

Article Scarlett, French track

A survey among the Francophone community at FAIS

The two 6th grade French track conducted a survey among our community in order to better know the aspects of francophonie as represented at FAIS.

We first identified the francophones among our faculty and staff and came up with a list of 66 people. Out of the 66 questionnaires that were sent out, 62 came back completed.

We were curious to find out if the people who spoke French at our school were all born in a francophone country. Out of 62, 39 were born in a French speaking country, mainly in France (27), then Belgium (4), Algeria (2), Ivory Coast (2), Canada (2), Senegal (1), and Congo (1).

Out of the 39 persons born in a francophone country, 38 had French as their mother tongue, one had Baoulé. A few were bilingual from birth because one of their parents spoke another language. All 39 speak French fluently.

The 23 people who were born in a non francophone country were born in majority in the United States (20), Panama (1), Italy (1), Lebanon (1) and Iran (1), and grew up speaking English, Spanish, Arabic, Berbere and Farsi.

They learned French in school, and often pursued the study of French to a university level. Some of them speak fluently, or have a high proficiency level. They all are more than conversational in French, and are able to read and speak the language.

Interestingly enough, most of our bilingual French-English speakers speak another language. Spanish is the third language spoken, but also German, Italian, Arabic, Portuguese, Japanese, Greek, Russian, Croatian, Swedish, Dyula, Wolof, Malaghsy, Finnish, Manjack, Minnan, Breton and even sign language, showing the incredible cultural variety of our community.

All of our French Speakers use their language skills at work, or to travel and for cultural purposes.

When asked about what they liked best about the French language, answers ranged from musicality, its poetic aspect, its precision, its nuances, its variety, its multicultural origins, its complexity, its colorful idiomatic expressions, its linearity, the richness of its literature, its cultural heritage, its elegance.

When asked about the future of the French language, half of the people predicted a decline whereas the other half could foresee a growing influence, mainly due to the growth of African and African-French speaking countries.

So, what did we learn about our community through this experience? First that we are a truly unique school, in terms of multiculturalism and international open-mindedness. People of so many different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds cohabit peacefully and thrive in this environment. Language is not only the key to communication, but also the vector to more complex and richer exchanges, the possibility to share values and express ideas and philosophies that are crucial to us.

Also, this survey revealed that our faculty and staff are lifelong learners, picking up the study of a new language at any age, wanting to develop even further their internationalism, and to continuously feed their curiosity for the world at large..