



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 is 7th in participation in French Immersion among the English provinces/territories. School boards continue to use FSL grants 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 policy and procedures via standing FSL Advisory Committees but most do not.

979,269 students were enrolled in Core, Extended, or Immersion French programs in publicly-funded, English-language school boards in Ontario in 2015-2016 out of the total student JK-12 English population of 1.9 million.

284,448 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 5.7 percent average annual growth rate for eleven consecutive years. In 2015-2016, the Ontario School Information System (OnSYS)* reported record high enrolment in French Immersion (212,714 students) and Extended French (33,104 students) with the majority of students learning French in the Core French program (733,451 students).

Efforts to promote the cognitive, cultural, economic, and employment benefits of a FSL education have contributed to the growth of FSL programs that deliver the best possible French proficiency through 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. 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 FI program 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 are on the website transformingfsl.ca.

Teachers began using the new FSL curriculum for elementary students in September 2014 and using the new FSL curriculum for secondary students in September 2015. The new 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 more than 8,000 electronic resources through IDÉLLO, part of GroupeMédia 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. Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELF), internationally recognized proficiency testing, is being provided to a sample of Grade 12 students annually, providing not only a credential for students but also a check in and encouragement of teaching that supports the Ontario FSL goals.

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

CPF Ontario, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, created FrenchStreet.ca in 2015 and is continuing to grow the site with the support of the Ministry and Official Languages in Education Protocol, Agreements and Action Plan (OLEP) funding. It is a searchable database for FSL educators to source French experiential learning opportunities for their students. It provides all visitors, students, parents and educators with ways to enhance the FSL classroom environment or extend learning beyond the classroom through a variety of means such as French arts and cultural activities, field trips, exchanges and work programs, contests, community events, and camps.

Our annual provincial French public-speaking contest, Le Concours d'art Oratoire, is held in May in partnership with the Ontario Modern Language Teachers' Association (OMLTA) and Glendon College. It is part of the CPF nation-wide contest and more than 20 000 Ontario students participate in their classrooms and regional competitions. With the support of the Ministry of Education, a new Impromptu Category has been developed to align the Concours with the new curriculum's focus on spontaneous oral production. Both the traditional and the new category align with the guiding principles of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).



CPF Ontario has partnered with the Ministry to increase FSL student engagement and retention to Grade 12. Projects include hosting the Pathways to Bilingual Success Conference for students in Sudbury in the fall of 2018, coordinating sociocultural workshops and performances, and distributing supportive materials to schools across Ontario to encourage students to study French until Grade 12 graduation.

CPF Ontario conducted a parent survey for the Ministry for this resource www.fslhomeworktoolbox.ca, has provided input on the FSL Framework and companion documents, the FSL curriculum, the parent guide, and participates in the FSL Provincial Working Group which is continuing to strengthen parent, educator, and community engagement in FSL.

Challenges

Retention in FSL to Grade 12

5,309 students graduated in 2016 with a Grade 12 FI credit, representing 42 percent of the original Grade 1 cohort with a small influx of middle and late 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: 47 percent
- French Immersion: 42 percent

(Retention percentages are based on Grade 12 students in 2015-2016 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 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 the unimaginable decision of having each of their young children attend different elementary schools to access French Immersion (FI), often without transportation provided. The availability of transportation is dependent on individual



board policies. Without access to free transportation, providing equal opportunity for student achievement through FI or Extended French education is impossible.

Over the last few years, several Ontario boards have conducted reviews of their FSL programs. Parent expectations that FI 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.

Teacher supply, recruitment, and retention has emerged as a new challenge 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, and the lack of French-speaking teachers migrating from other parts of Canada and the world are contributing factors. This challenge is beginning to be addressed by the Ontario Ministries of Education and Training, Colleges and Universities, Ontario English school board associations, as well as by Canadian Heritage in the new Action Plan on Official Languages.

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 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 FI 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 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 Immersion French 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 in Ontario English School Boards

Student Performance:

Tab 1: Hours of French Instruction by program, Percentage of Early French Immersion by School Board and by Province, Territory

Tab 2: Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and Self-Assessment Grid

Student Participation:

Tab 3: Enrolment Percentage per Program Pie Chart 2015-2016 and 2005-2006

Tab 4: Enrolment by grade in FSL Program and General Enrolment by Grade and School Language Publicly-Funded Schools 2015-2016

Tab 5: French Immersion Enrolment by Grade and Province/Territory 2015-2016

(Note: Ontario is 7th out of the 11 provinces/territories that report)

Provision of Programs:

Tab 6: Elementary and Secondary Enrolment in FSL programs by Board and Program Type 2015-2016

- 56 boards offer French Immersion (FI)/or Extended (Ext) French;
- 38 boards start FI/Ext in Junior or Senior Kindergarten (see Tab 1);
- 52 boards offer at least one secondary school with additional subjects taught in French.

Funding:

Tab 7: FSL Allocation to School Boards in 2014-2015: \$249 071 313 and 2015-2016: \$251 399 783

Tab 8: Hours of Instruction and Funding Graphs for Elementary Schools 2016-2017

Tab 9: Memo to Directors of Education – Funding for FSL Initiatives 2017-2018

- Canada-Ontario Agreement:
 - o Support for Education Staff and Research \$4 960 000
 - o Enriched School Environment \$1 500 000

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



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

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*Source for all Ontario statistics: Enrolment figures as reported by schools in the Ontario School Information System (OnSYS), October 2015-2016 and earlier years for comparison purposes, Ministry of Education.

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