

**CPF BRANCH-REPORTED IMPROVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES TO
PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL FSL EDUCATION 2010**

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BRITISH COLUMBIA

Improvement

French immersion programming has had a welcome success in Powell River, where parents had advocated for an Early French Immersion program for years. Every time the program seemed to be within their grasp, some unforeseen obstacle or development tripped them up. Finally, this year, their efforts were rewarded with the launch of Éco-Immersion, a trio of French Immersion, nature-based learning and engaging teaching methods.

Challenge

One challenge – at least the most urgent at the time of writing – is convincing cash-strapped school districts across BC that French immersion and other programs of choice are part of the core business of the public school system. We have seen school districts seriously consider scaling back or eliminating FI programs, and putting FI schools operating at near capacity on closure lists.

YUKON

Improvement

Access to more intensive French-second-language programs in the Yukon has been enhanced as a result of: the introduction of LFI in 2005, where for the first time more students are registered in French immersion than in core French at the high school level; the continued increase in FI numbers at the elementary level; and the growing interest in Intensive French, already on offer in a Whitehorse Catholic school.)

Challenge:

The Territorial Department of Education is in the midst of a review of FSL programs in the Yukon, with the objective of increasing the number of high school graduates with a working knowledge of French. In addition, the Territory has to find a way of making FSL programs accessible to all, while recognizing the importance of offering programs enhancing Aboriginal cultures and languages.

ALBERTA

Improvement

The *Diplôme d'études en langue française* (DELF) is being made available to an ever increasing number of Alberta students. In 2009/10, 733 grade 5-12 students from 12 jurisdictions received internationally-recognized credentials from the A1 to the C2 level. More schools, more jurisdictions, and at least two postsecondary institutions are investigating or planning to offer the DELF.

This prestigious recognition of second language proficiency validates students' progress in all four skill areas (the provincial achievement and diploma exams include only reading and writing) and offers a very practical addition to their résumés. It is seen as a motivator for students to continue their French

studies at least to the end of high school.

Just as important, a growing number of teachers are becoming familiar with the concept of language proficiency reference points. They find that the suggested strategies and practices nicely complement the language curricula and are easily integrated in the classroom. This increasing attention to the Common European Framework of Reference is enhancing French-second-language teaching and learning in Alberta.

Challenge

While French immersion has certainly become more inclusive in Alberta over the past decade, support within the program for at-risk and gifted students is uneven and far from universal.

Alberta Education has produced pamphlets and guides aimed at teachers, school administrators, and education support professionals which promote diversity in the French immersion classroom. Some school districts have undertaken interesting projects, particularly with regard to literacy development.

However, many factors continue to contribute to transfers out of French immersion: administrators and trustees who still believe that it is an “elitist” program and so do not provide appropriate leadership and support, too few experts in the fields of assessing and remediating learning disabilities specifically among immersion students, limited access to relevant professional development, the isolation of many immersion teachers, the need for information and support for the parents.

SASKATCHEWAN

Improvement

Saskatchewan’s continuing economic and population growth is being reflected in the growth of the more intensive French-second-language programs. Enrolment numbers are up ... way up! Growth is associated with:

- Increase in the number of students enrolled in the French Immersion program. In the 2009-2010 school year, enrolment increased by 6%.
- Increase in enrolment for Intensive and Enhanced French programs. 431 students were enrolled in 2008-09, compared to 541 students in 2009-2010, signifying a 2.5% increase.
- Increase in the number of schools offering the Intensive and Enhanced French program, from 13 to 15.
- Introduction of the Late Immersion program into selected Saskatoon Public Schools in 2009-2010;
- Renewed Curricula (available on line) in grades 3-10 French Immersion, levels 1-9 Core French, and Intensive/Enhanced French

Challenge

One of the greatest challenges facing Saskatchewan’s FSL programming currently exists in the Core French program. There has been a decrease in enrolment over the past five years, and retention of students in Core French from elementary to high school is a problem.

- Teachers’ access to classroom Core French resources is limited or non-existent.
- Isolation of Core French teachers as a teaching community.
- Limited availability of qualified teachers, as well as qualified substitute teachers, to teach in French programs, especially Core French (as cited by school divisions);
- Limited French methodology courses taught for Core, Intensive, & Enhanced French at both universities in Saskatchewan.

MANITOBA

Improvement

FSL programs in Manitoba have experienced positive change. French Immersion enrolment has increased: In the 2008-2009 school year 125 more kindergarten students enrolled in immersion, more graduates received a French Immersion diploma, and three new French immersion schools have been established in both rural and urban centres. The educational partners in Manitoba are focused on collectively supporting the revitalization of Basic French to improve the teaching and learning of French in Manitoba. Stakeholders have identified the following priorities:

- Teacher training;
- Developing consistent policies and practices for the teaching and learning of Basic French;
- Promoting the value of language education; and
- Rethinking and developing new curriculum.

Challenge

To ensure the continued success and evolution of the French Immersion program, student oral communication skills must be improved and solutions must be found for secondary schools that are unable to offer sufficient credits for the French immersion diploma.

ONTARIO

Improvement

The Ministry of Education has demonstrated a strong commitment to French Second Language education over the past two years. Specifically, it is undertaking a review of the FSL curriculum with a notable consultation process that has included advisors, educators across the province, FSL stakeholders and parents through CPF Ontario. It is expected that the new elementary and secondary Core French curriculum scheduled for implementation in September 2011 will include a new focus on oral proficiency and cultural awareness in a Canadian and global context.

Challenge

Declining student enrolment alongside an increase in demand for French Immersion programs has resulted in a growing number of accommodation reviews taking place in school boards across the province of Ontario. Finding appropriate solutions that identify suitable school sites for Extended French and French Immersion programs that meet the community's needs and will support the program growth trend can be challenging. Planning for FI growth at the school board level, committing OLEP funds accordingly and consultation with the parent community are required to succeed without compromising access to quality programs

QUEBEC

Improvement

At least one English school board has adopted a strategic plan including increased FSL instruction. The Lester B Pearson School Board is gradually increasing the quality and quantity of FSL to the point where immersion programs in some high schools will be equivalent to primary immersion programs – 85% of the day. A new emphasis on written French - 50% of the grade given - will help to implement a new standard for bi-literacy in these schools. A recent report by the Quebec Community Group Network, an umbrella organization of Anglophone groups in Quebec, called for a new standard for bi-literacy after

the QCGN surveyed Anglophone youth in Quebec. While it is clear that recent graduates of the English school boards are bilingual, they want and need an improved instruction in French.

Challenge

There is clearly a need for the other English school boards in Quebec to follow this example. There is a need to implement creative and innovative curriculum, and a new partnership between the school milieu, universities, the Minister of Education and the community. One of the goals of this partnership must be attracting and retaining qualified FSL teachers perhaps through a sharing of resources with the francophone school boards.

NEW BRUNSWICK

The dust has somewhat settled on the French Second Language issue in New Brunswick since the Department of Education eliminated Early French Immersion and Core French programs in primary. With the provincial elections nearing, the pot got stirred up again by politicians, stakeholders, and concerned parents with talks of possibly reintroducing Early French Immersion starting in Kindergarten. Canadian Parents for French NB is pleased that this issue is still alive and kicking with the people of New Brunswick and that debates and discussions are once again open for negotiation.

As for the Core French program, the Department of Education replaced it with Intensive French Programs running from grades 4 (Pre) to grades 6(Post) and adding each year an Intensive French program to Middle and then High school until the Core French program is totally eliminated. For this, the Department of Education should be commended as the Core French program desperately needed a makeover and so far, the Intensive French program seems to be the right solution.

The Department of Education did introduce a new grade 3 French Immersion entry level as a compromise to the people of this province and that CPF NB promised to help make that program the best it can be. However, we never deterred from our belief that the earlier the student learns French, the better the student's skill will be in that language.

New Brunswick is Canada's only officially bilingual province and is presently the only province that does not offer French Immersion at the Kindergarten level. This is a sham as it deprives our students of the same opportunities as other students from across this nation

NOVA SCOTIA

Improvement

In the 2008-2009 school year enrolment in French immersion program surpassed 15,000 students, with every school board offering an immersion program. Over the last three years, the Nova Scotia Department of Education has focused Core French, with a goal of increasing student success. To achieve this goal, instruction and literacy strategies similar to those used in the Intensive program have been implemented in Core French pilot classes. For 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 long term plans are to expand the Core French pilot classes across the province and to continue to provide summer institutes on Literacy and Differentiation in the Core French Classroom.

Challenge

The Department of Education would like to increase the retention rate of the core French program in grades 10 to 12, when Core French becomes an elective course. In the past five years, the retention rate has been between 10-15% in school boards for grades 10 to 12.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Improvement

This year we will see ten new French immersion Kindergartens begin in PEI. Kindergarten is being added to the public school system therefore each Elementary school with French Immersion will, in the fall of 2010, start the program in Kindergarten. This has also caused a domino effect whereby there is now a need to add a new Elementary school in the mix to accommodate the French immersion enrolment: One new point of access and ten new earlier accesses.

Challenge

Intensive French has been successful on PEI during the pilot years (2007-09). Now at the Junior High level, as Enhanced French, it is causing concern as some of these schools now have Core, Enhanced and Immersion. Very hard to schedule and get qualified teachers. As well, until Intensive French is introduced to more schools it will not become main stream.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Improvement

The Department of Education has strengthened their focus on FSL programs. In addition to plans for a French Second Language advisory committee, high school core French programs are now more accessible to all students coming out of Grade 9, thanks to a new Core French course for Grade 10 students. Core French 1200 is designed to meet the needs and learning styles of a broad range of learners for Grade 10 students, and will be implemented in September 2010.

Challenge

Retention in both Immersion and Core French programs at the high school level continues to be a challenge. It is to be hoped that the Department of Education's forthcoming French Second Language advisory committee, in which CPF-NL will be a participant, will be effective in addressing this issue