

French Second Language Learning in Canada

*Canadian Parents for French Brief to the
House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages*

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CANADA'S FRENCH IMMERSION MODEL – INSPIRED BY ANGLOPHONE PARENTS

“French immersion is a proven, successful Canadian approach to second language learning... No educational program has been so intensively researched and evaluated in Canada as has French immersion. The effects of the program on the acquisition of French-language as well as English-language skills, and the academic achievement of French immersion students, have been well documented and research shows that the program works.”¹ Canada’s world-renowned French immersion program began in St. Lambert, Quebec, at the request of Anglophone parents who wanted their children to have the opportunity to become bilingual in the Canadian school system, and who were disappointed with the poor proficiency outcomes from the existing core French program. An experimental French immersion program was established and extensive evaluation by McGill University researchers demonstrated that immersion students achieved high proficiency levels, and that children could learn a second language without jeopardizing their English abilities. After almost 40 years, the original French immersion model has proven its value around the world and been adopted in many countries and many languages.

CANADA'S LINGUISTIC DUALITY – EMBRACED BY ANGLOPHONE PARENTS

The French immersion model has contributed, as well, to Canada’s national unity. In 1977, the creation of Canadian Parents for French and its support for effective, accessible French immersion education presented “an English-speaking organization able to speak sensibly, perhaps even generously, about the French language.”² Originally a small group of concerned parents, CPF has evolved into a proactive national, parent-led organization with Branch offices in nine provinces and two territories and some 150 Chapters in communities nationwide. CPF and its approximately 22,000 members continue to support national unity and diversity by encouraging educators to develop inclusionary policies and practices to ensure that all students in Canada share opportunities to learn both of Canada’s official languages, to qualify for employment with the Government of Canada, and to make real contributions to Canada’s social and political development.

FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE LEARNING PROGRAMS

FSL Program Design and Delivery

Canadian schools offer a variety of French second language (FSL) programs, each designed to produce different French proficiency outcomes. FSL programs fall into two general categories — Core French (also known as Basic French or FSL) and not to be confused with FSL as a general term for both core and immersion instruction and French Immersion. Across the country the types of FSL programs offered, the points at which students may enrol in them, and mandatory periods of French instruction differ by province/territory, by school district and in some cases, by school. FSL programs are delivered in three milieus: English-only program schools offering core French, dual track schools offering core French to English-stream students as well as French immersion programs, and immersion centres, also known as single-track schools. Most immersion programs are offered in dual track schools. [Please see Appendix I for FSL programs and entry points by province/territory.]

Funding FSL Programs

Funding for FSL education is provided by ministries of education and by the Government of Canada Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP.) Negotiated by the Council of Ministers of Education and provincial/territorial ministries of education, OLEP funds compensate provincial/territorial education departments for supplementary costs associated with FSL programs, including program infrastructure, enrichment and expansion, teacher training, and student support. While most federal-provincial/territorial OLEP agreements allocate resources for professional development, creation of teaching materials and tools, and development of innovative approaches to FSL programming, there are gaps between what is addressed and areas of concern for parents and other FSL stakeholders. These include gaps in access to

transportation, specification of FSL teacher qualifications, and policies which would ensure equitable access to FSL education. Most disturbingly, many plans do not effectively address the need for accountability. While it is possible to track OLEP contributions from ministries to school districts, neither the federal or provincial governments have reporting requirements that specify the end use of these funds.³

CPF encourages federal and provincial decision-makers to establish stringent accountability measures to ensure that the use of OLEP funds is transparent, to ensure that school districts report on compliance with ministry program guidelines, and to ensure that parents and the wider stakeholder community are involved in FSL decision making.

Core French Programs (Basic French, FSL)

Currently, about 1,500,000 students (48%) in Canada are enrolled in core/basic French programs. [Please see Appendix II for Core enrolment statistics]. In Core French programs, the target language is the subject of instruction. Students learn French vocabulary and make a formal study of French grammar. While interviews with students who had studied in core/basic French programs suggest that students are generally positive about their elementary school experience, over half of those students who took high school core French had not had good experiences in the program. Research has indicated that core French students expect to learn how to speak French —they express boredom with grammar review and dissatisfaction that they are unable to converse in the target language. Their disillusionment is reflected in attrition rates as high as 95% from core French studies, and the fact that core French enrolment has been in decline in recent years and these losses are not fully explained by rising rates of immersion enrolment.^{4,5}

CPF encourages educational decision-makers to address student retention and achievement in core French programs by putting more emphasis on developing conversational skills.

Alternate Core French Programs

Many jurisdictions have begun offering more intensive core French programs that produce enhanced proficiency outcomes and retain up to 90% of students. Extended core French students study two or three subjects in the French language in addition to the regular core French classes. Extended core French becomes available to students between grades 4 and 8 and may be continued through high school. Intensive (Core) French (also known as Intensive French) is a relatively new program, now being offered or piloted in ten provinces and territories. This one-year program is offered in grades four, five or six and enhances the regular core French program with an intensive period of instruction in French using immersion methods. Students achieve an impressive level of French proficiency in a short time but must continue French studies in enhanced core French programs, not regular core French, in order to maintain and build on their new-found proficiency.

CPF encourages educational decision-makers to address student retention and achievement in core by making alternative core French programs available across the county.

French Immersion Programs

Currently about 353,000 students (14%) in Canada are enrolled in Immersion programs. [Please see Appendix III for Immersion enrolment statistics] Unlike core French, Immersion programs use the target language for instruction and as a means of authentic communication, not just practice exercises, in the classroom and with native French speakers. This allows students to learn a second language in the same way that they have learned their first, and to complete the same curriculum in French as they would in the English program. Early French immersion programs begin with a period of intensity to allow students quickly to develop sufficient French language skills to study subjects in French.

In Early French Immersion, beginning in Kindergarten or grade 1, French is used almost exclusively until the introduction of English language arts around grade 2 or 3. Instruction in French is gradually reduced to about 50-60% in grades 4-8

and further reduced in high school to 2 to 4 courses in French. By grade 11 or 12, immersion students are usually taking only a few courses in French. Middle and Late Immersion programs, usually starting around grades 4 or 5 and 6 or 7 respectively, follow the same model of initial intensity and gradual reduction of instruction in French.

Immersion programs have generally produced better second-language proficiency results than traditional foreign language teaching strategies. The intensive exposure to the target language is important because it allows students quickly to reach the level of second-language proficiency required to study other subjects in the new language. Immersion students approach native-like levels in second-language listening comprehension and reading by the end of elementary school, although they are distinguishable from native speakers in speaking and writing. High school immersion graduates should be able to work in or pursue post-secondary studies in their second language. In fact many high school immersion graduates attained an intermediate or higher level of second-language proficiency on Public Service Commission of Canada tests.⁶

TWO, TWO LANGUAGES FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

Over 40 years of research has concluded that students can add a second language at no cost to their first language competence (additive bilingualism) because languages are interdependent. Skills developed in the second language are available for learning and using in the first language and vice versa. English-language arts are introduced by the middle elementary years, while family and community also reinforce first language skills.⁶ (Research has shown that “the effect of learning a second language on first-language skills has been positive in all studies... [and] the loss of instructional time in English has never been shown to have negative effects on the achievement of the first language.”⁷ In fact, immersion students match and often surpass English program students’ performance by Grade 4 or 5 after first-language arts are introduced in the middle elementary years.⁸

While all French Immersion programs are designed to produce students who are able to function well in a French milieu, to accept a job for which French is the language of work, and to pursue post-secondary education in their second language, it must be noted that Middle and Late Immersion, unlike Early Immersion programs, attract and accept more highly motivated students with above average academic abilities. Early Immersion has the added advantage of coinciding with the optimal age for second-language studies.⁹

CPF and its members believe that Early Immersion is the most equitable option and is suitable for the widest range of student ability. It is offered at the age and grade when students would begin formal study of their mother-tongue and, unlike middle and late immersion in which students must quickly develop the level of French-language skills required to comprehend sophisticated concepts in their second language, Early French immersion presents no such requirement.

THE COGNITIVE, SOCIAL AND EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS OF BILINGUALISM

Enhanced Language Skills

Bilinguals are better able to analyze their knowledge of language. They learn that there are at least two ways of saying the same thing and understand the relationship between words and their meaning. They are able to focus more on meaning and take into account only relevant features when there is distractive information. They demonstrate more mental flexibility and perform better on tasks requiring mental manipulation. They are original in verbal expression, demonstrate non-verbal intelligence and can answer open-ended questions more freely than those who know only one language.

Enhanced Academic Opportunities

French-second-language graduates have more options than other students because they may choose to take some or all post-secondary studies in French. A 2005 survey of Canadian university students found that the majority of immersion

graduates surveyed reported no difficulty in making the transition from high school to university courses in French. Bilingual universities, like the University of Ottawa, English post-secondary institutions, like the University of Simon Fraser University as well as francophone institutions like Université Laval and Université de Moncton now offer entire programs which even provide academic, social and career support for those studying in their second official language. Further development of similar opportunities, however, may be limited by the fact that Canada is one of the very few highly industrialized countries that do not have national strategies for post-secondary education.¹⁰

CPF encourages decision-makers to develop a national post-secondary strategy that includes developing more opportunities for Anglophone students to continue studying in their second official language.

Enhanced Cultural Sensitivity

Students with two well-developed languages are more sensitive to communication and some evidence suggests that they are better able to understand the needs of others and to respond appropriately. Through exposure to cultural differences they may become more respectful of differences between people and their cultures and may be able to communicate with a large variety of people.⁵ (Lazaruk, 2007).

Enhanced Employment Opportunities

Bilingual graduates have access to a wider range of national and international jobs. The Government of Canada and thousands of businesses operate in more than one language – airlines, import-export companies and other international businesses require employees with second-language skills and cultural sensitivity.

EQUITABLE ACCESS: A CHALLENGE FOR FRENCH-SECOND- LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Meeting the Demand for French Immersion Programs

Demand for immersion programs is at an all-time high, but further growth is now limited by enrolment caps and school districts across the country which decline to introduce more programs, citing funding constraints. Decision-makers may also attempt to “protect” the English program by maintaining balanced enrolment in the two programs, reducing parents to entering lotteries or camping out during school registration in hopes of securing one of the limited immersion places. Implementing French immersion programs is particularly challenging for schools districts in rural and remote communities which lack the critical mass of students required to partition the student population.

CPF encourages decision-makers to respect the educational choices of parents and students by removing enrolment caps from existing immersion programs and implementing additional programs to meet demand.

As rapprochement between francophones and Francophiles gains momentum its impact may lead francophones in parts of the country to look at the relationship between separate FFL and FSL programs, and if they best serve their communities’ long term needs. CPF is following the debate now taking place within the national Francophone community, and will engage should we be invited to do so.

Meeting the Needs of Academically-Challenged Students

In most publicly funded English-language school boards there are no provincial screening procedures, so no child is ineligible for French immersion. Research demonstrates that students with lower academic ability are not differentially handicapped in Immersion and do as well as below average students in the English program.¹¹ Despite this, academically-challenged students do not have equitable access to specialist services. Concerned educators present persuasive (though unsubstantiated) arguments suggesting that the child’s educational needs would be best met in the English program and often advise parents to switch their children’s program for special education support. Indeed, administrators often advise parents that providing both French immersion programming and special education services

constitutes a duplication of programs, known as “double dipping” rather than applying OLEP funds designated for student support.¹² [Please see Appendix IV – Fact Sheet for Decision-Makers]

CPF encourages decision-makers to develop policies which include and provide specialist services for academically-challenged students and to train more FSL teachers to create inclusive classrooms.

Including New Canadian Students

Despite new Canadian students’ success in core and immersion programs and despite their parents’ support for linguistic duality and confidence in their children’s ability to master additional languages, new Canadian students continue to be discouraged or prevented from enrolling by well-intended educators and administrators who mistakenly believe that advanced English skills are required to succeed in immersion. [Please see Appendix V —Voices of new Canadians: Fact Sheet for Educators]

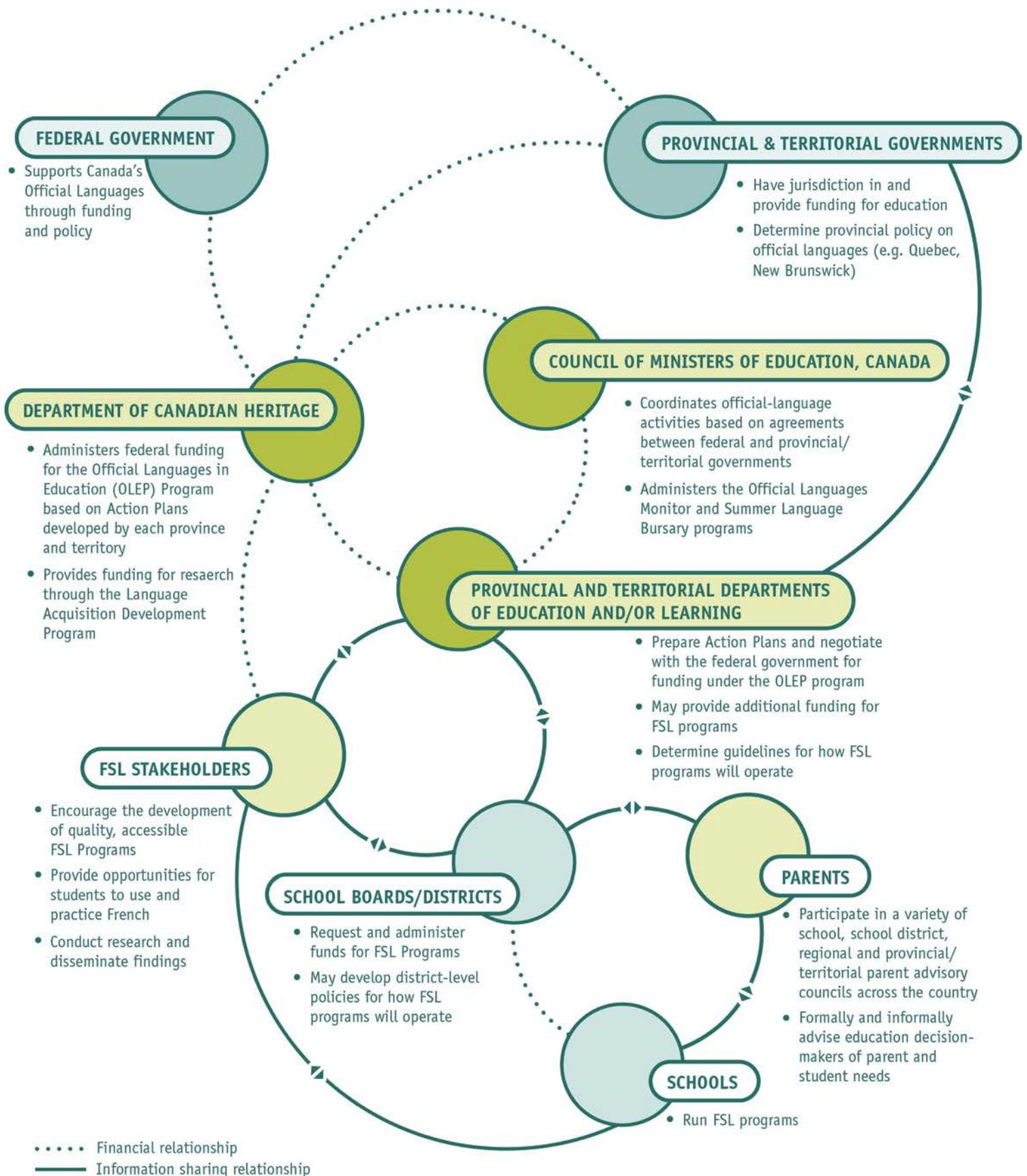
CPF encourages decision-makers to correct this misunderstanding and develop policies to ensure that immigrant students have equitable access to the French immersion education that will qualify them for senior government positions in which they may contribute to Canada’s political and social development.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR QUALITY FSL EDUCATION

Ensuring effective French-second-language programming is the shared responsibility of governments, school districts, teachers, school administrators and parents. Provincial policies and guidelines for French-second-language programs, including time allotted to French instruction, should be communicated directly to parents, teachers and administrators. Adequate, sustainable program funding should be secured by ensuring that all funds designated for FSL programs are used specifically for these programs. Most importantly, parents and community stakeholder organizations are informed of FSL issues to be considered and are actively involved in decision-making at the school, school district, ministry, and government levels.

CPF encourages federal and provincial/territorial decision-makers to include parents, post-secondary students, and the wider FSL stakeholder community in FSL decision-making.

A CONCEPTUAL DIAGRAM OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS



RECOMMENDATIONS

CPF encourages federal and provincial decision-makers:

- To establish stringent accountability measures to ensure that the use of OLEP funds is transparent, to ensure that school districts report on compliance with ministry program guidelines, and to ensure that parents and the wider stakeholder community are involved in FSL decision making.
- To address student retention and achievement in core French programs by putting more emphasis on developing conversational skills.
- To address student retention and achievement in core by making alternative core French programs available across the county.
- To ensure that early French immersion programs are offered and access across the country, as early Immersion is the most equitable option and is suitable for the widest range of student ability.
- To develop a national post-secondary strategy that includes developing more opportunities for Anglophone students to continue studying in their second official language.
- To respect the educational choices of parents and students by removing enrolment caps from existing immersion programs and implementing additional programs to meet demand.
- To develop policies which include and provide specialist services for academically-challenged students and to train more FSL teachers to create inclusive classrooms.
- To develop policies to ensure that immigrant students have equitable access to the French immersion education that will qualify them for senior government positions in which they may contribute to Canada's political and social development.
- To include parents, post-secondary students, and the wider FSL stakeholder community in FSL decision-making.

The recommendations above have been derived from CPF's position statements on:

- Equitable access to the French-second-language program of choice
- A full range of French-second-language programs and entry points
- Quality French-second-language programs
- National French-second-language proficiency benchmarks
- Shared responsibility for French-second-language education

Please see Appendix VI: CPF Position Statements

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- ¹² Wise, N. (2012) *Access to Special Education for Exceptional Pupils in French Immersion Program: An Equity Issue*, Proceedings of the Canadian Parents for French Roundtable on Academically-Challenged Students in French-Second-Language Programs, Canadian Parents for French, Ottawa

**APPENDIX 1:
FSL Programs by Province/Territory**

PROV/ TERR	Mandatory FSL Grades	Date mandatory French studies introduced	Core French Starting Grade	Extended (Expanded) Core French Starting Grade	Accelerated Core French	Intensive Core French Starting Grade	Post-Intensive Core French (Enhanced French) Starting Grade	Early French Immersion Starting Grade	Middle French Immersion Starting Grade	Late French Immersion Starting Grade	50/50 Bilingual Starting Grade
AB	No	n/a	4 or 10	No	No	5	No	K or 1	4	6 or 7	No
BC	No**		K	No	No	No	No	K or 1	No	5 or 6	No
MB	No**	Varies by school district	K	No	No	Yes	Yes	K or 1	4	7	No
NB	4-10	n/a	Core French being replaced by Pre- Intensive grade 4	No	No	5	6	No	3	6	No
NL	4-9		K	10	10	6	7	K	No	7	
NS	4-9	n/a	4	7	No	6	No	K	4	7	No
NT	No		K	No				K	4		
NU	No	No	1	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
ON	4-9	n/a	4 (offered at grade 1 in a few school boards)	5, 6, or 7 (grade 1 in only 1 Catholic BD)	No	Pilot program only	No	SK or 1	4	7	1
QC***	K-12	n/a	SK	Yes	unknown	Yes	unknown	K	Yes	Yes	Yes
PE	4-9	n/a	4	No	No	Pilot at Grade 6	No	K	4 (only 1 program in PEI)	7	No
SK	No	n/a	1	No	No	5 or 6	No	SK or 1	No	6	No
YK	5-8	n/a	SK	No	No	5 or 6	No	SK	No	6	No

*** There is great variability in QC FSL programming, as Anglophone school districts decide, in conjunction with parents, which types of programs and what entry points will be offered.

** Students are required to study one second language from grades 5 through 8. French is the language usually offered, but a school district may choose a different language.

Revised December 7, 2012

APPENDIX 2:

National Core French Enrolment Statistics 2010-2011

Prov / Terr	% in FSL Programs	% in French Immersion	% in Core French	Total in FSL Programs	Total in French Immersion	Total in Core French	Total Eligible Students
AB	32	5.9	26.0	190,319	35,398	154,921	595,460
BC	41	8.3	32.7	235,588	47,624	187,964	574,645
MB	46.8	11.3	35.5	81,775	19,734	62,041	174,739
NB	64.7	23.4	41.3	48,249	17,454	30,795	74,579
NL	59.8	12.7	47.1	40,930	8,698	32,232	68,463
NS	52.5	12.1	40.4	64,893	14,948	49,945	123,497
NT	29.8	7.6	22.1	2,496	643	1,853	8,576
NU	2.2		2.2	183		183	8,435
ON	50.0	7.9	42.1	978,464	155,232	823,232	1,957,016
PE	56.9	21.3	35.6	11,583	4,333	7,250	20,342
QC	100.0	35.8	64.2	105,377	37,729	67,648	105,377
SK	39.5	6.5	32.9	62,417	10,306	52,111	158,172
YU	57.8	14.9	42.8	2,668	690	1,978	4,618
National	48.7	14.0	35.8	1,824,942	352,789	1,472,153	3,873,919

APPENDIX 3:

National Immersion Enrolment Statistics 2010-2011

Prov / Terr	% in FSL Programs	% in French Immersion	% in Core French	Total in FSL Programs	Total in French Immersion	Total in Core French	Total Eligible Students
AB	32	5.9	26.0	190,319	35,398	154,921	595,460
BC	41	8.3	32.7	235,588	47,624	187,964	574,645
MB	46.8	11.3	35.5	81,775	19,734	62,041	174,739
NB	64.7	23.4	41.3	48,249	17,454	30,795	74,579
NL	59.8	12.7	47.1	40,930	8,698	32,232	68,463
NS	52.5	12.1	40.4	64,893	14,948	49,945	123,497
NT	29.8	7.6	22.1	2,496	643	1,853	8,576
NU	2.2		2.2	183		183	8,435
ON	50.0	7.9	42.1	978,464	155,232	823,232	1,957,016
PE	56.9	21.3	35.6	11,583	4,333	7,250	20,342
QC	100.0	35.8	64.2	105,377	37,729	67,648	105,377
SK	39.5	6.5	32.9	62,417	10,306	52,111	158,172
YU	57.8	14.9	42.8	2,668	690	1,978	4,618
National	48.7	14.0	35.8	1,824,942	352,789	1,472,153	3,873,919

APPENDIX 4:

The State of French-Second-Language Education 2012

FACTSHEET FOR EDUCATORS (FSL TEACHERS)

Canadian Parents for French hosted a Roundtable on Academically Challenged Students in French Second Language (FSL) Programs in June 2012 to initiate a dialogue amongst stakeholders, educators and policy-makers, to develop joint recommendations for more inclusionary practices, and to move the issue of equitable access for all students in Canada from discussion to action.

Approximately forty representatives from the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, ministries of education, school districts, faculties of education and researchers, as well as national associations active in the field of FSL education, attended the Roundtable and developed comprehensive recommendations and indicators of success. Participants outlined the need for policies, inclusionary practices and appropriate specialist support to enable equitable access and to meet the needs of academically challenged students.

THE CONTEXT

Every Canadian child should have the opportunity to become bilingual so he or she can participate fully in this country's economy, governance and society. However, the reluctance of school boards and school authorities to adapt to the needs of students with learning disabilities in immersion has created an unfortunate dynamic. These children are often systematically weeded from immersion and placed in the English stream. For those who remain, little support is available in school and at home, and parents are left to find remediation and support on their own. [Graham Fraser, Opening Remarks, CPF Roundtable June 2012]

The challenge is not usually for the children, but rather for the adults around them

Genesee 2012

Learning disabilities affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization, or use of social, physical, or verbal information. People with learning disabilities have average (or greater) thinking and reasoning abilities and are often creative. 5 to 10 per cent of Canadians and 50 per cent of special education students have learning disabilities, which are often accompanied by ADHD, anxiety disorder, executive function disorder, or giftedness. [Harding 2012]

THE SITUATION

Myths about French immersion are abound, and children who have any kind of learning disorder are often excluded from immersion programs for fear of compounding their problems, despite research showing that at-risk students can become bilingual and attain levels of first-language and academic ability commensurate with their learning challenges. "The challenge is not usually for the children, but rather for the adults around them. Research evidence shows that language-acquisition systems of at-risk students are extremely powerful, even when they do not function normally. The challenge is how to create a learning environment in which these children's potential can be fully realized." [Genesee 2012]

YOU CAN CREATE AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

Teacher education programs do not often provide training about academically-challenged students studying French as a second language. As a responsible educator, you are understandably hesitant to include students whose learning needs you can't meet, but

FACTS ABOUT LEARNING DISABLED STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN FRENCH IMMERSION

- second-language learning does not negatively affect the first language;
- students rapidly catch up once English is introduced and that many students surpass their peers by Grades 5 or 6;
- skills in French can and do transfer to English;
- struggling learners are at no greater disadvantage in second-language programs and have the ability to learn two languages despite their difficulties;
- struggling readers experience similar problems if enrolled in English-only programs;
- existing standardized tests can identify students at risk for reading difficulties much earlier than grade 2 or 3; and
- there is notable improvement of special need student performance in French Immersion post-intervention

[Bourgoin 2012, Genesee 2012]

- Research shows that effective interventions do exist. They include demonstrating techniques, using manipulatives, supporting oral language with writing, judicious use of students' first language, pre-teaching vocabulary, rephrasing and restating, using simpler language, teaching explicit strategies, and pacing lessons. Other strategies include highlighting text; modifying text; modifying grading systems; varying the length of assignments; chunking tasks; using a variety of assignments; giving extra time to finish a task or test; allowing students to hand in draft assignments early, receive feedback, and revise; and offering oral instead of written tests. [Mady 2012; Harding 2012]
- Research shows that FSL teachers who receive relevant info and training become capable of creating and running effective, inclusive classrooms.
- Research also shows that the learning strategies used in inclusive classrooms are useful for all students, not just those with special need and, although French immersion teachers are very busy these strategies do not necessarily take more time.
- You will find more information about inclusive classrooms in The State of FSL Education in Canada 2012 and the full Roundtable Proceedings (both documents are available at www.cpf.ca).

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Don't forget that the parents of struggling FSL learners are one of your greatest resources.

- They are motivated, active participants in their child's education; they understand their children's strengths and can help you to anticipate what may challenge their children.
- Individual learning strategies can be applied and supported at home which can help parents to become confident enough to step back and let areas of strength develop.
- Homework tasks that used to cause stress and tears can become manageable. Parents still have to manage timelines and tasks at home but their children have learned strategies from you and are able to work with confidence.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Ask your school district to provide professional development and/or to free up funds for FSL teachers to participate in relevant in-service development opportunities offered by faculties of education.

WHAT CAN CPF DO TO HELP ...

CPF's parent advocates will support your efforts by promoting the Roundtable recommendations at all level of the education system, from schools and school districts to ministries of education and the Government of Canada.

... WITH CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

CPF advocates for ...

- ... school boards to offer methodology training to all FSL teachers on second-language acquisition for academically challenged students.
- ... curricula that acknowledge and provide alternative strategies to assist academically challenged students in FSL programs.

... WITH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CPF advocates for ...

- ... provincial and territorial governments to be encouraged to create a program that increases the number of French immersion teachers capable of responding to academically challenged students.
- ... provincial and territorial governments to increase the professional development opportunities for FSL educators working with academically challenged students.

... WITH PERCEPTIONS

CPF advocates for ...

- ... the realistic development of communications and outreach campaigns to show that FSL education is accessible to all learners at all levels based upon research evidence. (Provincial/territorial governments)

... WITH RESOURCES

CPF advocates for ...

- ... a useable framework to be developed at the Ministry of Education level to systematically support academically challenged students in French immersion and French-second- language programs.
- ... the creation of a national and regional virtual resource centre. It must be user-friendly, relevant, accessible to all stakeholders, bilingual, and evidence-based.

... WITH POLICY

CPF advocates for ...

- ... Provincial and territorial governments to allocate special education funding to school boards based on student need, not on enrolment numbers.
- ... School boards to be accountable for how English and FSL funding is applied.

... WITH RESEARCH

CPF advocates for ...

- ... The establishment of a research clearing house with succinct and accessible synopses of critical, relevant research findings on language and academic development of special needs students.
- ... The citation of research in policy and curriculum design, methodology, and documents.

For more information and resources on CPF please visit our website at www.cpf.ca

APPENDIX 5:

Voices of new Canadians: FACTSHEET FOR EDUCATORS

Canadian Parents for French commissioned Callie Mady, PhD, to conduct a study of Allophone attitudes toward Canada's linguistic duality and their experiences with French-as-a-Second-Official-Language (FSOL) education in Canada. An online survey gathered the attitudes and experiences of 125 Allophone university students from across the country who had immigrated to Canada without English or French as a dominant language and who had been educated in Canadian public schools outside Québec. In addition, focus groups for 19 Allophone parents were conducted in Toronto, Vancouver, and North Bay.

Allophone parents respect official languages and are confident that their children can learn multiple languages

- 60% of Allophone parents felt that learning both Canada's official languages would benefit their children.
- 84% of Allophone parents studied FSOL themselves.
- 40% enrolled their children in French immersion, an impressive rate given provincial enrolment rates that range from 6% to 26% outside Québec (CPF, 2008).
- 50% of those who had not put their children in immersion would have done so if they had had information about the program.
- 63% of Allophone parents interviewed learned to speak or saw others speaking more than one language in their country of origin that may, in part, explain their confidence in their children's ability to master multiple languages.

Allophone students reflect their parents' commitment and confidence

- 96% of Allophone students believed that official-language bilingualism would have a positive effect on future employment.
- 94% stated that they value multilingualism.
- Their prior language learning experience also allowed them to judge that having learned one language helps with the learning of another.

Allophone parents need information about the Canadian education system and about FSOL programs in particular

- 80% of Allophone parents received no information about French immersion options from the school system.
- 30% of the Allophone parents received no information at all about the Canadian educational system from the school system itself prior to registering their children.

Allophone parents and students are sometimes discouraged from choosing FSOL education

- Although schools as well as provincial and federal governments want success for their students, they do not act in a consistent manner to provide FSOL learning opportunities to immigrant youth.
- 33% of Allophone students report that their school discouraged their enrolment.
- 42% reported that their school had disallowed their enrolment.

Allophone parents and students were satisfied with their FSOL learning, despite discouragement and the challenges of learning a third or subsequent language

- Allophone FSOL enrolment and retention rates are surprising since the Allophone students receive little encouragement to choose FSOL studies.
- 95% of Allophone parents who had enrolled their children in French immersion expressed satisfaction.
- 87% of Allophone students expressed satisfaction with their French learning in elementary and secondary school and felt that their French was good enough to continue FSOL at a higher level.

- 50% of Allophone student respondents remained in French beyond the compulsory period and completed the core French curriculum — an impressive rate compared with provincial completion rates ranging from 6% to 15% (CPF, 2004).
- 88% of students expressed satisfaction with their post-secondary French learning.

Educators can support and encourage Allophone parents and students to pursue FSOL studies

- Provide information about all FSOL programs to all parents, including immigrant parents.
- Work with cultural and immigrant-serving organizations to ensure that information about the school system in Canada and FSOL education is available to immigrant parents upon arrival.
- Maintain a broad range of FSOL program options and entry points so that Allophone children who miss the early immersion program can access late immersion or extended French options.
- Make teachers and administrators aware of the confidence and language-learning advantages of Allophone students who have already learned a second language.
- Make school personnel aware of the career and citizenship benefits of official-language bilingualism for Allophone students.
- Implement Ministry of Education policies explicitly ensuring access to FSOL programs for Allophone students.

References

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APPENDIX 6:

CPF Position Statements

Equitable Access to French-Second-Language Programs

The members of Canadian Parents for French believe that every child should have equitable access to the French-second-language program of their choice. French-second-language programs are accessible to all students when:

- There is open enrolment with no admission criteria or enrolment caps so that no child is turned away;
- Transportation is provided at no cost for both urban and rural students;
- Distance learning is available to provide French-second-language learning for students in small and remote communities;
- No additional fees are charged for French-second-language programs;
- Programming and specialist services are provided for gifted, special need and Allophone students;
- Every parent is regularly informed about French-second-language options and entry points, as well as the French-language proficiency levels which can be expected from each option;
- All students receive the information they need to make decisions about continuing to learn French at the secondary and post-secondary levels as well as outside of the education system.

Quality French-Second-Language Programs

The members of Canadian Parents for French believe that Canadian students deserve high quality, effective French-second-language programs. Excellent French-second-language programming is ensured when:

- Ministries of education and school districts have written French-second-language policies and guidelines which provide written goals for student French proficiency for all programs and specify sufficient hours of French-second-language instruction to achieve those goals;
- Graduates receive official recognition of their French proficiency achievements;
- New technologies are used to enhance French-second-language learning in the classroom;
- Research into French-second-language education is supported and used to inform policies, program design and student proficiency expectations;
- There is an adequate supply of quality teaching/learning resources;
- French-second-language teacher qualifications for all programs specify French-language proficiency, second-language teaching methods and subject competence;
- Mechanisms are in place to ensure a sufficient supply of qualified French-second-language teachers;
- There are adequate professional activities for French-second-language teachers to keep up with current pedagogical practices;
- School administrators receive the resources they need in order to effectively plan for and supervise the French-second-language programs in their schools.

National French-Second-Language Proficiency Benchmarks

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) supports the development and implementation of national, standardized French-second-language (FSL) proficiency tests. CPF commends the Department of Canadian Heritage (CH) for its initiatives in promoting national standards, and encourages CH, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and provincial/territorial Ministries of Education to act quickly and co-operatively on this issue.

CPF, in common with other players in the French-second-language education stakeholder community, supports the use of FSL proficiency testing to accomplish a variety of objectives. Accordingly, CPF recommends that the instrument (or instruments) chosen should be so designed as to support the following purposes:

- To establish national, comparable standards of French proficiency outcomes for graduates from various elementary and secondary FSL programs. These proficiency outcomes should be used:
 - To assist parents/students to make informed choices when taking FSL education decisions.

- To ensure that high school graduates are aware of their abilities in French and thus to encourage them to pursue postsecondary studies in French.
- To ensure that potential employers understand the French-language abilities of candidates.
- To assist postsecondary institutions to determine the appropriate placement of students in first-year French courses.
- To assist postsecondary institutions to determine which FSL programs merit advanced standing in French studies.
- To allow secondary French-second-language teachers and students to assess individual student performance and to develop appropriate individualized strategies for improvement.
- To establish national standards for French-second-language teacher accreditation: entrance assessment to determine whether language upgrading is required, and exit requirement to ensure that proficiency standards have been met.
- To establish national French proficiency standards for French-second-language teachers.
- To establish national standards for evaluating provincial/territorial performance in meeting the goals of their Official Languages in Education Program action plans.
- To establish a definition of "functional bilingualism" and to articulate national standards against which to evaluate progress toward the goals of the federal *Action Plan for Official Languages*.
- To ensure that all French-second-language students be accorded no-cost access to French-proficiency testing.

Full Range of French-Second-Language Entry Points and Program Choices

The members of Canadian Parents for French believe that students should be offered a variety of secondary and post-secondary French-second-language program options designed to meet different aspirations. Students have access to a sufficient variety of French-second-language programs when:

- There are multiple entry points to French-second-language programs at the elementary and secondary levels;
- A variety of immersion and core French programs are offered to elementary and secondary students;
- There are sufficient post-secondary opportunities for students to continue French-second-language studies.

Shared Responsibility for French-Second-Language Education

The members of Canadian Parents for French believe that ensuring effective French-second-language programming is the shared responsibility of governments, school districts, teachers, school administrators and support staff and parents. Shared responsibility for French-second-language programming is achieved when:

- Provincial policies and guidelines for French-second-language programs exist and are communicated directly to parents, teachers and administrators;
- Student French-proficiency achievement in French-second-language programs and current research findings are reviewed regularly, and policies and curricula are adjusted accordingly;
- A variety of accessible extra-curricular activities are offered so that all students have opportunities to practice and develop their French-language skills beyond the classroom and the curriculum;
- Adequate, sustainable program funding has been secured when funds designated for various French-second-language programs reflect the amount of time allotted to instruction in French and are used specifically for those programs; and the amount and flow of funds is transparent;
- Information about French-second-language learning is readily available to parents as their children move through the grades so they can support and encourage their children at all levels;
- Parents and other community stakeholder organizations are informed of French-second-language issues to be considered and are actively involved in decision-making at the school, school district, ministry and government levels.