

Why do new French immersion and French as a second language teachers leave the profession in the first few years of service? From the content analysis performed on the open responses to the online questionnaire, we can derive the most often cited reasons for teacher attrition by both the departed teachers and the informants who witnessed the departure:

- Difficult clientele;
- Parents of students;
- Personal investment (in time and energy);
- Resultant lack of time;
- Lack of support in general and by the school administration in particular;
- Lack of instructional materials;
- Stress and fatigue.

According to the analysis results, these factors make up the cornerstone of teacher attrition.

Support in dealing with problems appears to confirm the previous results in that this points to the school administration as the first point of contact for drop-out teachers who are having problems, who nonetheless fail to receive the help they need. Colleagues are also important contact persons when problems arise. The two types of support appear to be connected in tandem: the drop-out teachers either turn first to the school administration, then appeal to their colleagues when the help they seek is not forthcoming, or else they turn first to their colleagues and then to the school administration if the problem persists. Besides the perceived lack of support, the respondents also report a fear of
looking incompetent, which implies a lack of trust between the drop-out teacher and the various school actors, including the school administration and the school board. The issue of job insecurity is certainly another potential cause for this lack of trust between the new teacher and the school principal. Indeed, how do you ask for help from the person who will eventually decide if you get a permanent job? How do you admit your weaknesses to the authority who participates in your job evaluation? Finally, we must emphasize that family and friends provide a last line of support that is non-judgmental. Note that support shows the highest coding percentages, meaning that this issue was frequently connected with teacher attrition, by both the drop-out teachers and informants who participated in this study.

Teaching as a career choice and professional aspirations to become a teacher show two inverse trends. In the first case, the drop-out teachers report a lack of initial interest, which in part explains their departure. However, and in equal proportions, the drop-out teachers were motivated to become teachers. Two explanations may be posited to clarify the relationship between initial motivation and eventual departure: the teachers either idealized the teaching profession or had poor teaching skills. In both cases, initial training is repeatedly blamed, in that it does not adequately prepare teachers for the realities of school-teaching, perhaps by neglecting to provide links between theory and classroom practices.

So what can be done to prevent teacher attrition? Consistent with logic, the suggested remedies are better support in general and administrative support in particular, as well as university training that better provides teachers with the requisite classroom skills. Also mentioned are more instructional materials, specific teaching conditions for beginning teachers (including lighter workloads) and the reduction of isolation, which, as underscored earlier, is probably compounded for new immersion teachers. Above all, the most often stated need is associated with professional induction: mentoring. This solution is unanimously agreed on by both drop-out teachers and informants.
7.2.2 Qualitative analysis of the interviews

Why was it deemed necessary to complement the survey questionnaire that was distributed to the two separate populations (drop-out teachers and key informants) with interviews? The objective was two-fold. First, it was felt necessary to actually talk with the participants to try to deepen our understanding of the underlying reasons for new teachers to leave the teaching field. Second, we felt it necessary to triangularize the research data. Finally, according to the study by Adams and Cox (2008), questionnaires and individual and group interviews are all highly useful ways to help us understand a phenomenon in different ways, usually complementary. We therefore decided to hold two types of interviews: individual telephone interviews with the drop-out teachers and group interviews with the key informants.

As mentioned above, one of the most important objectives of this Canada-wide survey was to better understand why French immersion and French as a second language teachers leave the profession. During the online survey questionnaire, the participants were able to provide their email address in order to be contacted for individual interviews. The conversations were recorded as mp3 files using Skype. Of those who answered the survey, 8 agreed to participate in a telephone interview. Let us recall that online telephone interviews are not particularly new in social sciences research, and this method has been proven effective in many studies (Denzin, 2003; Gruber, Szmigin, Reppel & Voss, 2008; Stieger & Göritz, 2006). Some studies have addressed much more sensitive topics, for example, the study by Davis and colleagues (2004), where online interviews were conducted with persons who had contracted HIV. Notwithstanding, and despite the research team’s relatively lengthy experience in conducting interviews (online and in person), we should mention that the eight interviews conducted do not seem to have fostered sufficient personal contact with the respondents to induce them to speak unguardedly about their experiences. Certainly, they all answered the various questions about the underlying reasons for quitting teaching, potential solutions, human support, teaching as a career choice, professional aspirations and job satisfaction. However, when recontacting the participants, it was difficult to elicit a more detailed response. That said, to study this phenomenon, we recommend personal interviews. However, the research method meant that the candidates who agreed to be interviewed were located across Canada (6 provinces for 8 candidates), and it would have been complicated to travel in order to meet them all in person.

On the other hand, as noted by Morgan (1997), the group interviews (conducted solely with key informants who witnessed the drop-out) enabled rich exchanges with the participants. In fact, the interviewers had to intervene so that the participants would not lose sight of the objective of the discussion (to better understand why new French immersion and French as a second language teachers leave the profession), in order to elicit relevant responses. As mentioned earlier,
the group interviews were held in five major regions of Canada (one group interview per region), with groups comprising from three to seven teachers. To increase and facilitate participation, the group interviews were held after classroom hours and conducted during a meal. The group interviews lasted from 80 to 120 minutes.

7.2.2.1 Reasons for dropping out

The reasons stated by the drop-out teachers for quitting the field corroborate the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses. For instance, it is apparent from the interviews that support for beginning teachers was not available. They stated that when problems came up, there was never anybody around to ask for help. Everybody was busy with their own work (D71). Other respondents talked about the need to manage all by themselves to survive teaching. They claimed that they had to resolve their problems with their students on their own, and above all, not bother the principal all the time (D4). This lack of help was underscored in different ways by seven of the eight drop-out teachers, indicating a certain amount of bitterness toward the school community, which did not come to their aid when they needed it. During the telephone interviews, the drop-out teachers also repeatedly mentioned that their students gave them a lot of trouble, which drove them to quit their jobs. Several said that the students were not interested in French (D1), or were always annoying (D5), or were so difficult that they simply could not perform their jobs, and it was impossible to teach French (D8). The last reason invoked during the interviews was the excessive workload and the lack of time to do it. This reason appears to be partly linked to the challenges inherent in immersion teaching, including a shortage of instructional materials. It therefore required too much time to teach, with all the planning and corrections to be done, so that the teachers seemed to be working “nonstop” (D3). The interviewees did not mention the other difficulties included in the previous analyses.

The group interviews were similar in content to the individual interviews. The interviewees emphasized the lack of instructional materials, stating that there were few immersion materials, and that teachers entering the profession had to look for them (G2E4). Students were difficult to handle, and young teachers often got the most difficult classes, which did not make it any easier, especially as they were novices and had to get used to so many other things at the same time (G4E2). The heavy workload meant that new teachers were working “all the time,” and that is why they quit (G5E3). The key informants we met with also repeatedly stressed that the immersion teachers who came to their school and later quite were inadequately prepared. They arrived with a teaching degree but did not know how to teach French immersion (G1E4), or they had no idea what immersion was all about (G5E1). During the group interviews, the teachers said that they had done their best to help the new teachers, but that it was not always possible. They said that they tried to help them, but it was not always easy to

1 Examples from the interviews have been translated from the French. Interviewees have been coded to protect the confidentiality of the respondents. Drop-out teachers are coded from D1 to D8. Individuals in the group interviews are double-coded: the first segment is the number of the interview group and the second segment is the participant’s number. For example, G1E3 stands for interview group number 1, teacher/educator number 3.
do, and that they would have really liked to help them, but teaching immersion was not easy, and at times they had the impression that the drop-out teachers would have liked the helping presence of another teacher at all times (G1E4).

As for the underlying reasons for teacher attrition, the group interviews appear to corroborate the reasons identified in the previous analyses. Lack of help when it was needed, excessive workload and a shortage of instructional materials are some of the reasons that impelled novice teachers to quit teaching.

7.2.2.2
What can be done to prevent teacher attrition?

It is highly noteworthy that two main solution directions emerged from the interviews, both individual and group. The first, in line with the previous results, is mentoring, which would be an effective way to help beginning teachers upon entry into a school. According to one informant (G5E1), as soon as new teachers arrive at the school, another teacher should be responsible for helping them. This idea of mentoring is usually accompanied by the need to devote more time to the new teachers, but, as one teacher explained (G5E3), to do so would mean freeing that teacher up, as well as the ones who would like to help. The idea of giving new teachers a lighter workload or making arrangements to devote more time to new teachers is the last solution proffered. According to one informant (G2E2), new teachers should have a slightly less demanding workload at the beginning to give them time to get used to the job. Aside from these two proposed solutions, the group interviews again brought up the idea of better teacher training programs as a potential way to prevent attrition. If new teachers were well prepared, they would probably find the job easier (G4E6).

Thus, the solutions proposed by the respondents appear to prioritize two main directions: mentoring and a lighter workload to enable new teachers to deal better with teaching in the classroom, a profession for which university training does not seem to provide the requisite skills.

7.2.2.3
Human support available to drop-out teachers who are having problems

The interviews confirmed to some extent the previously obtained results. The drop-out teachers primarily blamed the school administration, claiming that the principal was never available to see them when they had questions (D4), but also that their colleagues were not always available. For instance, one drop-out teacher (D6) said that there were only four immersion teachers at the school, and that the other immersion teachers were rarely available for help. In the group interviews, the responses were more mixed, and it was not a lack of willingness to help new teachers that was to blame, but rather the time or the opportunity to do it. For example, one informant (G1E1) would have liked to help a teacher who quit, but did not really have any free time to do so. This was due to heavy school responsibilities, and although it was hard to refuse the request of a novice teacher, one simply did not have the time. In the group interviews, the teachers also talked about the difficulty of interacting with the English parents of students enrolled in French immer-
sion programs, especially when they felt that
the new teachers were in no way prepared for
this situation.

7.2.2.4
Teaching as a career choice, professional
aspirations and the job satisfaction of
drop-out teachers prior to quitting

The results of the interviews on teaching as a
career choice, professional aspirations and job
satisfaction prior to leaving the profession are
inconclusive. Five of the drop-out teachers in-
terviewed said that they chose to go into tea-
ching out of personal interest. According to
one (D8), at the beginning there was a desire
to become a teacher because it seemed like a
pleasant job, whereas three others said that
they chose the profession by accident (D3),
or without really thinking about it, because
they did not get accepted into any other pro-
grams (D4). Similar to the qualitative analyses
of responses to the questionnaire, job satis-
faction was primarily linked to contact with
the students and being in charge of a group
of students, which could be stimulating at
times (D4), although they still found the job
too demanding to find satisfaction in it. Thus,
teaching could be interesting, but it took up
too much time, or all their time, and they
always had to be thinking about their class
and what they were going to teach, which
was too demanding, so that they were always
tired (D6). Therefore, as indicated previously,
the drop-out teachers could be teachers who
were satisfied with teaching in the classroom
as such, but usually dissatisfied with the more
peripheral attributes of the job. As for the in-
formants, they felt that the novice teachers
were poorly prepared for the realities of im-
mersion teaching and its particular teaching
context.

7.2.2.5
Summary

The analysis of the individual and group in-
terviews deepens our understanding of the
new teachers’ underlying reasons for leaving
the teaching profession. This third data sour-
ce confirms the previously advanced reasons,
namely lack of support, which featured pro-
minently in the responses of the drop-out
teachers in the interviews, along with diffi-
cult clientele, lack of time, and shortage of
instructional materials. These reasons, all of
which are mentioned previously, appear to
be the most salient for understanding the
drop-out phenomenon.

From the interviews, we also identified two
main recommendations for helping new
teachers: mentoring, and a rearranged work
schedule to accommodate both new tea-
chers and their mentors.
8. Conclusion

To conclude this study, we begin by recalling the overall objective, which was to better understand the reasons why new French immersion and French as a second language teachers leave the teaching profession in the first few years of service. A number of specific objectives contribute to this overall objective:

1. To present a profile of the survey respondents;
2. To document the main reasons why new teachers are leaving the profession;
3. To better understand the level of satisfaction of young teachers with the teaching profession;
4. To better understand the opportunities that new teachers have to collaborate with experienced teachers;
5. To better understand the relationship between the professional aspirations of new teachers and their departure from the profession;
6. To identify the persons to whom new teachers turn when problems arise;
7. To identify what schools could do to help retain new teachers in the profession.

To meet these objectives, we conducted a Canada-wide online survey (n = 201), accompanied by individual telephone interviews (n = 8) and group interviews (n = 5). The online survey comprised a sample of 34 drop-out teachers and 167 key informants who witnessed the events surrounding the teachers’ departures. Most of the informants were involved in immersion programs. Let us recall that no significant differences were found between the two groups of respondents, which suggests that their perceptions of teacher attrition, albeit noteworthy in some respects, do not differ significantly. Moreover, this distribution of participants is valuable in that it enabled us to enrich our results by confronting the two groups of respondents to identify convergences and divergences in their attitudes toward teacher attrition. This mixed methodology included quantitative analyses (descriptive statistical and inferential analyses of the questionnaires) and qualitative analyses (content analysis of open responses to the questionnaire and interviews).

The results show that teacher drop-out in French immersion and French as a second language programs is primarily explained by five factor groups:

1. Difficult work conditions inherent in French immersion and French as a second language teaching;
2. Lack of instructional materials (particularly for immersion programs);
3. Inherent challenges in the relational aspects of teaching;
4. Underlying problems of classroom management and sometimes difficult clientele;
5. Initial training and career choice of the drop-out teachers.
First, it is noteworthy that the majority of the drop-outs documented in this study occurred within the first five years of teaching (including 50% within the first two years), which confirms the argument that the professional induction phase is particularly conducive to teacher attrition (Guarino, Santibañez & Daley, 2006; Hammerness, 2008; Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2004).

In terms of difficulties encountered by the drop-out teachers, excessive workload outside the workplace (at home, etc.), too often heavy workloads and the resultant lack of time are the main points related to work conditions. Although it comes up, low salary is not a prominent factor in teacher attrition, a finding that has been reported previously (Brill & McCartney, 2008; OECD, 2005; Ondrich, Pas & Yinger, 2008).

The shortage of instructional materials is also reported as a reason to quit teaching, and this appears to be particularly true for immersion teaching, because the language of teaching does not always correspond to the language of the community. Indeed, in an English-speaking school, the teaching materials made available to French immersion teachers are mostly in English (e.g., history textbooks), which means they would not be very useful in a French immersion class.

Classroom management and difficult students are also major challenges for new teachers, whatever the subject being taught. In fact, classroom management is a destabilizing feature that confronts beginning teachers from the start (Romano, 2008). Moreover, young teachers usually prioritize this aspect over teaching the subject or student learning (Kagan, 1992).

The relational aspects of teaching are further problems that new teachers must cope with. Difficult relationships with some parents of students is repeatedly mentioned as a reason that drives future teachers to quit, especially by the key informants. On the other hand, the drop-out teachers place more emphasis on problematic relations with the administration and colleagues. In this respect, lack of support, particularly when problems with parents occur, is the most recurrent theme among the respondents, which corroborates the findings of recent studies (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Chaplain, 2008; Gonzalez, Brown & Slate, 2008; Hudson, Beutel & Hudson, 2008; OECD, 2005). The administration is usually the first point of contact for drop-out teachers who are experiencing problems. However, the results indicate that they do not always get the help they need. Colleagues are also important contacts when difficulties arise. The two types of support appear to be connected: either the drop-out teachers turn first to the administration and then appeal to their colleagues when they do not get the help they need, or they turn first to their colleagues and later to the administration when the problem persists. In either case, the support they receive does not seem to meet their expectations or resolve their problems. Besides the perceived lack of support, the respondents also report a fear of looking incompetent. This point is certainly explained in part by the job insecurity that most beginning teachers experience: asking one’s employer for help could be viewed as an obstacle to securing a permanent job. We also note the absence of a relationship of trust between the drop-out teacher and the other school actors. Family and friends provide a final line of support that is at the same time judgment-free.
Paradoxically to the lack of support reported, the drop-out teachers appear to have had opportunities to work jointly or in collaboration with their colleagues, which implies a differentiation between collaboration between teachers and support for drop-out teachers, two relatively independent themes in this study. In practice, this means that new French immersion and French as a second language teachers seem to be able to collaborate with their colleagues, but not necessarily to ask for help when they need it.

Teaching as a career choice and professional aspirations to become a teacher show two inverse trends. In the first case, drop-out teachers show a lack of initial interest in the profession, which partly explains their eventual departure. However, and in equal proportions, the drop-out teachers were motivated to go into teaching. Two explanations may be posited to clarify the relationship between the initial motivation and the subsequent departure: either the teachers idealized the teaching profession, a point that has been brought up in other studies (e.g., Hammerness, 2008), or they had poor teaching skills. In both cases, initial training is repeatedly blamed, in that it inadequately or partially prepares students for teaching, indirectly increasing the odds that they will leave the profession.

So what can be done to prevent teacher attrition in French immersion and French as a second language programs? How can we help future teachers? Consistent with logic, better support in general and administrative support in particular as well as university training that better provides the requisite skills are suggested, along with more instructional materials, specific conditions for beginning teachers (including lighter workloads) and strategies to provide them with help when they experience problems. Above all, the most often cited need by the respondents concerns an aspect of professional induction: mentoring, combined with a rearranged work schedule for new teachers.

Before presenting the recommendations for education systems, it is important to suggest some directions for future research. First, it would be instructive to conduct this kind of survey on a regular basis in order to deepen our understanding of the drop-out phenomenon. This recommendation is consistent with the conclusions of the meta-analysis by Borman and Dowling (2008), which emphasizes that empirical data need to be gathered. Otherwise, it would be important to examine the relations between the diverse moderators of teacher attrition to better understand how they interact. More studies should be conducted to examine and compare the perceptions of a variety of actors, as we have done. Finally, in line with the project Current Trends in the Evolution of School Personnel in Canadian Elementary and Secondary Schools (http://www.teachcan.ca), it would be useful to conduct a follow-up study on new French immersion and French as a second language teachers, from university training to professional induction into teaching.
9. Recommendations to prevent teacher attrition in French immersion and French as a second language programs

These recommendations are directed to school systems and stem from the results of the present study.

1. Put in place a mentoring system in schools where new teachers are hired.
2. Arrange a lighter workload for new teachers to help them adapt to the conditions inherent in teaching practice.
3. Put in place a professional induction plan to support teachers who enter the profession, with clearly defined roles for all school actors.
4. Set up collaboration spaces between experienced teachers and new teachers, so that new teachers can more readily exchange ideas with and benefit from the advice of their more experienced peers.
5. Raise awareness among school boards as to the importance of providing French instructional materials to French immersion teachers working in English schools. Create a shared network of specific immersion instructional materials.
6. Disseminate the results of this research report to school administrators so they will be less likely to assign the most difficult classrooms to novice teachers.
7. Raise awareness among teachers as to the difficulties that new teachers experience during the induction stage so that they will be more likely to assist them.
8. Disseminate the results of this study to universities so they will establish strategies to better prepare future teachers for the realities of the classroom, and particularly classroom management.
9. Put in place a Canada-wide system of help and support using information and communication technologies (email and other online means of communication) to help new teachers survive the professional induction phase.


