



The State of French Second Language Education in Ontario

French Second Language (FSL) education in Ontario is growing and strengthening. However, parents still face barriers to accessing French programs with the best possible proficiency outcomes for their children. Ontario ranks 6th in participation in French Immersion among the English provinces/territories. School boards continue to use the FSL allocation under the Languages Grant to pay for other priorities and are not required to report on FSL expenditures. A few school boards actively engage parents in setting FSL program priorities, policies and procedures via standing FSL Advisory Committees, but most do not.

1,021,917 students were enrolled in Core, Extended, or Immersion French programs in publicly-funded, English-language school boards in Ontario in 2018-2019 out of the total student JK-12 English population of 2,040,482.

318,762 students were doing more French than the Ministry of Education requires and are enrolled in French Immersion, Extended French or Core French from Grades 10 to 12.

Successes

Enrolment in the French Immersion (FI) program has enjoyed a 5.6 percent average annual growth rate for fourteen consecutive years. In 2018-2019, the Ontario School Information System (OnSYS)* reported record high enrolment in French Immersion (246,164 students) and Extended French (33,110 students), with the majority of students learning French in the Core French program (742,643 students).

Efforts to promote the cognitive, cultural, economic, and employment benefits of FSL education have contributed to the growth of FSL programs that deliver the best possible French proficiency. These FSL programs have higher intensity and an early start, that is 100 percent of the day in French in the early grades, starting in kindergarten. Graduates of French Immersion programs are now parents and they are enrolling their children and providing encouragement for their peers to do so.

School boards are adopting more inclusive practices towards allophone students wishing to become proficient in both of Canada's official languages. Statistical analysis shows increasing enrolment in French Immersion programs in areas with a rising number of new immigrant and allophone families such as York and Peel.

In April 2013, the Ministry of Education introduced *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools*, a document which presents the overarching principles of FSL education in the province and can best be summarized by its vision statement:

Students in English-language school boards have the confidence and ability to use French effectively in their daily lives.



In 2015, the Ministry released companion documents to the Framework, *Including Students with Special Needs in FSL Programs*, *A Parent Guide on Supporting your Child's Success in French Immersion and Extended French*, and *Kindergarten in a French Immersion Setting*. In 2016, the Ministry released a second companion document to the Framework, *Welcoming English Language Learners into French as a Second Language Programs*. The release of the Framework document was followed by a Ministry call to action for all 60 English school boards requiring the submission of three-year plans to support the identified provincial FSL goals. Supporting resources for professional learning for teachers and administrators continue to be produced and posted on the website transformingfsl.ca.

Teachers began using the new FSL curriculum for elementary students in September 2014 and for secondary students in September 2015. These documents support the provincial FSL goals and include a greater emphasis on authentic communication, inspired by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). FSL students, together with their teachers and parents, have access to thousands of electronic resources through IDÉLLO, part of Groupe Média TFO, our publicly-funded educational French broadcaster.

Official Languages in Education Protocol, Agreements and Action Plan (OLEP) funding is being used to support professional learning for teachers and cultural enrichment for students aligned with the Framework, the curriculum, and the CEFR, including providing the opportunity for a sample of Grade 12 students to participate in the Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELF) annually. The DELF is an internationally recognized proficiency test that provides students with outside validation of and a credential for their French proficiency. It also provides a check on Ontario's success in meeting FSL Framework Goals and OLEP commitments.

Recent and Ongoing Canadian Parents for French (CPF) Ontario Projects

CPF Ontario works in partnership with the Ministry of Education to create and deliver French Second Language learning initiatives in support of FSL Framework Goals and the FSL curriculum. These include Frenchstreet.ca, Pathways to Bilingual Success Conferences for Grade 7-9 students, cultural performances and workshops in French, and our annual French public-speaking event, *Concours d'art oratoire*.

Frenchstreet.ca is a fully bilingual searchable website and social media database of community-based resources in French to support students, teachers, parents and school boards. Its listings include field trips, arts & culture, camps, exchanges, Francophone Centres, post-secondary opportunities, guest speakers, parent support, and contests. It averages over 2,000 visitors each month. In May 2020, this initiative of CPF Ontario has gone national with financial support from the Department of Canadian Heritage.

In response to COVID-19, CPF Ontario collaborated with Ministry of Education officials to redesign our in-person 2019-2020 projects for delivery online with the reallocation of approved funding.



We helped develop and promote Camp Tournesol Virtual Camps and Classes through to August 31, 2020 and subsidized registration fees to create more than 19,000 hours of live, interactive French programming for elementary students. As schools shut down, we moved from supporting in-person professional performances in French to 80 video/livestream performances and workshops in June and July, which were seen by more than 4,000 students from 20 school boards.

Our annual provincial French public-speaking contest, *Le Concours d'art Oratoire*, is usually held in May in partnership with the Ontario Modern Language Teachers' Association (OMLTA) and York University Glendon Campus. This year, the event moved online with 197 K-Grade 12 students from 25 Ontario school boards participating in *Concours virtuel - Ensemble à distance: Ton expérience face au virus* via video submissions.

Challenges

Retention in FSL to Grade 12

5,745 students graduated in 2019 with a Grade 12 French Immersion credit, representing 38 percent of the original Grade 1 cohort with a small influx of middle and late French Immersion students. Very few Core French students continue in Grades 10-12. Effective retention strategies are required to retain secondary students in all FSL programs. These could include supporting experiential learning, exchange opportunities, and finding new ways to expand the selection of credits.

Retention to Grade 12 by program:

- Core French: 6 percent
- Extended French: 61 percent
- French Immersion 38 percent

(Retention percentages are based on Grade 12 students in 2018-2019 measured against the original cohort at year of entry (FI Gr. 1; Ext Gr. 5; Core Gr. 4), without consideration for the migration of students from one jurisdiction to another or multiple entry points. Consistent methodology has been used to track annual comparisons.)

Barriers to Participation in FSL Programs

Despite the Framework and individual board policies that support equity and inclusion, we continue to hear from elementary parents who are being 'counselled out' of French either to access special education support or to be in English as a Second Language classes. Reliable year over year school board data is not publicly available on this divergence of policy and practice. We are beginning to see some evidence of the impact of the Ministry's new *Including Students with Special Needs in FSL Programs* in terms of program delivery and the refreshing of promotional materials prepared and distributed by school boards. However, continued effort and professional learning is needed to overcome long-held myths that limit FSL opportunities in school and beyond for students.

There has been little improvement in the number of school boards that impose barriers to access, such as lotteries and capping. Students are simply denied access or families face impossible choices like French Immersion/Extended but without before and after school childcare or French Immersion/Extended but no board-provided transportation. The availability of transportation is



dependent on individual board policies. Without access to childcare and free transportation, providing equal opportunity for student achievement through French Immersion or Extended French education is impossible.

Over the last few years, several Ontario boards have conducted reviews of their FSL programs. Parent expectations that French Immersion programs will expand to meet demand and will be based on best practices identified for achieving the optimal outcome in French proficiency have not been realized in all parts of Ontario.

French teacher supply, recruitment, and retention was identified as an emerging issue by the Ontario College of Teachers in 2015 following upon several years of oversupply. In particular, boards report that finding occasional teachers with FSL qualifications is difficult. The change to a two-year Bachelor of Education program, the impact of Regulation 274, the disconnect between school boards and Faculties of Education, and the lack of effort to attract French-speaking teachers from other parts of Canada and the world are contributing factors. The problem is being examined by the Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA) as a provincially funded Labour Market study and Canadian Heritage is providing funding across Canada to support graduating more FSL qualified teachers. However, this shared responsibility continues to require leadership from the Ministries of Education and Francophone Affairs in collaboration with all stakeholders including the Ministries of Colleges and Universities and Citizenship, Immigration, and International Trade (Ontario).

Achieving the Best Possible Proficiency Outcomes

The continued dependence on the base definition of Immersion as 50 percent of instructional time in French, which was set in the 1970's against the advice of the first expert panel, poses a challenge to student achievement in French, and to meeting our provincial and federal goals to increase proficiency outcomes and retention to Grade 12. Most jurisdictions across Canada and a majority of Ontario school boards offer much more than 50 percent French, in a front-end loaded early Immersion program. Moving from a 50 percent program in one board to a 100 percent program in another board is not necessarily allowed by the receiving board, which impacts retention. Parents complain that calling very different FSL programs by the same name is misleading.

Canadian Parents for French has compiled existing research to assist in identifying best practice delivery with a view toward inclusivity and proficiency outcomes for all students in the French Immersion program. Additional research bibliographies contain references to and findings from selected research studies addressing current issues in FSL education and second-language acquisition. The bibliographies are for the use of parent advocates, educators, school districts and FSL researchers and are accessible at www.cpf.ca/en/research-advocacy/research/research-bibliographies-fsl-education.

Funding and Accountability

In addition to the Pupil Foundation Grant (basic per pupil funding), the Ministry of Education allocates a per FSL student amount for additional costs related to the delivery of Core, Extended, and French Immersion programs. Continuation of this funding, first established in the 1970s, is essential to



providing an incentive for boards to provide additional instruction in French. However, the FSL allocation flows into general board revenues with no strings attached and no accounting for expenditures.

Facts and Figures -

Current State of French Second Language Education in Ontario English School Boards

Student Performance:

Tab 1A: Hours of French Instruction K-8 and Credits at Secondary Level

Tab 1B: Early FI Percentage of French Daily by Board and JK-12 Total FI Enrolment by Board 2018-2019

Tab 2A: Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

Tab 2B: CEFR Self-Assessment Grid

Student Participation:

Tab 3: Enrolment Percentage per Program Pie Chart 2018-2019 and 2005-2006

Tab 4: Provincial Enrolment by Grade and FSL Program Type 2018-2019

Tab 5: French Immersion Enrolment by Grade and Province/Territory 2017-2018

(Note: Ontario is 6th out of the 10 English provinces/territories that report)

Provision of Programs:

Tab 6A: Elementary Enrolment in FSL programs by Board and Program Type 2018-2019

- 55 of 60 boards offer French Immersion and/or Extended French;
- 36 of 60 boards start French Immersion/or Extended French in Junior or Senior Kindergarten (see Tab 1B);

Tab 6B: Secondary Enrolment in FSL programs by Board and Program Type 2018-2019

- 56 of 60 boards offer at least one secondary school with additional subjects taught in French.

Tab 6C: French Immersion Enrolment by Board, By Grade 2018-2019

Funding:

Tab 7A: FSL Funding (Pages 53-56 of the Technical Paper 2020-2021)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/2021/2020-21-technical-paper.pdf>

Tab 7B: FSL Allocation to School Boards 2017-2018

Tab 8: Hours of French Instruction and Funding Graphs for Elementary Schools 2020-2021

Tab 9: Memo to Directors of Education – Funding for FSL Initiatives 2020-2021

Tab 9A: Canada-Ontario Agreement: Support for Education Staff and Research \$5.1 million

Tab 9B: FSL (OLE) Projected School Board Funding Allocation 2020-2021

Tab 10: Canada-Ontario Agreement on Minority-Language Education and Second Official-Language Instruction 2013-2014 to 2017-2018

NB: Provincial/Territorial Governments have published a new Protocol for 2019-23 but the Canada-Ontario Agreement and Action Plan are not yet public.



ONTARIO EDUCATION GOAL

To better prepare students with the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to succeed in the future, whatever path they choose.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/preparing-students-future> (Retrieved August 31, 2020)

FSL FRAMEWORK GOALS

1. Increase student confidence, proficiency, and achievement in FSL.
2. Increase the percentage of students studying FSL until graduation.
3. Increase student, educator, parent, and community engagement in FSL.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES IN EDUCATION PROTOCOL GOALS (2019-2023)

To help provide English majority learners with the opportunity to learn French as a Second Language and in so doing benefit from cultural enrichment.

Areas of intervention:

- **Learner Participation:** recruitment and retention of learners in second-language instruction programs and promotion of these programs
- **Provision of Programs:** access, maintenance, development, and/or enrichment of a variety of programs, approaches and pedagogical resources for second-language learning and instruction
- **Academic Achievement of Learners:** demonstration of a positive impact on second-language competencies of learners
- **Enriched Learning Environments:** cultural enrichment of second-language learning programs
- **Support for Educational Staff:** development, provision and assessment of training (initial and continuous), and professional development programs for staff working in second-language instruction; recruitment and retention of qualified or specialized staff
- **Research:** research related to second-language learning and instruction, and dissemination of knowledge in Canada

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*Source for all Ontario statistics: Enrolment figures as reported by schools in the Ontario School Information System (OnSYS), Ministry of Education.

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