

CPF Canadian Parents for French

Branch and National Perspectives

***The State of French-Second-Language Education in Canada 2010 Official Launch
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Canadian Parents for French British Columbia & Yukon

President: Debra Pool

Canadian Parents for French Ontario

President: Heather Stauble

Canadian Parents for French Nova Scotia

President: Colin Landry

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President: Amanda Wilson

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This has been a challenging year for FSL in our region, despite some real progress in some areas.

Let's begin with the good news:

- 2009-2010 was the first year since the turn of the century where overall school enrolment actually increased.
- British Columbia recorded another year of growth in French immersion—our 12th straight year. We have over 44,000 French immersion students in the province, almost 8% of the total K-12 school population.
- French immersion posted gains in Yukon as well, while intensive French made its first appearance in a territorial school.
- At the local level, after many years of hard work, the Powell River Chapter of CPF finally obtained an early French immersion program. Even better, the program is a mix of French immersion and nature-based learning called *éco-immersion*.
- Intensive French is making slow and steady progress in BC, and is still seen as a means of revitalizing Core French. In passing, I'd like to note that, for the first time, there were enough intensive French students in the competition to warrant their own division in our regional *Concours d'art oratoire*.
- Yukon undertook a review of its FSL programs, and discussions are currently underway on implementing some of the report's recommendations. The BC & Yukon Branch is proud to note that the Whitehorse Chapter is a recognized stakeholder in this process.

These successes are even more remarkable for having been achieved at a time of great financial stress for school districts, with, for example, Surrey and Vancouver school districts posting 17 and 16 million dollar deficits respectively.

Threatened program closures and school reconfigurations were reminders that, even after 40 years, many—too many—school trustees and school district administrators see French immersion and other FSL programs as standing outside the core business of public schools.

FSL programs (and by FSL, I really mean French immersion) in 100 Mile House, Williams Lake, Prince George, Nanaimo-Ladysmith, Comox Valley, Kamloops and Surrey were subject to a number of pressures as school districts across the province sought to control budget overruns. CPF parents mounted campaigns in these communities to preserve the quality and access of existing programs, and even to expand existing programs.

For example, CPF Chapters in Williams Lake and 100 Mile House fought back against a school district staff recommendation to eliminate the entire French immersion program. This would have left over 300 students unable to complete the program and obtain their Double Dogwood. By rallying community support, CPF parents were able to claim a partial victory, with only the late French immersion program in 100 Mile House falling to the axe.

Even as I speak, school trustees in the Rocky Mountain school district have voted to eliminate one of the most successful small-town early French immersion programs in our region, and replace it with a middle immersion program, preceded by a Core French K-3 course. Who knew that the New Brunswick model would find its way to Golden, British Columbia?

Another development affecting FSL in British Columbia was the rapid introduction of full-day kindergarten over two years, beginning this school year. There is no doubt that this early childhood initiative will have an impact on access to French immersion as resources are stretched to accommodate an influx of kindergarten-aged children.

A last development is the introduction of Mandarin immersion in a small number of school districts in BC. I wanted to mention this for the following reason: although there are many second languages being taught in BC with Ministry approval—in addition to French there is German, Japanese, Punjabi, and Spanish—the introduction of Mandarin immersion in Vancouver, Burnaby and Richmond has generated immense media interest. Our Branch office has been getting many telephone calls from reporters and even from filmmakers, and this has provided us with an unexpected opportunity to promote French immersion and other FSL programs.

But this degree of interest has also served to remind us that in our part of the world, multiculturalism is often set up against biculturalism, and multilingualism against bilingualism. FSL needs a second wind if it's not going to be taken for granted or become a victim of some vague notion of globalism. The theme of Allophone engagement in this year's State of FSL report¹ is one that BC & Yukon Branch strongly supports, and as a Pan-Canadian network, Canadian Parents for French needs to position FSL as the best way for young Canadians to learn the many languages of our planet.

Canadian Parents for French Ontario

President: Heather Stauble

Consultation

Over the past two years, CPF Ontario has met with Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Education, and her successor Leona Dombrowsky. We have had 6 meetings with senior Ministry staff and there has been increased consultation and collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities as well as FSL stakeholders.

Enrolment

Currently, 49% of eligible students in Ontario are studying French. In 2008-09 there were 803,000 students enrolled in core French; 30,175 in extended French and 137,032 enrolled in French immersion (FI), which had an annual growth rate of 4.6% for the past four years. FI enrolment represents 6.9% of eligible students in Ontario, putting Ontario 9th in Canada.

Graduation rates

In Ontario only 4.6% of students enrolled in the core French program complete a Grade 12 French credit. The French immersion retention rate has improved, with 27% completing the full FI program course load to Grade 12. The graduation rate, however, is severely limited by a lack of secondary school programs and courses.

Sites

There has been an average of 18 additional French immersion or extended French sites per year for the past 5 years in the province.

¹ *The State of French-Second-Language Education in Canada 2010*

OLEP

Ontario and the Government of Canada have signed the Protocol for Agreements for Official Languages in Education (OLEP) under the Official Languages Act. However, 16 months after signing, the Ontario Action Plan has yet to be released to the public.

Although not available to the general public, Canadian Parents for French Ontario was recently given an opportunity to see the 2009-2013 Action Plan. It contains initiatives for professional development, improving special education for FSL students, using the Common European Framework, research and e-learning.

However, the commitment to consultation, increased participation and graduation rates is significantly reduced. Whereas the last agreement had set a goal of increasing the number of bilingual graduates to 50%, the new Agreement has set a goal of “Maintain or increase, if possible.” This represents a decrease in the goal of graduation rates of 25%.

Funding

There is still no requirement for school boards to account for how they use the FSL funds. The near total absence of financial reporting, along with anecdotal reports from many school boards, raises concerns about whether these funds are in fact used for FSL programs.

While the details of the Action Plan have not been made public, the federal and provincial funds that flow from it have. The Ontario Ministry of Education allocation for FSL grants to Ontario school boards for this year is \$235.6 million. The total FSL allocation for the period from 2005-2011 amounts to \$1.38 billion. Only \$32 million, as renewal funds, have been accounted for.

Curricula

The Ministry of Education is currently reviewing FSL curricula. It is expected that the core French curriculum scheduled for implementation in September 2011 will include a new focus on oral proficiency and cultural awareness. The review of the French Immersion curriculum is just beginning.

Kindergarten

All day - every day kindergarten is being introduced in Ontario. Ten early French immersion schools have been included in the first round of implementation. Careful monitoring will be required to ensure that access and intensity of the early FI programs are not compromised as the full implementation takes place.

Growth

There has been an average of 18 additional French immersion or extended French sites per year for the past 5 years in the province.

Last year CPF Ontario launched a multicultural outreach program aimed at informing Allophones about French Immersion programs. In Toronto, 49% of the population speak a language other than French or English as their first language. According to Callie Mady's report, 60% of Allophone parents felt that learning both of Canada's official languages would benefit their children and 96% of Allophone university students believed that official language bilingualism would have a positive effect on future employment. In contrast, 80% of Allophone parents received no information about French immersion options from the school system and 42% reported that their school disallowed their enrolment.

Improving access through transportation, elimination of capping and lotteries, support for special education students, improved course selection and access for Allophone students will enable enormous potential for growth.

FSL teachers

High demand for the FI program brings with it the challenge of supplying qualified proficient FSL teachers. The ministries and the Ontario College of Teachers are beginning to tackle this issue through inter-provincial agreements, education and professional development for teachers.

Limiting access

Too many school boards still control access to FI programs by denying transportation, denying admission, and counselling out as a means to stem growth. Increased demand for French immersion programs despite overall declining enrolment has resulted in a growing number of accommodation reviews.

In summary

While there are many positives in Ontario including increased participation in French immersion, increased sites and initiatives to support FSL students and teachers through special education, professional development and increased course selection, the reduced goal of bilingual graduates, the lack of accountability requirements and consultation at the school board level compromises the effectiveness of those advocating on behalf of these programs.

CPF Ontario has made recommendations to the Minister of Education and other related Ministers articulating the need to work in concert to develop policies and programs that establish a continuum from Kindergarten to post secondary graduation. Knowledgeable FSLACs are needed at the Provincial and school board level to develop plans that improve access, plan for growth in participation, proficiency, retention and graduation and to ensure that funds are allocated accordingly.

Canadian Parents for French Nova Scotia

President: Colin Landry

In the 2008-2009 school year, enrolment in the immersion program (early and late) surpassed 15,000 students in Nova Scotia. The French immersion program began in our province over 30 years ago with only two schools, one in Halifax and one in Sydney. From those small beginnings, growth in the immersion program over the years has been consistent. Programs were added by school boards over the past twenty years, supported by parents and CPF Nova Scotia. Today, each school board in the province offers a French immersion program and the popularity of the program continues to grow each year.

However with shrinking demographics and declining rural populations, the majority of Nova Scotian students experience French as a second language though the core French program. Core French is mandatory in our province from grade four to grade nine. Of a total school population of approximately 72,000 students, over 50,000 are in the Core French program. The Nova Scotia Department of Education in its 2009-2013 Action Plan has pledged to increase this number by 10%. This goal will be achieved by focusing on increasing success in our core French program.

Enrolment in schools teaching French as a second language has risen in the early immersion and intensive French programs, but there has been a continuing decline in core French, late immersion and integrated French programs. Attrition is most dramatic in the core French program when the program is no longer mandatory after grade nine. The Department of Education has drawn up a plan to offset the decline in French-second-language programs by establishing experimental core French classes, and by increasing the number of courses available online and by correspondence to enable students to complete their immersion or integrated French certificate.

To achieve the goal of increased success in core French, the Department of Education has focused on using instruction and literacy strategies similar to those used in the Intensive program have been implemented in core French pilot classes. The number of core French Pilot classes will be doubled over the next four years.

In order to increase the effectiveness of the core French pilot classes, a variety of methods and supports have been made available to teachers and school boards such as ongoing intensive PD opportunities; meetings between pilot teachers, school board French consultants and the Department of Education; on-site visits; ongoing mentorship; pre- and post-student interviews; new resource materials; analyzing changes in student success; and teacher satisfaction. The Department of Education will also develop a website for core French students designed to support learning in the classroom with videos, games, music, news, etc.

Canadian Parents for French Nova Scotia (CPF-NS) will continue to meet with the Department of Education for ongoing consultations. CPF-NS will continue to organize its extra- and co-curricular youth activities such as summer camps, *Concours d'art oratoire* and the Bilingual Career Exploration Day. These opportunities for youth are available to all French-second-language programs in our province, from core French to immersion French programs.

Canadian Parents for French Prince Edward Island

President: Amanda Wilson

Greetings from the Canadian Parents for French (CPF) PEI Board of Directors, volunteers and staff on this 10th anniversary of the launch of the State of French Second Language in Education Report.²

In 2008 when Claude Parent delivered our message, he noted that as a non-profit it was our objective to work towards putting ourselves out of business having attained our goals. As you can see we are all still here but I hope a step or two closer to retirement.

In spite of all our efforts, the challenges have only changed slightly. There is still a shortage of qualified FSL teachers, students continue to have trouble accessing a broad range of FSL education programs and the quality of FSL programs are still suspect.

Prince Edward Island has long since been a leader in French immersion (FI) enrollment, third behind Quebec and New Brunswick. In the school year 1999-2000 CPF PEI reported 16.2% of eligible students enrolled in FI; five years later it was 19.6% and in 2008-09 it was 21%. We

² *The State of French-Second-Language Education in Canada 2010*

continue to experience positive growth, notwithstanding the 8% + in overall declining student enrolment.

The Protocol for Agreement for Minority-Language Instruction and Second-Language Instruction made available (in round numbers) \$247 million annually in 2005-06; in this most recent agreement that amount was \$235 million. As you can see this is significantly less than the 2005-06 agreement. Taking into account the ever-rising Consumer Price Index, there is also less buying power with this money today. As you can well imagine, with declining financial support from the Federal Government, it is impossible to maintain the quality of education our children are receiving, let alone strive for distinction.

A quote from Frank Smith³: “One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way.” Do we really believe this? If so, we need our federal and provincial governments to show their support for bilingualism in a more significant manner. Apply the old adage “put your money where your mouth is.”

Having said that, we also believe in another wise old saying: “God helps those that help themselves.”

Money is not the answer to all our prayers. What are we (CPF) doing to improve the delivery of FSL education? To encourage new generations of children and parents to embrace bilingualism? If we are to take some of the credit then we also need to accept some of the criticism.

As each bird flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the bird following. By flying in “V” formation, the whole flock adds 71% more to its flying range than if each bird flew alone. **The lesson here:** Teammates who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they’re going quicker and easier when they travel on shared power.

Those of us involved in the support of French language education need to become “teammates.” We suggest adopting the community ideal: “The good of many outweighs the good of the one.” In essence we are advocating for regional cooperation instead of individual competition. This involves establishing a cooperative network of local and regional public, private, and nonprofit bodies, working with higher levels of government, that focus their efforts for the benefit of their region or group of regions as a whole. This cooperative spirit may be able to address some of the shortcomings of working as individual bodies.

We need to begin by critically examining the opportunities and challenges this theory presents. We are not advocating anything rash and new-fangled. Partnerships and collaborations have been going on for some time. Are they evident enough to be making a noticeable difference? We think not. We are suggesting an open and honest discussion, identifying best practices, who might be best suited for leadership and what initiatives deserves support in time and money.

An example of this may be having the French schools accept French immersion students into their schools for a semester (or year) to strengthen the students’ French language skills, or having

³ Frank Smith was a reporter, editor, and novelist before beginning his formal research into language, thinking, and learning. He has been a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the University of Toronto, the University of Victoria, British Columbia, and the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. He holds a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

the French immersion classes accept French students into their schools to access a course not offered in their school. This something we are discussing in PEI.

In closing we would be remiss for not mentioning the great work that is being done in PEI in FSL education. Intensive French is slowly being implemented; we have two new French immersion elementary schools and 22 new French immersion kindergartens this year. Our premier has consented to being a spokesperson for our *Concours d'art oratoire* (he was a competitor himself in grade 5/6) and French immersion enrolment is up significantly.

We look forward to the day we can retire as champions of French second language education, when a quality education taught by competent teachers will be available to all who desire it.

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Canadian Parents for French National Office

President: David M. Brennick

Good morning, and welcome to the launch of *The State of French-Second-Language Education in Canada 2010*. It gives me great pleasure to welcome the many supporters of linguistic duality who not only traveled across Canada, but rolled out of bed at dawn to join us today.

Members of Canadian Parents for French (CPF) feel strongly that all students in Canada deserve equitable access to quality, effective French-second-language (FSL) programs. For years, FSL stakeholders have identified barriers to access: Enrolment caps, differential program and transportation fees, admission criteria and limited FSL entry points in small, rural and remote communities preclude the participation of many students.

Furthermore, there are great discrepancies in school district practice regarding inclusion and academic support for academically-challenged and Allophone students, both between and within provinces and territories. This certainly suggests that school districts receive little direction from ministries of education, and the nearly complete lack of ministry policies bears this out. Indeed, a cross-country review of ministry policies affecting equitable access found only 5 policies that support *any* aspect of equitable access!

We call for ministries of education across the country to develop and adopt formal policies to provide clear direction to schools and school districts.

The report also looks at one aspect of equitable access—the inclusion of Allophone students in more intensive FSL programs. Focus groups with immigrant parents in Toronto, Vancouver and North Bay and an online survey of Allophone university students from across the country provide an excellent example of barriers to access and the lack of ministry policies that perpetuate them.

While Vancouver and Toronto have the largest number of new Canadians, international immigration is a major factor driving population growth in all but a few jurisdictions.

Statistics Canada reports that in 2010, population growth in Nova Scotia stemmed essentially from international migration, which accounted for more than 80% of overall growth, while half of Saskatchewan's growth is attributed to international migration.

Indeed, the Atlantic Provinces are aware of these trends and have initiated a pilot project to retain immigrant health workers by meeting the needs of all family members.

Despite the fact that immigrant parents support Canada's official languages—even after realizing that little French was heard in daily life in English-dominated communities, 84% of parents interviewed studied French as a second language themselves—and despite the fact that 80% received no information about French immersion options from the school system, Allophone parents pursue second-official-language education for their children.

In the absence of clear ministry policies however, 33% of Allophone students surveyed reported that their school had discouraged them from enrolling in immersion, while 42% reported that their school had disallowed their enrolment!

New Canadian students are aware of the importance of linguistic duality and the benefits of official-language bilingualism, are committed to pursuing FSL education and are confident of their own language learning abilities. It is time to support, not discourage, second-official-language education for Allophone students.

To this end, Canadian Parents for French encourages *all* ministries of education to develop formal policies to facilitate Allophone participation in immersion and to develop the necessary inclusive teaching strategies. We also encourage the Departments of Canadian Heritage and Citizenship and Immigration to support the development of appropriate policies and pedagogy so that new Canadians can qualify for senior federal government positions and make real contributions to Canada's social and political development.