



The State of French Second Language Education in Ontario

French Second Language (FSL) education in Ontario is growing and strengthening.

984,628 children were enrolled in Core French, Extended French or French Immersion programs in publicly-funded, English-language school boards in Ontario in 2013-2014.

Of those students, 270,219 were doing more French than the Ministry requires (students in French Immersion, Extended French, and 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 nine consecutive years. In 2013-2014, the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS) reported record high enrolment in French Immersion (187,741 students) and Extended French (32,917 students) with the majority of students learning French in the Core French program (763,970 students). Efforts to promote the cognitive, cultural, economic, and employment benefits of a FSL education have contributed to the rise of FSL programs that deliver a higher intensity with strong proficiency outcomes. Graduates of the French Immersion programs are now parents. 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 a sharp increase in the popularity of the French Immersion program in areas with a rising number of new immigrants 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 the spring of 2015 the Ministry released a companion document to the Framework entitled **Including Students with Special Needs in FSL Programs**. The release of the Framework document was followed by a Ministry call to action for all 60 English school boards to submit three-year plans to support the identified provincial FSL goals.

Teachers began using the new FSL curriculum for elementary students in September 2014 and began using the new FSL curriculum for secondary students in September 2015. The new documents are intended to support the provincial FSL goals and include a greater emphasis on authentic communication, inspired by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). **Kindergarten in a French Immersion Setting** was published in March 2015 in Prologue, a publication for French Immersion and Extended French educators, to support educators in French Immersion Kindergarten classrooms with the implementation of The Full-Day Early Learning – Kindergarten Program. The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat released a parent guide called **Supporting your Child's Success in French Immersion and Extended French Elementary Schools**.

Recent and Ongoing French Second Language Projects

CPF Ontario released the new *FrenchStreet.ca* website in October 2015, a searchable database for FSL educators to source French experiential learning opportunities for their students. It provides all visitors with options to enhance the FSL classroom environment or extend learning through a variety of means such as arts and cultural activities, field trips, exchanges and work programs, contests, community events and camps.

Registration is healthy for our annual provincial French public-speaking contest held in May, Le Concours d'art oratoire, which we do with our partners, the Ontario Modern Language Teachers' Association (OMLTA) and Glendon College, as part of the Canadian Parents for French nation-wide contest. A new Impromptu category is in development to align the Concours with the new curriculum and the guiding principles of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

In August 2014, Minister Madeleine Meilleur, on behalf of Minister Liz Sandals, announced that Ontario's English-language school boards are getting full and free access to TFO's educational resources with additional support from the Ministry of Education. Canadian Parents for French (Ontario) advocated successfully for this change on behalf of FSL students and our partners at the OMLTA. More than 7,000 electronic resources are now accessible for classroom use by the more than 14,000 FSL teachers across the province.

Canadian Parents for French (Ontario) has partnered with the Ministry of Education as part of the Official Languages in Education Agreement and Action Plan to expand the '12 Reasons to Stay in French' project which includes hosting the *Bilingual Success Conference* for students in the greater Toronto area, and developing and distributing teaching materials to schools across Ontario to encourage students to study French until grade 12 graduation.

Canadian Parents for French Ontario conducted a parent survey for the Ministry for this resource <http://www.fslhomeworktoolbox.ca/>, has provided input on the new FSL Framework document, the new FSL curriculum, the new parent guide and participates in the FSL Provincial Working Group which is continuing to strengthen parent, educator and community engagement in FSL. The 'On Est Capable' website and Projet à Québec are providing support to our partner, OMLTA.

Challenges

4,861 students graduated with a Grade 12 FI credit, representing 42 percent of the original Grade 1 cohort with the influx of middle and late immersion students. 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 exchange opportunities and finding new ways to expand the selection of credits.

Retention to Grade 12 by program:

Core French: 11 percent (up 4 percentage points in two years)

Extended French: 43 percent (no change)

French Immersion: 42 percent (up 6 percentage points in two years)

(Retention percentages are based on Grade 12 students in 2013-2014 measured against the original cohort at year of entry, 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.)

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 support or to be in ESL classes. Reliable data is not available on this divergence of policy and practice from school boards. We are beginning to see evidence of the impact of the Ministry’s new *Including Students with Special Needs in FSL Programs* in terms of program delivery if not yet in measurable results.

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 the unimaginable decision of having each of their young children attend a different elementary school where the coveted FI spot is still available, often without transportation provided. The availability of transportation is dependent on individual board policies. Without access to free transportation, providing equal opportunity for French Immersion or Extended French education is impossible.

At least three school boards (Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Halton District School Board and Upper Grand District School Board) are currently reviewing their FI program delivery models. In the context of a viability review of the FI and English programs, the Halton DSB has an expressed goal to reduce enrolment in Early French Immersion programs as a means to ensuring the delivery of a viable English program in several dual track schools.

The OCDSB is recommending a 50/50 FI program delivery model for every child in JK/SK along with a reduction in the number of hours of French as the language of instruction in its early FI program by introducing English and math (taught in English) as early as Grade 1. A full review of existing research is needed in order to validate the recommendation in the broader context and at the expense of decreasing proficiency outcomes for all students in the FI program due to the reduction in program intensity.

The continued dependence on the base definition of immersion as 50 percent of instructional time in French which was set in the 1970’s poses a challenge to student mobility within Ontario and beyond. Most jurisdictions across Canada and a majority of Ontario boards offer much more than 50 percent in a front-end loaded 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 and parents complain that calling very different programs by the same name is misleading.

ONTARIO EDUCATION GOALS

1. Achieving excellence
2. Ensuring equity
3. Promoting well-being
4. Enhancing public confidence

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 GOALS (2013-2018)

Provide every student with the opportunity to study FSL

Track and improve:

- student performance-acquisition of measurable second-language skills
- provision of programs
- student participation-recruitment and retention to secondary graduation
- enriched school environment
- support of educational staff and research

FACTS AND FIGURES –

CURRENT STATE OF FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE IN 60 ONTARIO ENGLISH SCHOOL BOARDS

Student Performance:

Tab 1: Instructional time by French program

Tab 2: Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

Student Participation:

Tab 3: Average daily enrolment in French Second Language and in French First Language

Tab 4: Ontario enrolment by grade and type of French program

Tab 5: National enrolment in French Immersion

(Note: Ontario is 8th out of the 11 provinces/territories that report)

Provision of Programs:

Tab 6: Enrolment in FSL programs by school board

- 52 boards offer French Immersion (FI)/or Extended (Ext) French:
- 38 boards start FI/Ext in Junior or Senior Kindergarten;
- 52 boards offer at least one secondary school with additional subjects taught in French.

Funding:

Tab 7: FSL grant allocated by province to school boards in 2013-2014: \$240,922,172

Tab 8: Funding per minute of instruction

Tab 9: FSL Allocations from Canada-Ontario Agreement to support enriched school environment and educational staff

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

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Source for all statistics: Enrolment figures as reported by schools in the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS), October 2013-2014 and earlier years for comparison purposes, Ministry of Education.

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