



Lester B. Pearson  
School Board

Commission scolaire  
Lester-B.-Pearson

# FOCUS GROUPS SUMMARY

Presented to the Long Term Planning  
Committee

*"Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world." –  
Nelson Mandela*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB) is in process of examining its service offer at the secondary level. In the spring of 2018, the board's Long Term Planning Committee commissioned a survey of parents, teachers and students to gauge levels of interest in the innovation of specific programs. That survey generated nearly 7,000 responses on six different programming options available to high schools.

As a follow-up to this survey, the LBPSB Long Term Planning Committee mandated Talent Flex Consulting Inc. to facilitate ten focus groups with parents, students and teachers in the three regions of the school board to validate the level of understanding, acceptability and disparity in preferences for three of the six suggested programs:

- Vocational option
- Project-based learning
- Collaborative bilingual school

In total, 59 participants attended the sessions.

The understanding of the program impacts the level of acceptability. It was particularly the case for the project-based learning options. When participants of a specific group could explain what project-based learning was to the rest of the group, the level of understanding would increase and the level of acceptability as well.

The understanding of the vocational option and collaborative bilingual school was standard and clear for participants. However, should LBPSB move forward with the project-based learning, a particular focus should be put on informing and educating the targeted population that it is an emerging form of learning; a major change from the traditional methods. And, change must be managed proactively.

All three options or a combination of these options could be acceptable to the participants. Although there was some disparity in the preferences of each group, no option clearly stood out for a particular group of participants or by region.

- Teachers were the least polarized group. They identified all three options as being viable but had numerous concerns with the logistic for each of them.
- Parents want options for their kids, want them to be bilingual and they also want to continue sending their kids to LBPSB.
- Student's preferences were more around the vocational option and the collaborative bilingual school.

As "devil's in the details", all participants have asked many questions on the logistics of each program. Regardless of the options to be chosen by LBPSB, the "how" must be well planned and deployed to ensure student success.

## INTRODUCTION

The Lester B. Pearson School Board is in process of examining its service offer at the secondary level. This includes consideration of use of building, shared premises and program adjustments in existing school projects. In the spring of 2018, the board's Long Term Planning Committee commissioned a survey of parents, teachers and students to gauge levels of interest in the innovation of specific programs. That survey generated nearly 7000 responses on six different programming options available to high schools.

As a follow-up to this survey, the LBPSB Long Term Planning Committee would like to explore the three options that emerged, more deeply through the use of focus groups representing parents, students and teachers respectively. A focus group for each will be run in the three general territories of our board (Southwest, West Island and Off Island) for a total of 10 groups.

The committee has identified the following outcomes as being desirable in this particular exercise:

1. Is there a clear understanding of each option and does clarity alter the feedback from a particular group?
2. If there is a disparity in support for a particular option, what may explain that disparity? How significant is the disparity?
3. Is there a disparity in support for a particular option based upon region?
4. What may be motivating support for a particular option by a particular group?

Talent Flex Consulting Inc. has been mandated to conduct the focus groups and produce this report which will be presented to the Long Term Planning Committee of the School Board.

LBPSB was responsible for identifying and inviting participants to each of the ten focus groups. The target was to have between 6 and 12 participants for each group, which was achieved for eight of the ten focus groups (only 2 students showed up for the West Island session and 4 parents for the Off island session). In total, 59 participants attended the sessions.

This report presents the methodology of the focus groups, an overview of the demographic profile of the participants, general trends gathered from the sessions as well as specific trends for each region and groups. Talent Flex Consulting Inc. also presents some specific recommendations pertaining to program development, program deployment, follow-up communication as well as future public consultations. All recommendations are in linked with questions and/or comments gathered during the focus group sessions.

## SECTION 1: METHODOLOGY

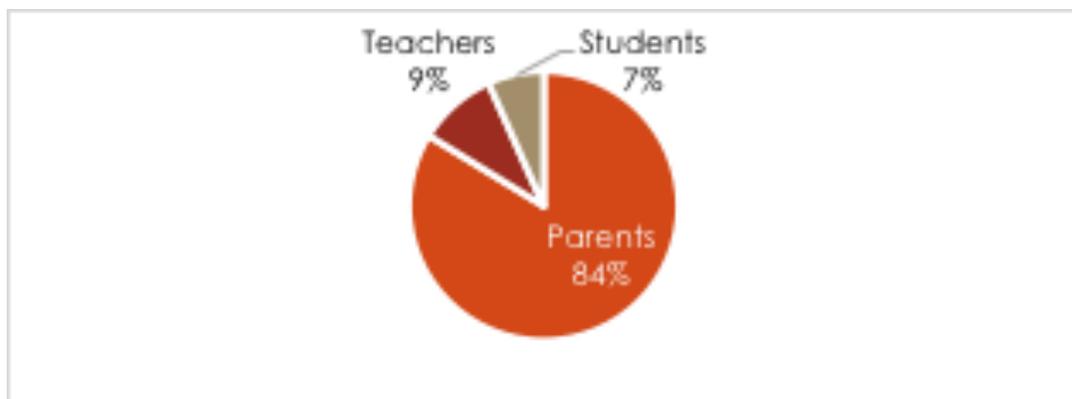
### ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey was developed and posted on a secure website. Invitations to complete this survey were sent out mid-June 2018 to parents of the students at the LBPSB schools, to the teachers who teach at LBPSB and to a sample of students from grades 9, 10 and 11. Data collection stopped June 20, 2018. A total of 6,891 respondents submitted information.<sup>1</sup>

As stated in the report prepared by L.C.D. Consulting: "The Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB) is interested in finding out the degree of acceptance for each of the six suggested new programs for the high schools in its system."

The survey had 25 questions, of which 14 questions aimed at obtaining the respondents preferences with regards to the six proposed programs.

Of the total of 6,891 useable responses:



Three of the six suggested program ideas were identified as having a good chance to succeed:

- Vocational option
- Independent learning (or project-based learning)
- Bilingual school

<sup>1</sup> Investigation of New Ideas for High School Programs, prepared for Lester B. Pearson School Board, L.B.C. Consulting Services, Montréal, Canada, July 2018 (Online Survey Report)

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## FOCUS GROUPS

### B. OBJECTIVES

The LBPSB Long Term Planning Committee would like to explore the three options that were favored in the survey more thoroughly through the use of focus groups representing parents, students and teachers respectively. A focus group for each will be run in the three general territories of our board (Southwest, West Island, and Off Island).

The committee has identified the following outcomes as being desirable in this particular exercise:

2. Is there a clear understanding of each option and does clarity alter the feedback from a particular group?
3. If there is a disparity in support for a particular option, what may explain that disparity? How significant is the disparity?
4. Is there a disparity in support for a particular option based upon region?
5. What may be motivating support for a particular option by a particular group?

### B. FOCUS GROUPS

Ten focus groups were organized in October. All ten focus groups were facilitated by Josée-Christine Boilard, CEO and strategic advisor at Talent Flex Consulting Inc. She was accompanied by a co-facilitator for each of the sessions. Joëlle Verreault and Maude Laroche acted as co-facilitators.

### C. PARTICIPANTS SELECTION

LBPSB was responsible for the participants' selection. Participants were randomly selected from the list of people who had previously answered the online survey, had answered "yes" to question 24 "If one is held, would you be available to attend a focus group discussion specifically to discuss the future of the structure of high schools in the LBPSB system?" and replied positively to the email invitation sent out by LBPSB in the week of October 1 2018.

59 people participated to one of the ten focus groups that were organized between October 17 and October 24, 2018:

	<b>Students</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Parents</b>
<i>Number of participants to the survey</i>	<b>666</b>	<b>759</b>	<b>5223</b>
<i>Number of participants who have answered “yes” for a focus group</i>	<b>223</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>1767</b>
<i>Number of invitations sent out for focus groups</i>	<b>223</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>1131</b>
<i>Number of formal invitations sent to potential participants</i>	<b>23</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>
<i>Number of people of have accepted the invitation to participate in the focus group</i>	<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>
<i>Number who attended focus group</i>	<b>14</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>18</b>

#### D. FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS AGENDA

All focus groups followed a general standardized agenda and had a duration of 90 minutes. Participants were asked to complete a non-disclosure agreement as well as a short demographic questionnaire when they arrived.

All focus groups were organized the same way:

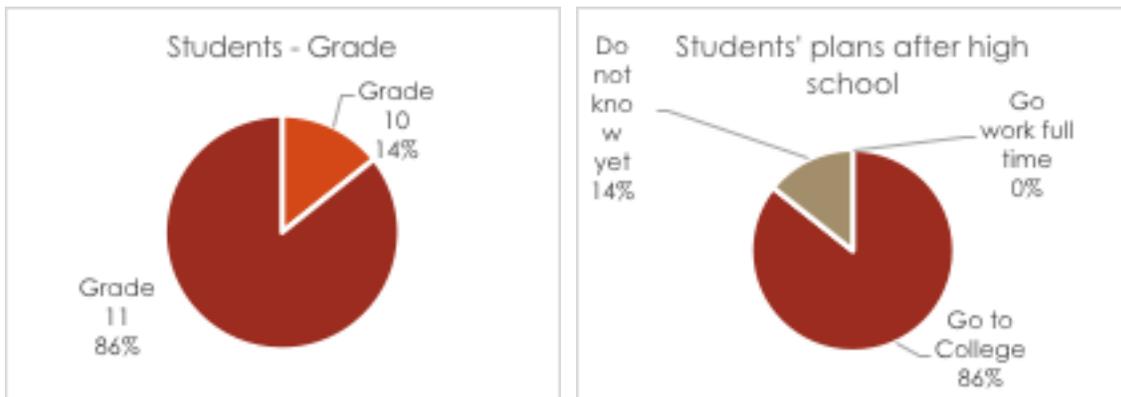
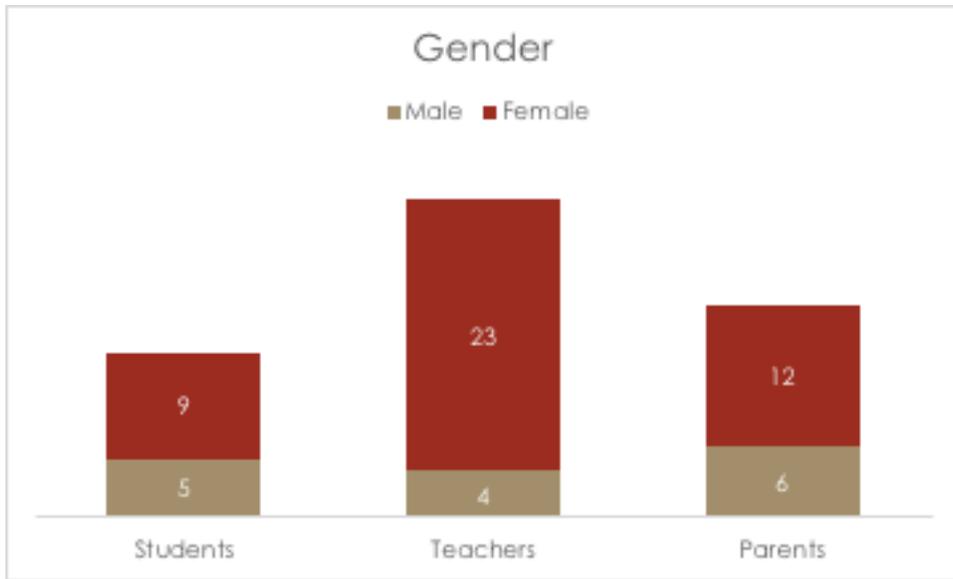
1. Participants' introduction
2. Facilitators' introduction
3. Short introduction
  - a. Context of LBPSB revisiting its high school programs
  - b. High level survey results
  - c. Purpose of focus groups
  - d. Ground rules for discussion
4. Between 15 and 25 minutes were dedicated to each of the three programs identified by the school board (vocational option, project based learning and bilingual school):
  - a. Participants were asked to read a short description of the program which had been prepared by LBPSB (see section 3 of this document)
  - b. Followed by the first question: “*What do you understand from that description?*”
  - c. The first few groups were also asked specifically about the advantages and disadvantages of each options
  - d. As the sessions progressed, other vetting questions were asked to clarify comments received from previous groups
  - e. For the vocational option, participants were also asked to list individually the trades that should be favored should LBPSB decide to offer this program in some of its schools

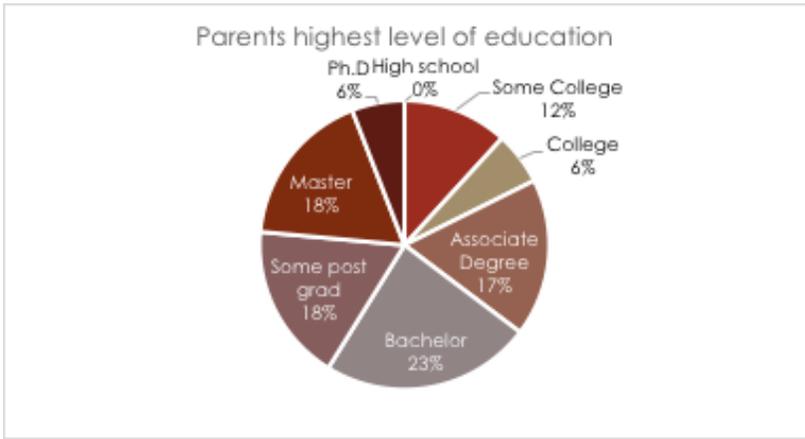
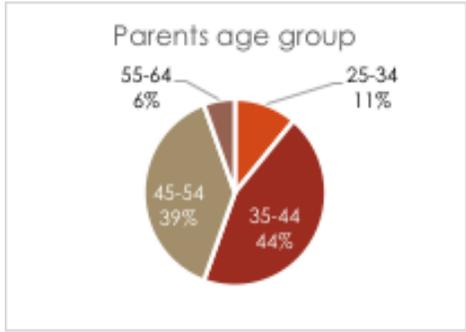
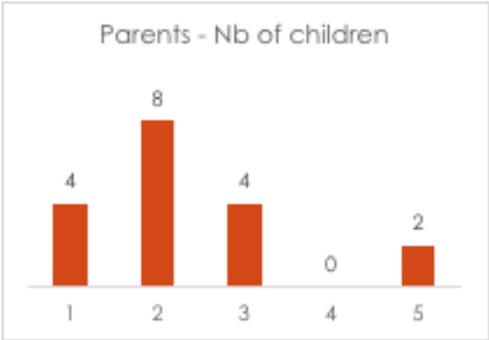
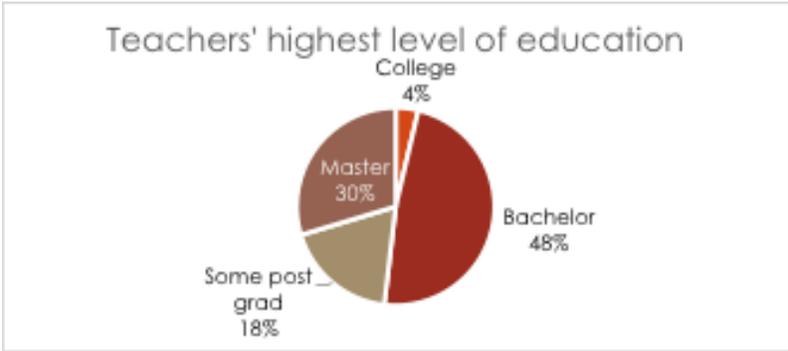
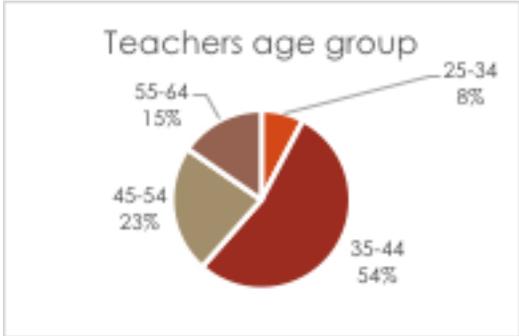
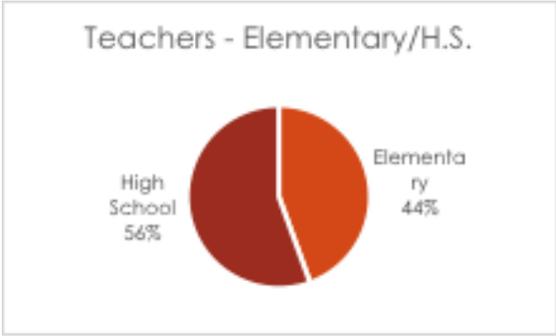
5. Participants were then asked to rank each program from 1 to 3. The original purpose of this question was to establish whether the opinion had changed from the answer that was given when they completed the survey. However, most participants who had completed the survey could not remember what option they had chosen.
6. A short conclusion followed
7. Participants were then asked to complete a Feed-back questionnaire of the session.

## SECTION 2: PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHICS

Students were almost entirely selected by the principals of nearby high schools as the number of respondents to the invitation was too few.

Most parents and teachers had completed the survey, but the majority could not remember which option they had opted for.





## SECTION 3: PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS (AS PREPARED BY LBPSB)

### VOCATIONAL OPTION

This is a formal model which has been recognized and promoted by the Ministry of Education in Quebec for several years.

French school boards across the province have been more active in deploying (or exploring) this model than English boards.

Essentially, in a vocational program,

- Students commit to pursuing either a program in vocational education (or a trade that leads to the workplace) and their general secondary education at the same time.
- The vocational education courses would be integrated into their secondary program.
- It would require students to be part of a specific cohort (group) all working towards the same professional certificate after Secondary III.
- Students would have a particular path of study in Secondary IV and V which would allow them to graduate from high school but also be close to completing and simultaneously obtain a Diploma of Vocational Studies.
- They could still attend CEGEP even if they decided to finish up their professional training, since certain Vocational Programs, where a *passerelle* exists, would lead directly to CEGEP Technical Programs.

### PROJECT BASED LEARNING

There are elements of this model already in place in some classrooms and schools in our system. The idea here would be to orient an entire school towards this approach. This is sometimes referred to as an "Inquiry Based Model" or "IB Program".

- Students learn through working on independent projects with teacher support. Those projects could be individual or collaborative or a combination of both.
- Often, students decide the project to work on, to allow them to learn the particular subject. Teachers can give them an array of projects or, most often, general parameters from which students then build their projects on.
- The curriculum is covered as students engage in the projects and pursue what it is that they need to know to be able to complete them.
- The focus is on learning through real world situations and solving real world problems which are identified by the students.
- It often means that time and space is less structured than in a traditional school model. Students may not follow a traditional class schedule but have more time available for independent work.
- Students see teachers for guidance on their projects but may also spend time meeting with classmates or project partners to explore content together.

- Evaluation in this sort of a model is ongoing and based upon students reflecting continuously on what they are doing rather than on some sort of final test or exam which measures content knowledge.

### COLLABORATIVE BILINGUAL SCHOOL

This model would be a joint project with our sister board, the Commission Scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys (CSMB). It would require approval from the Ministry of Education as a special project.

- Students from both school boards would occupy the same building and remain registered in their home school board.
- Half the students in the school would be from LBPSB, half from CSMB.
- Students would be encouraged to take mother tongue French in blended classes.
- Students would be encouraged to take mother tongue English in blended classes.
- A limited number of courses would be available for students to take in their second language if they elected to do so. This would be part of the negotiation with MEES.
- LBPSB students could elect to study courses in French at their choosing.
- Clubs, teams and other extra-curricular activities would be blended.
- The school would function bilingually in its daily operations.

## SECTION 4: GENERAL TRENDS

### VOCATIONAL OPTION

This program was generally well understood by the all participants of the focus groups. The general understanding is as follows:

- Integration of the option of vocational education after secondary III.
- Concomitant: students who choose this option would obtain a high school diploma and have completed a good portion of a vocational certificate at the same time.
- Ability to go to CEGEP since High school diploma is completed through a *passerelle* program that would allow for them to complete missing courses required by CEGEP.
- Offering of vocational education in the regular schools as opposed to adult education centers only.

There is a common understanding that this program is tailored to kids that are not academically inclined.

Participants have also identified similar advantages and disadvantages to this option:

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Quicker to job market / efficient way to use students' time</li><li>- High school diploma completed</li><li>- More options for students</li><li>- Tied to the needs of the workplace</li><li>- Improve drop out rate</li><li>- Help motivate the ones who are not academics</li><li>- Reduces the stigma associated with vocational education since they do have a high school diploma</li><li>- Cohort make it easier to manage</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Stress level is already high, this stream would have to replace other courses</li><li>- There is a stigma, a negative reception to these training</li><li>- What would happen with teachers that teach option classes</li><li>- It's a more difficult sell to parents than students</li></ul>

In general, most participants were in favor of implementing this option in regular high schools although some of parents have mentioned that secondary III is too early to take that kind of decision. However, there were a lot of discussions around the following elements:

- This program should be optional. This is not an option for everyone. Some students know that they want to go to CEGEP after their high school diploma and this option should not prevent them from doing so.
- Some participants have noted that it is not the same skills that are required to do vocational education or CEGEP and University and wonder whether it is possible to

offer a concomitance program. However, literacy and math are deemed to be important regardless of the path student chooses.

- There is a general opinion that some vocational clientele are just not strong enough to complete high school so there would still have to be two different programs.

Furthermore, almost all participants have raised the issue of the negative perception around vocational education. Kids have been pushed by the education system and their parents to complete their college and university diploma. Students who have been pushed towards vocational education are often the ones that are academically challenged. And for those students who are generally good at school, it is perceived as being "an easy way out".

There is also a general opinion that kids should be exposed much younger, much more efficiently to the different career paths whether they be vocational, technical (i.e. college) or university. It is felt that existing support in career/guidance counseling is insufficient in general and that kids (and their parents) are not sufficiently equipped to make a career choice in secondary III.

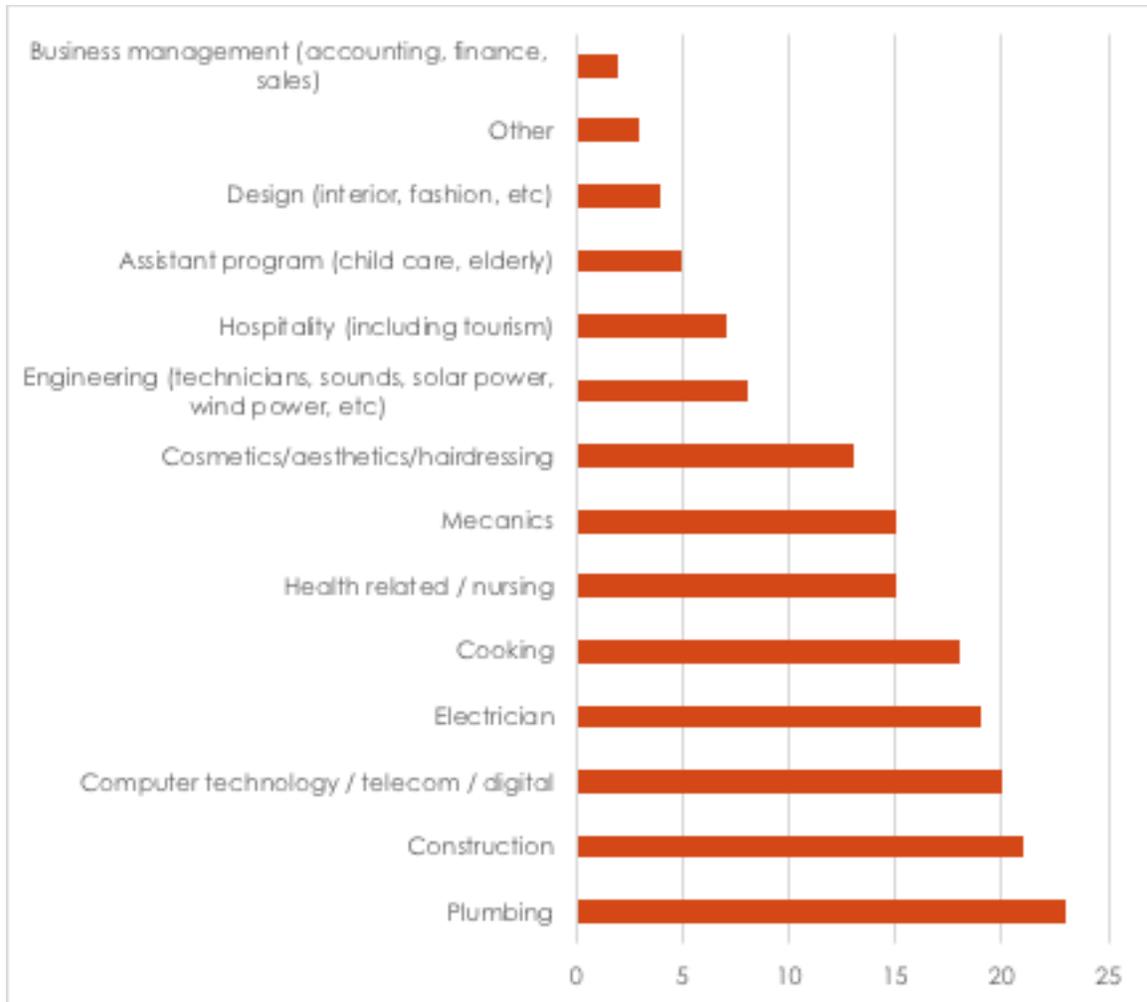
Should LBPSB decide to implement this model, the following elements should be clarified and communicated to parents, teachers and students:

- Which diploma would be obtained at the end of this curriculum? Is it a "real" high school diploma? How many credits towards the vocational program?
- What happens once diploma is completed? Do students who have opted for vocational training go to an adult education center? Do they do an internship?
- Are vocational courses replacing option courses, which ones?
- What happens if a student changes his/her mind one year into the program?
- What would be the *passerelle* if a student chose to finally go to CEGEP?
- How can they go to those trade schools and do courses with students that are in the vocational program full time? Would it be the same facilities?

#### **KEY SUCCESS FACTORS:**

- Offer flexibility to change their minds (in or out)
- Improve all aspects of understanding/educating on the different career paths early (elementary through to high school).
- Train guidance counselors so they can both support the decision-making process and the search for an internship or a job at the end of the vocational training. Most CEGEP and universities have their career placement centers, high schools offering vocational training should have one too. Career workshops not just vocational, all fields. Promote vocational education as an alternative that is as successful as college or university education and that requires hard work and dedication (i.e. this is not the "easy way out")
- Adapt the system to the reality of vocational education. It is a whole different approach, so it has to be designed as a whole and not just some classes.

Participants were asked to list the trades that should be favored for the vocational education program. Below is a summary of the suggestions.



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## PROJECT BASED LEARNING

Most participants were in favor to some degree to this proposal as it teaches students how to be learners. However, the spectrum of understanding for this program was quite large, from a project by “traditional” academic subject (English, Math, Science, etc.), to a formula that is similar to the personal project of the IB program or the “genius hour”, to a project that encompasses all academic fields and where students decides on what they will actually work on. Some teachers and parents have been exposed to the deep learning model that exists in some elementary schools and noticed that it provides a high success rate as students learn more concepts at once. However, there are no ministry exams in elementary schools, so evaluations can be adapted to this model.

All participants agree that this type of teaching would bring more relevance to students because they would choose a project that is interesting to them, they would be willing to put in the work, this would result is high levels of engagement.

It seems though that students that are currently performing in the existing regular or traditional teaching methods are more reluctant to this model as this would require them to work in teams and they feel they would be putting in all the work and other kids would benefit from their work. They are also concerned that they would not develop all the skills and knowledge that they need to pursue CEGEP and/or university. Furthermore, most participants believe that this model would work for some students – those who are self-motivating in particular – but not for kids who require structure and discipline. There is a concern that some students may fail at developing the required skills as they would wait last minute to complete their assignments. Teachers have mentioned that LBPSB is an inclusive Board and as such, must propose different methods of teaching to ensure the success of all students. Parents have mentioned that teenagers need structure and guidance and have a propensity to push the limits, so they have the potential to choose easier projects or wait to the last minute to complete their assignments.

Parents that are close to the business world are more in favor of this model as they feel that it is a better reflection of today’s labor market. Likewise, for teachers who have been exposed to this model, have done training or have followed researches in that field.

*“This sounds like a 21st century evolved type of education” - Parent*

It is a common opinion that a balance with traditional teaching would be required to learn the fundamentals of each subject. It is felt that an optimal break-down between traditional learning and project-based learning must be established for this model to work. It is particularly the case for mathematics, music and science courses.

However,

- This model requires a strong buy-in from teachers
- Teachers will need time to plan, coordinate activities with other teachers and counsel children
- Evaluations, in particular the MEQ examinations, would have to be revisited to make sure that it is in line with this new philosophy

- Schedules would also have to be reviewed to adapt to this new approach
- Milestones must be established clearly to make sure that all students acquire the skills and knowledge that are expected to be learned each year.

Participants have also identified advantages and disadvantages to this option:

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More motivating for students as they choose topics that interests them</li> <li>- Makes learning much more concrete</li> <li>- Development of soft skills required in the workplace (leadership, communication, team work, critical thinking, time management, logistics, problem resolution, etc.)</li> <li>- Improve students' success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The stronger kids would end up with all the work</li> <li>- Difficult to include a more varied clientele and special class rooms with the program</li> <li>- MEQ evaluations must be adapted to this model</li> <li>- Current school structure must be adapted in particular as it pertains to classes size</li> </ul>

Should LBPSB decide to implement this model, the following elements should be clarified and communicated to parents, teachers and students:

- What happens if a student finishes a project sooner? Do you get time off or do you start another project?
- How are projects chosen to ensure that the level of complexity is adequate to the learnings that are expected for each grade?
- How will the logistic work at the school level (dedicated "project" schedule, coordination/counseling/advisory)?
- How will progress be tracked against MEQ evaluations?

### KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

- Teachers need more time for planning, coordinating, counseling/advising and to work as teaching teams to follow the curriculum of learnings that are required. Classes should be smaller to ensure that teachers have enough time to supervise all students.
- Teachers must be trained on this new model as this requires more coaching, coordinating and planning skills than actual knowledge in a specific field.
- Specific milestones should be established to ensure that all students move forward throughout the year.
- There should be a balance between traditional learning and project-based learning.
- Schedules have to be revisited.
- Evaluations would also have to be revisited in this model.

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## COLLABORATIVE BILINGUAL SCHOOL

This program was also well understood by the majority of the participants. The general understanding is as follows:

- One school from LBPSB and one school from a French school board (such as Marguerite- Bourgeoys) would be located in the same building
- Students from each school board would benefit from mother tongue French and English courses
- Some subjects would be offered to students of each classes in French or in English (blended classes)
- Students would get to socialize in the school, in clubs, sports and/or other extra-curricular activities
- Each student would remain in their own school board, but would have classes together and all communications and public announcements would be bilingual
- "a Montreal-style school"

Not surprisingly, the vast majority of participants recognized that bilingualism is essential for all Quebec students. In fact, they all felt that the ability to speak more than one language was essential for all kids. Participants also felt that one of the best ways to learn a new language is to practice with people that do speak it, making the socialization aspect of the collaborative bilingual school very interesting.

It should be noted that almost none of the participants felt that the high school curriculum was sufficient for students to be bilingual at their graduation. There is also a shared opinion that it is difficult to attract French teachers at the school board.

Most participants thought that the proposed Collaborative Bilingual School was interesting in theory. In particular that this program would:

- Help students be more fluent in French at the end of their high school education
- Help protect English schools as cost would be shared with the French school board
- Allow students to socialize with French kids

However, there were a lot of concerns raised with this program:

- Perception that the school board wants to close down more schools.
- Although everyone recognizes that it may be beneficial for both francophones and anglophones to learn a second language, there are concerns that the students from the French school board would not be able to attend English classes because of legislative constraints deriving from Bill 101. Furthermore, participants were not sure how the blended class would work as the level of students for each language varies quite a lot.
- There is a shared concern that conflicts could potentially arise between the two groups and that segregation would prevail just like it is the case with the existing model of offering more than one program in a school.
- Participants recognized that the current political climate in Quebec is more favorable than it was in the 1990's but there is still concerns for territory protection that would create internal conflicts within the school as it was the case for John Rennie when it was bilingual.

- There are major differences in education philosophy between LBPSB, that is deemed to be inclusive, and other school boards. It is the case for students but also for teachers and teaching assignments methods that are different from the French school board.
- Many concerns were raised by teachers, in particular for anglophone teachers who would be negatively impacted by this program.

Finally, while some participants felt that this program would be beneficial for kids attending LBPSB as they would be exposed to more French, most felt that anglophone students would not necessarily improve their French with this program.

Participants have also identified advantages and disadvantages to this option:

+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would help students learn French as they would socialize daily with francophones</li> <li>- Hard to attract French teachers at LBPSB</li> <li>- Could offer more services, sports and other activities to students as expenses would be shared by two school boards</li> <li>- Students could help each other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would still be divided as it is easier to fraternize with people that speak the same language</li> <li>- The blended courses would not work because there are too many levels</li> </ul>

Should LBPSB decide to implement this model, the following elements should be clarified and communicated to parents, teachers and students:

- Bill 101: Can French kids attend English classes for subjects other than English?
- Would there be 2 administrative offices, 2 principals and 2 different way to discipline and philosophies?
- How would space be defined between the English and the French classes?

### KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

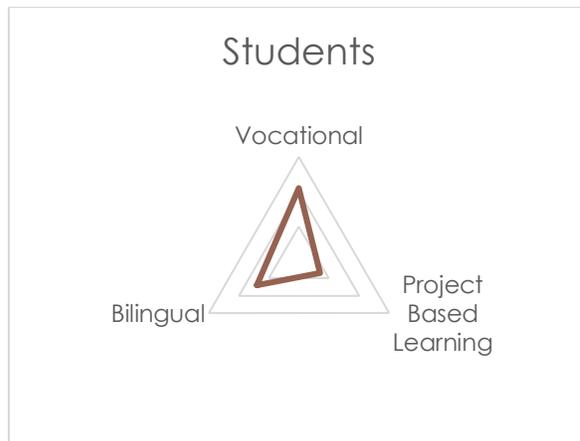
- The emergence of one culture for the school would be essential to make it work.
- Must be done in a progressive way, starting young (elementary school) and evolve through this model
- Work proactively with teachers' unions to make sure that the model is acceptable to them and that anglophone teachers can maintain their employment with the school board.
- Understand why graduation rates in English schools are higher than French schools to make sure that it is maintained with the implementation of this program.

## SECTION 5: SPECIFIC TRENDS

This section presents the preference of each group (students, teachers, parents) and of each region.

At the end of each session, participants were asked to rank each program based on their understanding and the discussions. The results of this exercise are presented below graphically. Considering the limited number of participants to the focus groups, there is no statistical relevance to these results. However, it provides LBPSB with a sense of the preference that emerged from the sessions.

### TEACHERS, PARENTS, STUDENTS



Southwest students were skewed towards vocational with bilingual following as preferred options while Off island students were more in favor of the bilingual program and then vocational. West Island only had 2 students attending.

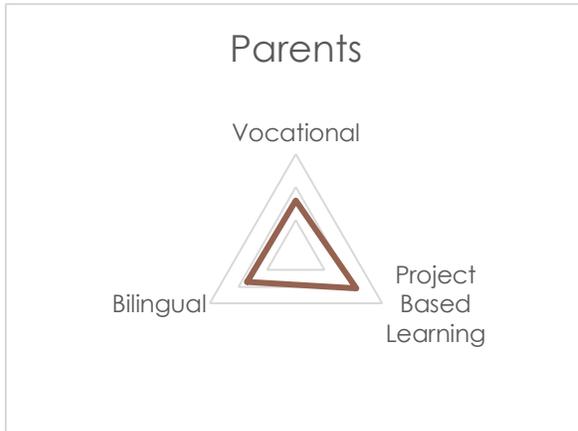
Students did not understand fully the project-based learning option. None of the students had been exposed to this model except for some of the IB personal projects. Furthermore, there seems to be concerns for "enriched" kids that they would end up with all the work. They feel they work well in the current evaluation system.



Teachers' preferences were much more diverse. No consensus per group except for John Rennie (who was composed of parents/teachers) that was skewed towards vocational. When we look at the preferences that were indicated by the participants of each group, there was almost no disparity for each option.

Teachers have raised a lot of clarifying questions and will want to understand how it would be deployed logistically. They have also raised concerns for their anglophone colleagues should the

bilingual option be implemented and would require time and training for the project-based learning option.



Southwest parents were skewed towards project-based learning, West Island parents towards vocational and Off island towards bilingual programs.

All parents were concerned with the level of bilingualism of their kids graduating from high school. However, they don't necessarily think that school is the only solution, socialization is key to learning French. Those parents who had children in project-based elementary schools were more in favor of the project-based learning model but were wondering how it would be implemented at the high school level considering the MEQ evaluation system.

Most parents think that the vocational option should be implemented. However, when asked if they would be comfortable with their kids choosing this option, a fair proportion thought that students were too young to take that kind of decision in secondary III.

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## PER REGION



Students were skewed towards vocational training while both parents and teachers were skewed towards project-based learning.

Teachers from Southwest raised a lot of concerns with implementation of each option and believe that both French teachers and anglophone teachers would be negatively impacted by the Collaborative Bilingual program.

One parent suggested that a blend of these programs would be interesting as well.



No particular option stood out for students (only 2) and teachers in this location. Parents were skewed towards vocational. However, it should be noted that only 4 parents showed up and 3 of them followed a vocational path in their career.

The teachers group was the most diverse group (male/female, francophone/ anglophone, project-based/ alternative / elementary).

In this location, all three groups have raised the necessity to bring back the home economics classes to prepare kids for the “real world”.



Both parents and students were skewed towards bilingual programs.

Students from this group were concerned with the project-based learning mostly for the teamwork portion of it. They were really comfortable with the way evaluation were currently done as they were performing in this model.

Off island Teachers raised concerns with the project-based learning program for some specific topics and considering the MEQ evaluations that are not adapted to this model.

## SECTION 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents recommendations in line with comments made by the participants throughout the sessions and based on best practices the consultants have observed in their prior experience.

### PERTAINING TO DEVELOPMENT OF NEW PROGRAMS

All participants were in favor with the introduction of new programs. Not surprisingly though, they would be in favor of programs if they had been exposed too or could easily understand it. It was particularly the case for the project-based learning program. Those teachers who were in favor had a chance to attend a conference on this topic, had made research or had been exposed to the model that was implemented in elementary schools. Most parents who were in favor of this program had kids in elementary school who were involved in such a program or were close to the business world and knowledgeable of emerging management models where this approach is becoming prevalent.

Taking this into consideration, LBPSB may want to consider using multi-disciplinary consultative committees to support in the development of new programs in order to:

- Understand when and where information will be required to educate parents, teachers and students.
- Start educating the stakeholders
- Be able to link high school education to the requirements of CEGEP, University and the labor market
- Prepare the implementation proactively, taking into consideration the budget constraints.

From another perspective, some participants felt that new programs were interesting but the “back to basics” was also necessary. Many mentioned the need to reintegrate Home Economics in the curriculum as a way to prepare kids for their future independence and expose them to other skills.

In future program decisions that will be taken, the school board should pursue its willingness to be inclusive to all and to propose alternatives for special needs students and exceptional students alike.

Finally, everyone understands the budgetary challenges of the school board. Regardless of the options that will be chosen, LBPSB should make sure that the program can be sustained for the duration of the studies of the cohort (i.e. 5 years).

### PERTAINING TO DEPLOYMENT OF NEW PROGRAMS

Most participants strongly believe that the current formula of multi-program schools is beneficial for kids. However, there is a feeling that there are already many programs in LBPSB schools and that, to a certain extent, they are cannibalizing each other. LBPSB should perhaps look at the direct “competition” (private schools, French schools or even

schools from other English school boards) to develop a differentiated value proposition that would help attract those children that can attend the English schools. Some parents believe that this value proposition is linked with the privilege anglophone kids have to attend English schools.

Regardless of the options to be chosen by the school board, it will be important to proactively promote all of them and educate future students and their parents on the benefits of each program, so they can take the best decision. Enriched and IB programs seem to be very visible and “sold” efficiently to future students and their parents but the alternatives are not. One of the participating parents shared her experience in supporting her kids through the selection process for Grade 7 and though she had failed to properly orient her daughter.

Finally, a new program is a change at the school level. It is therefore very important to properly manage change throughout the development and deployment of new programs. A proper change management plan should, amongst other things, include the following elements:

- A detailed communication plan that takes into account all stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, school management, etc.)
- Logistics of the new program (schedule, content, budgets, classroom setup, equipment, etc.)
- Impact on teaching team and other members of the school staff
- Training required for teachers to adapt to the new program

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## PERTAINING TO FUTURE CONSULTATIONS

The majority of participants really appreciated having the opportunity to express themselves on the programs. Most of them would have been interested in discussing the three other options presented in the survey or discuss other alternatives. Some teachers felt that decisions were already taken by the school board and were skeptical that their opinion would make a real difference.

In our opinion, public consultations are an efficient way to obtain other points of view, particularly from students and their parents. Teachers, who will ultimately be responsible for implementing the decisions taken by the school board are also an invaluable source of feedback. They fully understand the operational and logistical caveats of the programs to be implemented and should be leverage as much as possible in the development phase of new programs through consultative committees.

For future consultations, it is recommended to:

- Ensure that survey and focus groups be organized in a shorter time frame so that participants remember the context (and their answer);
- Invitation to face-to-face meeting be done a few weeks before the event;
- That invitation clearly states the purpose of the meeting;
- That a reminder be sent a few days prior to the event to ensure full attendance.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, all three options or a combination of these options could be acceptable to the participants we have met in the focus groups.

The understanding of the vocational option and collaborative bilingual school was standard and clear for participants.

Should LBPSB move forward with the project-based learning, a particular focus should be put on informing and educating the targeted population that it is an emerging form of learning; a major change from the traditional methods. And, change must be managed proactively.

Although there was some disparity in the preferences of each group, no option clearly stood out for a particular group of participants or by region.

As "devil's in the details", all participants have asked many questions on the logistics of each program. Regardless of the options to be chosen by LBPSB, the "how" must be well planned and deployed to ensure student success.

## APPENDIX

### FOCUS GROUPS PARTICIPANTS

Southwest – Lasalle CCHS Oct. 17	Students	Teachers	Parents
Nb of participants to the survey	47	109	801
Nb of participants who have answered "yes" for a focus group	19	49	322
Nb of invitations sent out for focus groups	19	49	322
Nb of formal invitations sent to potential participants	9	13	12
Nb of people of have accepted the invitation to participate in the focus group	2	10	11
Nb who attended focus group	7	7	8

West Island - Lindsay Place HS Oct 18	Students	Teachers	Parents
Nb of participants to the survey	376	399	2982
Nb of participants who have answered "yes" for a focus group	118	125	935
Nb of invitations sent out for focus groups	118	125	299
Nb of formal invitations sent to potential participants	6	11	12
Nb of people of have accepted the invitation to participate in the focus group	6	8	9
Nb who attended focus group	2	7	4

Off Island - St-Patrick Elem Oct 22	Students	Teachers	Parents
Nb of participants to the survey	243	251	1440
Nb of participants who have answered "yes" for a focus group	86	89	510
Nb of invitations sent out for focus groups	86	89	510
Nb of formal invitations sent to potential participants	8	12	12
Nb of people of have accepted the invitation to participate in the focus group	2	5	8
Nb who attended focus group	5	5	6