

Westgarth Primary School Languages Working Party

Results from the School Community Survey

Introduction

A Languages Working Party (LWP) was established by the Westgarth Primary School Council and started operating in September 2013 to provide recommendations back to the School Council on a future languages education policy for Westgarth Primary School (WPS) by September 2014.

In November, 2013, the LWP conducted an on-line survey inviting feedback from the school community to:

- Better understand the importance of LOTE education within the school community;
- Measure the level of satisfaction with the current LOTE program offered at WPS;
- Determine the key objectives or priorities of a possible future languages program; and
- Gain some insight into the preferred languages of a LOTE education at WPS.

This report provides a summary of the outcomes from the survey and the LWP would like to thank those who took the time to complete the survey.

A total of 155 responses were received from the 401 households that formed the WPS community at the time – giving the survey a response rate of 38.7%.

Families with their **youngest child in prep to year 2** (in 2013) accounted for nearly three quarters (72.9%) of the total responses. The response rate was quite high for prep to year 2 households at 44%, but slightly lower for families with their **youngest child in year 3 to year 6** (29%).

Results

1) Overview of LOTE within the Westgarth Primary School community

From those households who completed the survey:

- 1 in 7 speaks a language other than English at home, with nearly half (45%) of these speaking Greek at home;
- Other languages spoken at home within the school community include: Arabic, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Norwegian, Russian, Serbian and Spanish;
- 1 in 9 studies a language other than English outside of WPS, with nearly half of these (47%) studying Greek; and
- Other languages studied outside WPS include: Arabic, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin and Russian.

2) Objectives of a LOTE Program

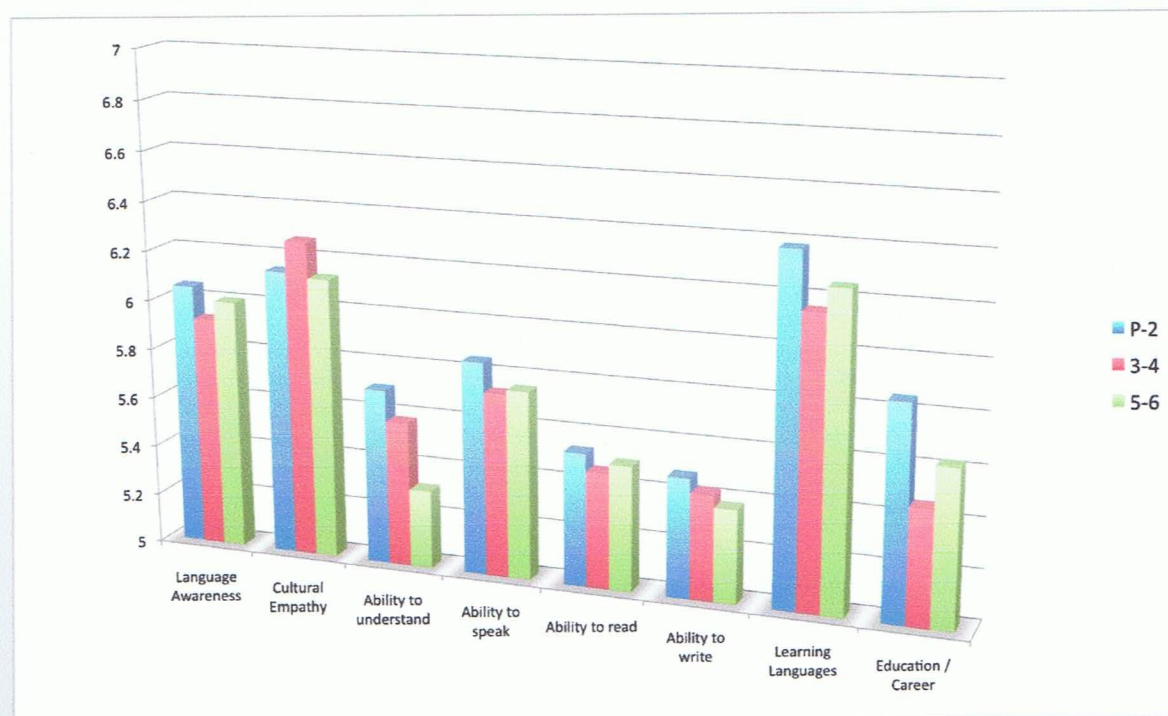
Graph 1: The five key outcomes that parents deemed most important from a LOTE program were (in order of priority):

- The ability to develop language learning skills;
- An empathy with people from different cultures;
- An awareness that people speak different languages;
- An ability to speak a language other than English; and
- A foundation for future education / career pathways.

These responses were consistent across the year levels, although for prep to year 2 families, ability to develop language learning skills and a foundation for future education / career pathways was rated more important compared to those year 3 to year 6, and conversely, developing empathy with people from different cultures appeared to be more important to those in year 3 to year 4.

Note, all the criteria for a LOTE program listed in the survey were considered important or above (scoring at least 5.3 out of 7).

Importance of LOTE Learning by Year Level



Average score calculated on a 7-point scale where:

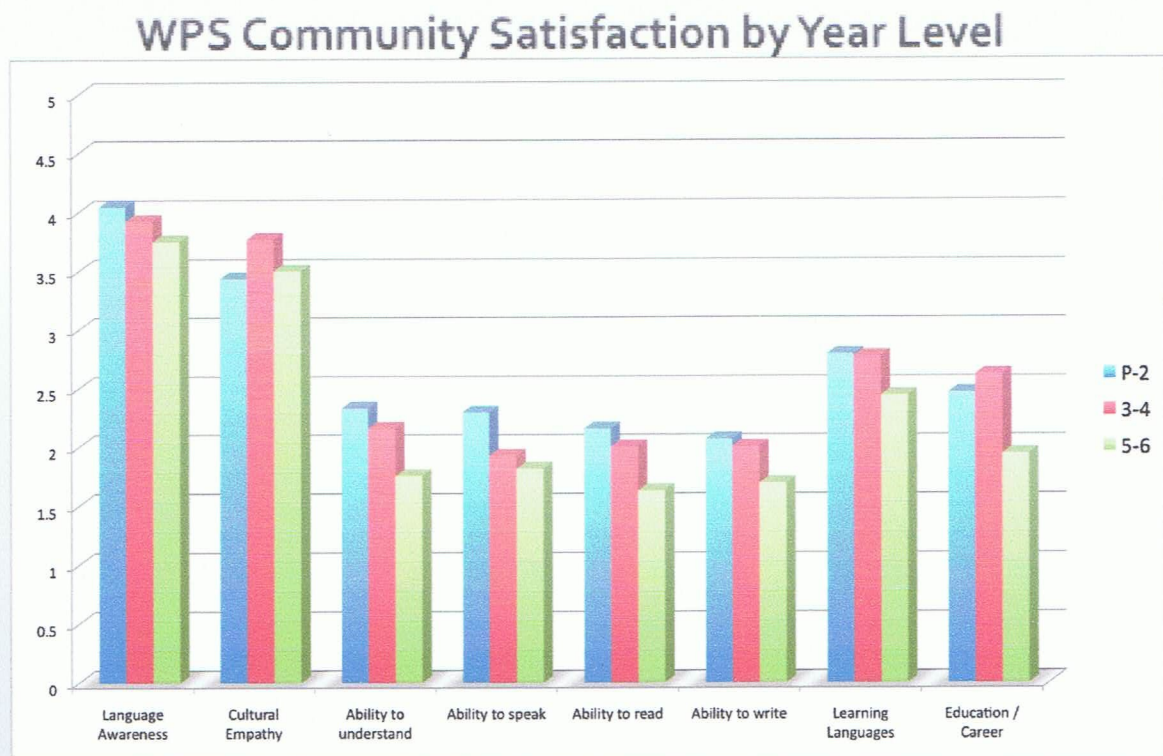
1 – Extremely Unimportant; 4 – Neither Unimportant nor Important; and 7 – Extremely Important

3) Westgarth Primary School Community Satisfaction with LOTE

AusVELS (the mandated curriculum for Victorian schools during the transition to a National Curriculum) states that primary school language education should teach children both to:

- Communicate in a language other than English; and to
- Develop an awareness of other cultures and their languages.

Graph 2: Parents were asked to rate on a 5 point scale the extent to which the current WPS LOTE program achieved key outcomes. The current LOTE program scored well in relation to language awareness and cultural empathy, while it did not rate so strongly in the areas of teaching the ability to understand, speak, read or write a second language. This feedback was broadly consistent across the year levels.



Average score calculated on a 5-point scale where:
1 – Not achieved at all; 3 – Moderately achieved; and 5 – Fully achieved

4) Language Preference(s) *

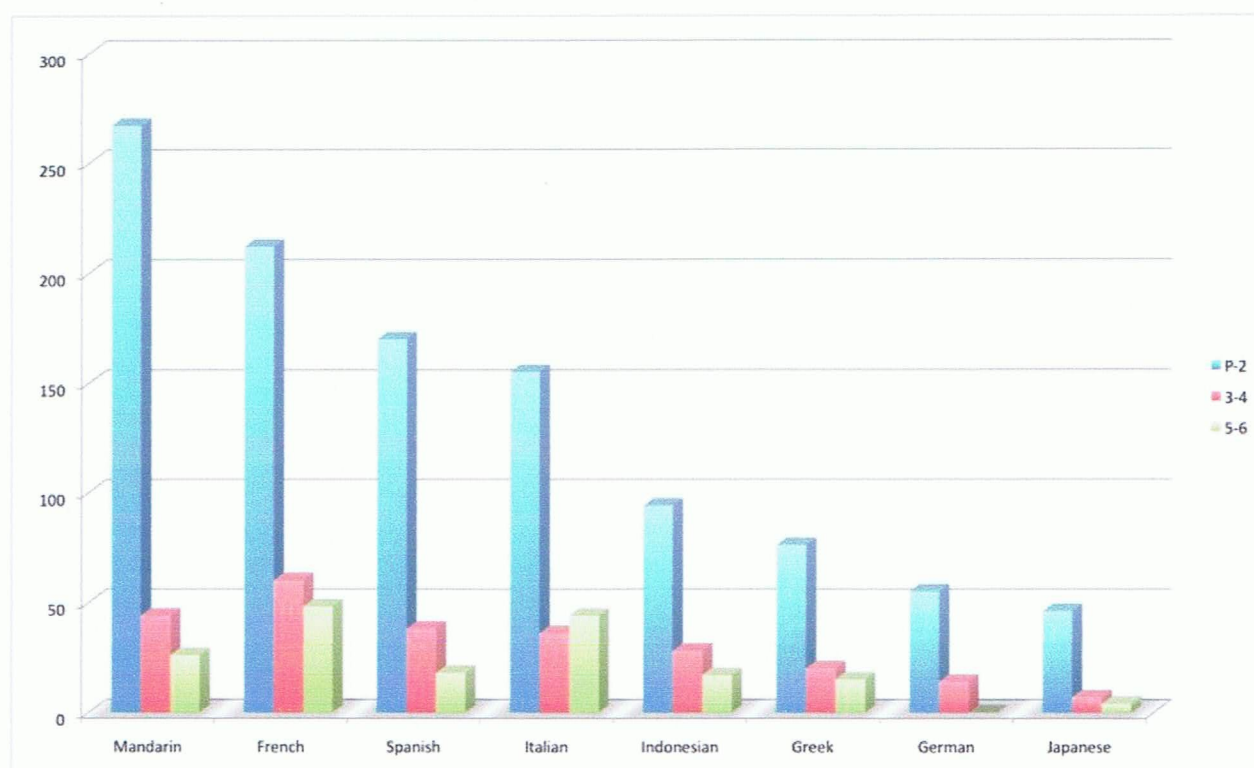
Graph 3: Parents were asked to list their preference for a language or languages that they would like to see taught at WPS. The top four languages (in order of priority) were:

- Mandarin
- French
- Spanish
- Italian

followed by Indonesian, Greek, German and Japanese.

Note, 25% of parents listed four or more languages and those families with their **youngest child in year 3 to year 6** rated French over Mandarin as their preferred language.

WPS Language Preferences by Year Level – the Top Eight

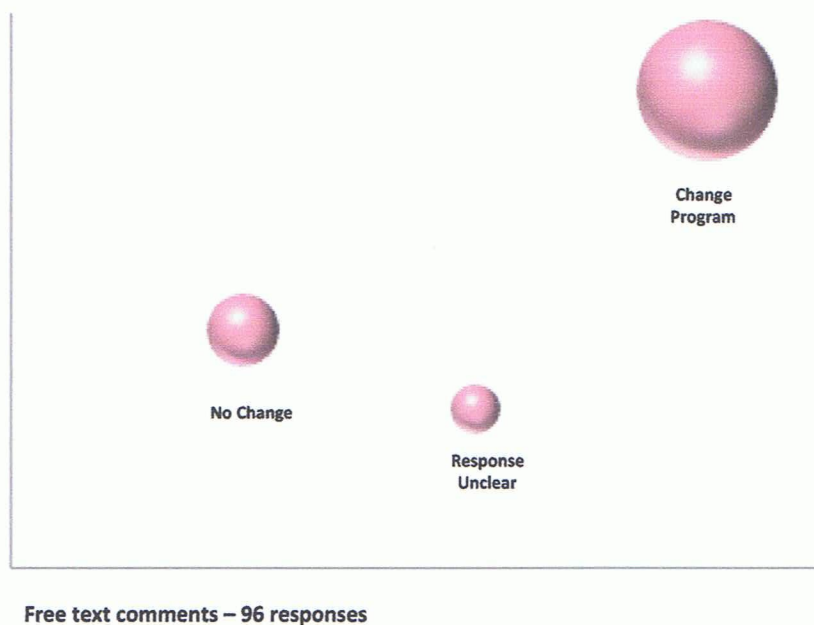


Conclusions *

The key conclusions from the survey are drawn from, and can be best summarised by, the free text comments or opened ended responses received at the conclusion of the survey. The free text responses have been grouped into a number of themes that highlight the predominant views from the respondents and these are summarised in the graphs below.

Graph 4: Firstly, the comments were broadly grouped into three categories – those who indicated no or minimal change to the current LOTE program, those who advocated a change to the program and those whose responses were unclear.

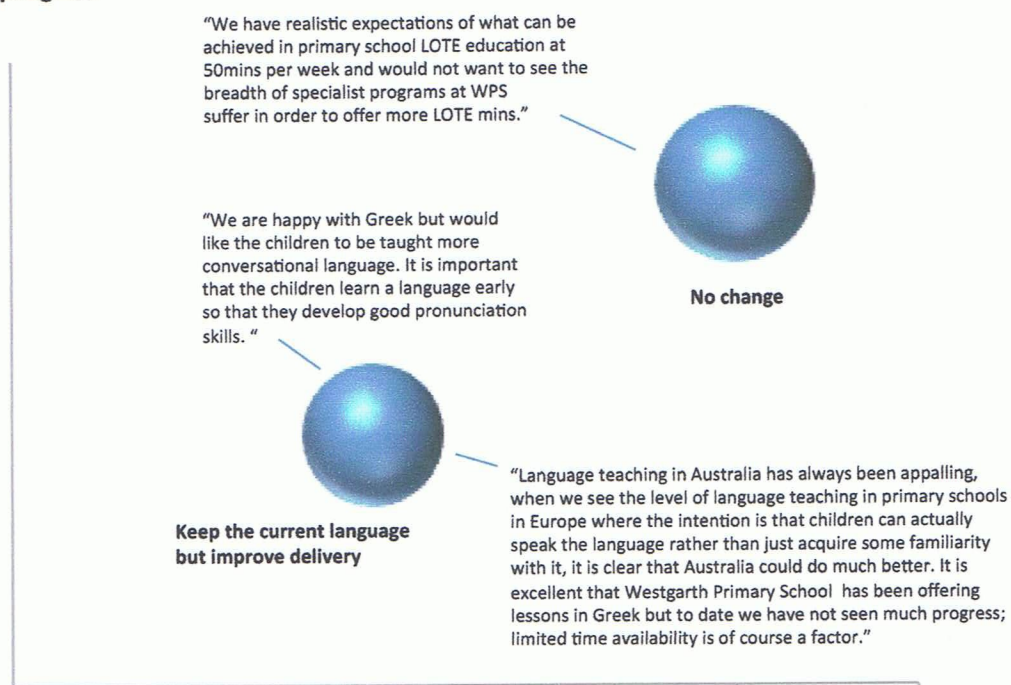
Proportion of families indicating a clear preference on a future languages program



Graph 5: Secondly, the comments from those responses from Graph 4 who indicated no or minimal change to the current LOTE program were further examined to determine the proportion who suggested that the language should remain, but the delivery be changed, and those who were comfortable with the current program in its current form.

The feedback indicated that approximately half suggested no change to the current LOTE program while the other half suggested that the current Greek language should be kept but changes made to the way it was delivered.

Proportion of families indicating no or minimal change to the current language program

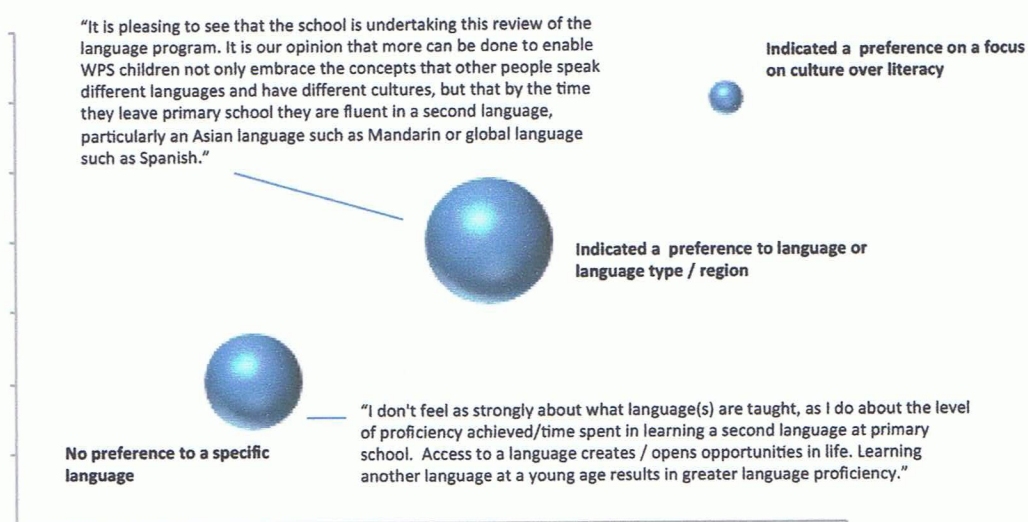


Breakdown of those, in Graph 4, who indicated a preference to not change the program.

Graph 6: Examining the comments from those responses from Graph 4 who advocated changing the current program, the majority of those responses were able to indicate their preference to a specific language or language type.

There was also a group of households who indicated changing the LOTE program but did not mind or have a strong preference on a particular language or language type. There was a small group who indicated changing the LOTE program but the focus of a new program should be on different cultures rather than literacy.

Proportion of families indicating a preference for a new program and indicated a language preference

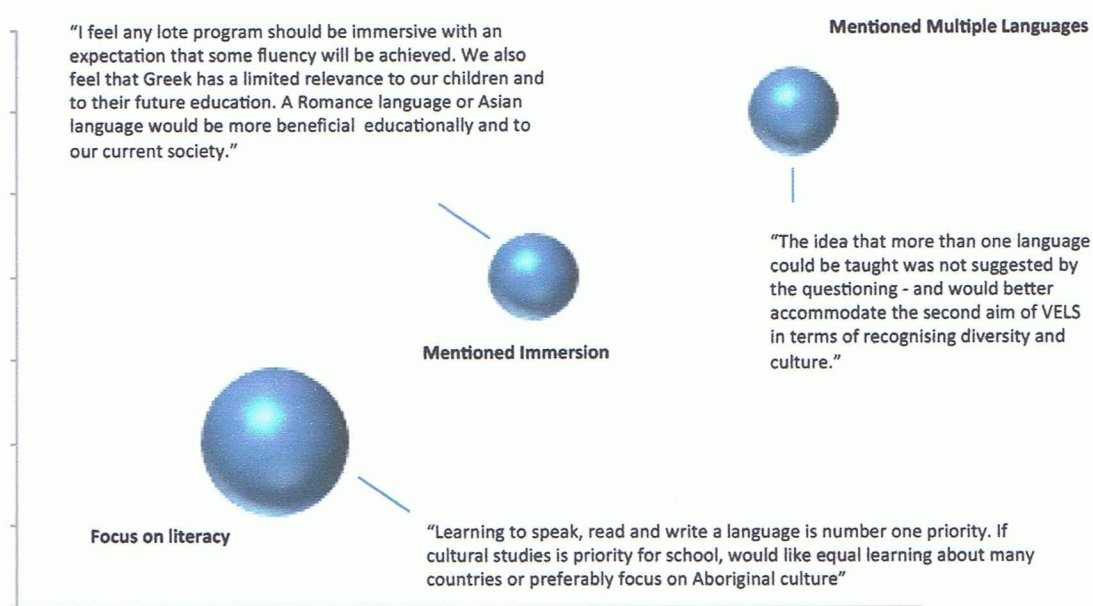


Breakdown of those, in Graph 4, who indicated a preference to change the program.

Graph 7: Again, examining the comments from the same group from Graph 4 who advocated changing the current program, the majority were interested in a future program having a strong focus on literacy.

A smaller proportion of comments specifically referenced “immersion” as a technique they would like adopted as part of a new LOTE program while a similar number of responses indicated that they would like a future LOTE program to involve the teaching of multiple languages to be considered.

Proportion of families indicating a preference for a new program and mentioned the type of program



Breakdown of those, in Graph 4, who indicated a preference to change the program.

* Language preferences and language models will continue to be addressed in the second survey.