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We acknowledge the financial support of the Department of Canadian Heritage.
Knowing French has provided me with several career opportunities I would have never considered had I only known English.

My parents immigrated to Canada in 1975 from Kenya, East Africa. Because of their education, their home, and their community, my parents each knew several languages before arriving. I was born a few years later, and was soon followed by my sister. We lived in a suburb of Montreal, Quebec, and were introduced to French at a very young age. When we started school, my parents made sure we were enrolled in a school with a French immersion program. Given that they were multilingual themselves, my parents understood the value of knowing more than one language. Enrolling my sister and me into a French program only made sense in a country with two official languages.

However, while my parents recognized the merit of knowing more than one language, French was not a language they already knew. They tried their best to help my sister and me to do our homework but this was sometimes challenging. Admittedly, my sister and I did not make it easy for them. Like any child who doesn’t like a subject, we would avoid homework, procrastinate, and complain when we weren’t allowed to play because we had to read our French books. I remember on more than one occasion questioning the usefulness of French and hearing my parents reply, “You may not see it now, but one day you will appreciate knowing French and thank us for enrolling you in French Immersion.”

Today, I am grateful that my parents, like millions of others, made the choice to enroll my sister and me into French Immersion as soon as we started school. I must admit (though not within earshot of my parents!) they were right.

Knowing French has provided me with several career opportunities I would have never considered had I only known English. While attending university in Toronto, I worked for several call centers which provided bonuses for being Official Language Bilingual. These jobs paid much more than any retail position and allowed me to graduate debt free, something that is increasingly difficult for post-secondary students.

Now I work in Ottawa for Canadian Parents for French (CPF) where I can share and demonstrate the usefulness of being fluent in Canada’s two official languages every day.

The more I work with CPF, the happier I am to see that my story is not unique. From small towns in the Maritimes to the big cities of the West coast, French second-language programming has expanded across Canada for over 40 years, with almost 8% of all Canadian students enrolled in French Immersion today. This program is so popular it is not uncommon to see parents camp out overnight to ensure their children are enrolled.

This issue of CPF Magazine compares the different types of FSL programs currently available across the country, and features interviews with prominent Canadians who share their views on the value of Official Language Bilingualism in Canada. It also includes examples of how CPF is working to provide opportunities for students to use French outside of the classroom.

We hope you enjoy this issue of CPF Magazine.

Shaunpal Jandu
Editorial Manager
In 2006, University Affairs interviewed you about French second-language programs in Canadian universities. Your general message was that universities could do a better job at continuing the good work done at elementary and high school levels. Has your opinion changed? If so, how?

I continue to view this as a problem. Too often, young people who have invested a lot of time and energy developing their language skills in school discover that universities are not interested in their second-language abilities, nor do they offer opportunities that would help students build on what they achieved in high school. The federal government, Canada’s largest employer, needs bilingual employees, as do many service industries and professions. Many students manage to maintain their language skills on their own or pick up French again once they graduate. However, I think that most universities are missing a real opportunity to support a strong, marketable skill. As for building future leaders, they may also be hindering their graduates from genuinely contributing to Canada’s linguistic duality, from participating in the national dialogue, and from fully understanding our country as a whole.

Since becoming Commissioner in 2006, I have spoken with deans, chancellors and faculty heads at Canadian universities in all regions of the country. I have learned about programs I didn’t know existed and about discreet efforts being made by many institutions. I have used examples from some to spur others to action. I have reminded them that not only does Canada’s largest employer—the federal government—need to fill 40% of its positions with bilingual employees, but bilingualism is an important asset for a wide range of professions.

Some universities are faring quite well and could easily be viewed as models for other institutions. The University of Ottawa offers a wide range of programs in both languages and nurtures its bilingual identity. Glendon College, the Université de Moncton, the Université de Saint-Boniface, the Université Sainte-Anne and the University of Alberta’s Campus Saint-Jean are all institutions where bilingualism is valued as an academic asset. Other universities like McGill, Carleton and the University of Calgary take bilingualism seriously.

continued next page
I think that most universities are missing a real opportunity to support a strong marketable skill.

Could you comment about the results of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages’ two-year post-secondary project and development of its post-secondary inventory?

Even though our study on second-language learning in universities was published in 2009, the issue continues to be one of my priorities. Universities are large institutions that develop their plans years in advance, and change can sometimes be slow, not unlike the public service. Progress is measured in years, like the work done by Canadian Parents for French.

Generally speaking, individuals I meet today are more receptive than they were seven years ago when I became Commissioner. They recognize that students have language skills and want to maintain them.

They have watched the debates about bilingualism for Supreme Court justices and government appointments and realize that French just might be the edge their students need to have the kind of career they want. Some are trying to see how their institution can contribute to that. I’ve been told about interesting projects, notably from law faculties.

The on-line tool1 developed by my office to provide information on second-language opportunities at the university level is continuously updated and promoted to young Canadians. My regional representatives highlight the tool at career fairs or events attended by young people. CPF Ontario also includes information about the on-line tool in a resource kit distributed to French second-language teachers to encourage retention and promote the benefits of studying in French through high school and beyond.

How would you describe the current French second-language landscape at the post-secondary level across the country?

Some universities and faculties are doing very well, while others are just beginning to explore what they might do. When shopping for a university, students and parents need to ask questions about what is available. The university map on our website2 can help.

I am less familiar with the situation in colleges. My impression is that few colleges invest in their students’ second-language skills, but we have not studied the issue yet. I would be interested to learn about a college with a successful approach. The distinction between a university that prepares its students for a profession and a college that develops its students’ skills to enter a trade is a lot more nuanced today than in the past. Perhaps now there’s a growing need for colleges to review the programs they offer and recognize bilingualism as a marketable skill.

The University of Alberta has suspended the business administration program offered at its French campus, Campus Saint-Jean, despite having students enrolled in the program. The University of Prince Edward Island specialization for BEd students is also in jeopardy due to cuts at UPEI.

What are your thoughts on the closure of these programs? What should be done to prevent such closures in Canada?

I don’t want to get involved in conflicts about specific institutions, an area under provincial jurisdiction. However, I do think that these controversies point to the importance of making a strong case for a French second-language learning continuum, from elementary school to post-secondary education. Despite their declining resources, universities and governments need to be reminded of the advantages of maintaining programs that will give graduates an edge in the labour force.

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1 www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/tool_outil/index_e.html
2 www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/twolanguages_deuxlangues/index_e
What can organizations like Canadian Parents for French, and/or our members, do to encourage the development of post-secondary French second-language programs? Do we have a role to play as parents?

The whole immersion movement and the development of quality French second-language programs are a testament to the influence parents can have on the education system. And it’s not limited to language. From programs for children with special needs to making our schools safe for kids who have severe food allergies, the impact of parent groups on what happens in schools has always been considerable.

It’s more complicated in universities. At this point, parents no longer have any say. Their children – now young adults – are the university’s students. These students need to understand that they have the right to insist on what they feel is important to prepare them for the future.

During one of our round-table discussions held across Canada, students stated that there is a need for universities to offer meaningful discipline courses in French. They felt it was essential to make second-language learning practical. Students do not necessarily want to study literature; they want content that is relevant to their field of study.

As an organization, Canadian Parents for French must continue to advocate for quality French second-language programs and be the collective voice of parents who want their children to have the opportunity to become bilingual.

If we all do our part to speak to decision makers and work together on this particular issue, the hope is that post-secondary institutions will consider knowledge of both official languages to be intrinsic to the academic development of graduates who are entering an increasingly competitive market. As Commissioner, I will continue to stress the importance of second-language learning, whether in our universities or in the public service, and I will continue to position the use of both official languages as a key leadership skill.

Our official languages are a defining characteristic of our Canadian identity. Both French and English belong to us and are part of our sense of national identity, even if we only speak one of them. One remaining challenge is for all of us to fully embrace linguistic duality as a core Canadian value, no matter what language we speak.
Globalization and the knowledge economy are placing a premium on “soft skills,” including language and intercultural skills. It is therefore not surprising that employers consider it increasingly important that part of their workforce be able to speak Canada’s two official languages. Second-language learning is also essential for strengthening Canadian identity and citizenship, and for fostering better understanding among Canadians. Over the past three decades, major investments in immersion programs across the country have resulted in a new generation of bilingual Canadians, many of whom are now in post-secondary institutions. These students are ready, willing and able to learn in their second official language.

It will take concerted action if Canada is to provide a true continuum of second-language learning opportunities for all Canadians, from elementary school through to the labour market. This continuum is an important and integral part of preparing our young people to be productive employees and citizens who can invest themselves fully in the civic life of our country.

Commissioner’s Actions

Recognizing the lack of research on second-language learning opportunities at the post-secondary level, the Commissioner published a study on Canada’s universities in 2009 called Two Languages, a World of Opportunities: Second-language Learning in Canada’s Universities.

The findings showed there were relatively few universities that recognized the importance of offering second-language learning opportunities, and of their role in building a bilingual workforce. The study also found that there is no comprehensive approach for building a system to support a continuum of second-language learning. The Commissioner met with various key partner groups and co-organized round tables in six provinces to discuss the results of the study and increase awareness of this issue.

BILINGUAL GRADS IN DEMAND

“Bilingual grads are in greater demand on the job market than ever. According to a study cited in [Commissioner] Fraser’s [2009] report, Canadian employment rates are higher for those who speak both English and French, and they make more money. ‘The federal government is Canada’s largest employer, and it needs bilingual employees,’ Fraser says. Because of cutbacks, the old model—in which the government provides language training to employees who require it—is out of favour. As a result, job candidates who speak both official languages are more attractive prospects.”

Kate Lunau, “On the Money: Bilingual Grads are in Greater Demand Than Ever Before—and Universities are Responding,” Maclean’s 2013 University Rankings, November 1, 2012, p. 84.
As a complement to the 2009 study, the Office of the Commissioner developed an on-line map of Canada (see link below) to help students find out about learning opportunities in various universities across the country. The map lists second-language courses, subject-matter courses taught in the second official language, support programs, networking activities and exchange programs that are available at more than 85 Canadian universities.

Assessment of Current Situation

At the elementary and high school levels, we are still far from achieving the vision in which all Canadians have access to the necessary resources to effectively learn English and French. Registration issues, such as enrollment caps, overnight lineups and lotteries, continue to hinder access to second-language programs in many regions. In several provinces, school officials need to provide better support to allophone parents who are interested in these programs.

At the post-secondary level, some universities have increased their second-language learning opportunities, while others have reduced their efforts in this area. The decision to reduce efforts is caused by various factors. For example, the Government of Canada is not expressing its need for bilingual workers loudly and clearly enough to prompt post-secondary education officials to pay more attention to the benefits of second-language learning.

At the end of March 2013, the federal government released its new five-year official languages action plan, the Roadmap for Canada’s Official Languages 2013–2018: Education, Immigration, Communities. The Commissioner was disappointed that funding for official languages learning (minority-language education and second-language instruction) had been cut by nearly $35 million. Despite the fact that two out of the three recommendations the Commissioner made in his 2011–2012 annual report related to second-language learning—through language exchange programs or learning opportunities at the post-secondary level—the 2013–2018 Roadmap did not include any new funding to increase second-language learning opportunities for young Canadians. Another initiative not included in this Roadmap was the Canada School of Public Service’s program to make its second-language learning tools accessible to students at Canadian universities—a program the Commissioner had often cited as a best practice.

SECOND-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS: A WINNING PROPOSITION

“Lori Chang-Foidl’s family spoke Cantonese at home in Calgary in the 1970s. Her parents were immigrants from Macau and Trinidad, and though neither spoke French they believed that their children, born into a bilingual country, should learn both languages, she said. When her own daughter was born the first thing she did was start looking for a French immersion school. Today her daughter is pursuing French as part of a double major at university. ‘I don’t know of any parents of [French Immersion] students who have regretted the decision to enroll them in a bilingual program. It’s a bit of a mystery to me why parents are hesitant or negative towards the idea,’ Ms. Chang-Foidl said.”


Next Steps

The findings of the 2009 study and the Commissioner’s recommendations resulting from those findings remain highly pertinent today:

- To offer young Canadians second-language learning opportunities, our country should better exploit the potential of minority-language educational institutions (i.e. English-language institutions in Quebec and French-language institutions in the other provinces).
- Educational institutions should focus on working together and using technology to improve opportunities for second-language learning.
- A priority should be to increase the number of exchanges and real-life opportunities for students to use their second official language and interact with people who speak that language.
- Stronger university second-language policies and requirements should be part of an overall strategy to improve second-language learning.
- Students should receive more information about the advantages of learning their second language and about the opportunities available to them.
- A common language proficiency framework should be developed to help assess students’ second-language skills.

To achieve a true continuum of second-language learning, the federal government must demonstrate its leadership by developing an overall strategy on this issue. To effect change and channel resources, it should also use the Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction. The Commissioner hopes that this protocol will strengthen and support the initiatives and investments outlined in the 2013–2018 Roadmap, so that Canadians who want to learn their second official language will have the tools to do so.

“[A]s I mentioned in our study of second-language learning in Canadian universities, I recommend that the Government of Canada provide financial assistance to universities so that they can develop and carry out new initiatives to improve students’ second-language learning opportunities. There needs to be a continuum of second-language learning from elementary school to the post-secondary level and then into the workplace.”

— Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages


Visit www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/twolanguages_deux-langues/index_e to find out about second language learning opportunities throughout Canada.
On the 40th anniversary of the Official Languages Act, host Stuart McLean of CBC Radio’s Vinyl Café decided to pay public tribute to the federal legislators of 40 years ago. Remembering the controversy surrounding the Act, and other equally contentious pieces of legislation such as the adoption of a new Canadian flag or the abolition of the death penalty, McLean told his audience: “It was the courage of those Parliaments and the politicians who were in the House at that time that gave me my great respect for the idea of public service and for those who put themselves forward for public service.”

“It was something I feel,” says McLean of his broadcast piece, “it should be said more often. Public service people who take a stand for something are not given enough respect. We’ve been so well served by our public service.”

“I remember the anger in English Canada against official bilingualism in Canada,” he says of the political and legislative debates of the late 1960s. “People are resistant to change, but now few people would argue against bilingualism, the flag or Medicare. These are things which Canadians embrace. These are things which define us as Canadians.”

In McLean’s 1992 book about small town Canada, Welcome Home, English and French Canada don’t always seem to know much about each other. One example is the Quebecker who has never heard of French Immersion. I ask McLean, who travels across Canada for the Vinyl Café: Have things improved since then?

“I suspect that Canadians are more tolerant, more accepting of each other,” he replies, “but it’s time for us to go to the next step.” As he put it in his broadcast, “We haven’t been successful with our sense of each other. We have been tolerant and... accommodating too, but we haven’t said that they are also us. We haven’t embraced the most fundamental truth about us: that they are us, and we are them.”

It’s the old Martin Buber idea, “I am thou,” he tells me.

McLean grew up in the very English-speaking suburb of West Montréal. “I learned the basics of French at school, but it’s when I spent the summer working on a construction site where I was the only “Anglo” within 50 miles that, for the first time, I understood what it meant to communicate in another language.”

Looking back on that experience, he says: “I think I learned not to be shy—I could make errors, be inarticulate. I learned that I could communicate with my high school French.”

As an artist who works exclusively in English, McLean realizes that “my work requires a Francophone to make the leap into English,” even if the Vinyl Café has presented Francophone performers like 3 gars su’l sofa, Les Batinses, Pierre Lapointe, Ariane Moffatt, Daniel Grenier, and Amélie Lefebvre to enthusiastic audiences across the country. As a citizen, McLean feels that one should be reading Quebec literature, listening to their music and watching their films. “I listen to a fair bit of Quebec music,” he says. “The last thing I listened to was probably my all-time favourite Québécois CD from the 1970s, Harmonium’s magnificent Si on avait besoin d’une cinquième saison. We should all be involved in each other’s cultures.”
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French Second-Language Programs and Student Performance

By Joan Hawkins, Manager of Research and Development, CPF

French Second Language (FSL) programs comprise a major part of the curriculum in school boards across the country. With the wide range of FSL programs available, Canadian Parents for French provides research findings to help members advise school boards about their communities’ needs for FSL options in schools. This article and the accompanying chart will clarify the advantages and differences in program design as well as student performance among Canadian FSL programs.

French Second-Language Programs Offered in Canada

Early French Immersion (EFI)
EFI students are almost completely immersed, learning all subjects in French during their first few years of school. English is usually introduced between Grades 2 and 4. From Grades 4 to 8, French instruction is reduced to 60 to 80 per cent. In high school this percentage drops again, with two to four subjects taught in French, in addition to a French course. By Grades 11 and 12, students generally take only one or two courses in French.

Middle French Immersion (MFI)
MFI programs typically begin in Grade 4 or 5. Like early immersion programs, students are immersed in the French language at the beginning of the program and, over time, the amount of material taught in French is reduced. There are relatively few middle immersion programs offered in Canada with most participating school districts offering only early and late immersion options.

Late French Immersion (LFI)
LFI programs commonly begin in Grade 6 or 7. Instruction is almost exclusively in French at the beginning and, as in early and middle immersion programs, the proportion of French-language instruction is gradually reduced.

Early Partial Immersion (EPI)
EPI programs, also known as 50-50 or bilingual programs, begin in Kindergarten or Grade 1, with classroom time evenly divided between French and English instruction for the duration of the program.

Core French (also known as basic French or FSL) is taught as one subject within a school curriculum. Instruction in French language skills and culture is usually introduced between Kindergarten and Grade 4, with students spending between 20 and 40 minutes per day learning French language arts.¹

Extended/Expanded French programs provide core French students with additional exposure to French, by using it as the language of instruction for one or two subjects in addition to a French course. This option becomes available to students between Grades 4 to 8 and may continue throughout secondary school. Currently, extended French programs are offered only in a few provinces.

Intensive French programs are generally available in Grades 4, 5 or 6 to enhance the core French program. For one half of the school year, students take part in an intensive period of French instruction using immersion teaching methods. During this period, students spend approximately 70 per cent of the school day in French, learning skills that support the curriculum. The regular curriculum is “compacted” and students complete it in English in the second half of the school year.


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## French Immersion Programs

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<th>Suitability For Most Students</th>
<th>Instruction in French</th>
<th>Initial Intensity?</th>
<th>French Language Proficiency</th>
<th>Enhanced English Language Proficiency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early French Immersion</td>
<td>The early immersion option presents the most advantages. It is the least likely to be affected by academic ability and therefore the most inclusive. Language learning is based on the ability to express oneself fluently in speech and to understand a spoken language. Teaching methods match the developmental level of these young students.</td>
<td>90-100% usually beginning in K or G1.</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Students in Early French immersion programs achieve the highest level of oral competency in French of all French second-language students.</td>
<td>Students experience an initial lag in English-language skills but, when English language arts are introduced, EFI students match or surpass the proficiency level of English program students.</td>
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<td>Middle French Immersion</td>
<td>Middle immersion enrollment reflects students' performance in English in the early grades, and students with learning difficulties are less likely to enroll.</td>
<td>90% usually beginning in G4.</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Students in Middle French immersion programs achieve higher scores on oral competency tests than all French second-language students except those in Early French immersion programs.</td>
<td>MFI students' English-language skills match or surpass those of their English-program peers.</td>
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<td>Late French Immersion</td>
<td>Late French Immersion programs are demanding due to the complex subject matter to be learned in French. Not surprisingly, Late Immersion attracts students who are academically skilled or highly motivated to master the second language despite the academic challenge presented.</td>
<td>80% usually beginning in G6 or G7.</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Students in Late French immersion programs achieve higher scores on oral competency tests than all French second-language students except those in Early and Middle French immersion programs.</td>
<td>LFI student's English-language skills match or surpass those of their English-program peers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>50/50 French Immersion</td>
<td>Partial immersion programs, also known as 50/50 or bilingual programs split instructional time evenly between French and English instruction. Students are taught 50 per cent of their lessons in French, 50 per cent in English, for the duration of the program.</td>
<td>50% usually beginning in K or G1.</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Studies looking at partial immersion programs indicate that students tend to have lower levels of French proficiency than EFI, MFI and LFI programs.</td>
<td>50/50 French immersion programs are not known to produce any enhanced English-language skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program</td>
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<td>Extended/Expanded French</td>
<td>Extended/Expanded French programs use French as the language of instruction for one or two subjects in addition to a French course. Like other delayed-entry programs (MFI and LFI) Extended French reflects students' performance in English and core French in the early grades, and students with learning difficulties are less likely to enroll.</td>
<td>French Language Arts plus 2 or 3 subjects studied in French. Usually beginning in G5.</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Extended/Expanded French graduates develop greater French-language knowledge, basic communication skills and appreciation of French culture than regular Core French students.</td>
<td>Extended/Expanded French programs are not known to produce enhanced English-language skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive French</td>
<td>Intensive French programs are suitable for a wide range of student abilities. Immersion teaching methods are used during the French portion of the school year but, unlike MFI and LFI, students do not need to quickly develop French-language skills to complete a standard curriculum. The program has been successfully modified to provide a two-year Intensive French program for students with learning challenges.</td>
<td>A one-year program, usually offered at G4 or 5. The first half of the year is in French, the second half in English.</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Intensive French students develop impressive French-language skills in a short time. In order to maintain and enhance French proficiency it is also necessary to offer appropriate follow-up programs like Late French Immersion, Extended French or specialized post-intensive French programs.</td>
<td>Intensive French programs are not known to produce enhanced English-language skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Core/Basic French /FSL</td>
<td>Core/Basic French /FSL programs include students with a wide range of abilities. Indeed, in some provinces students are required to study core French for some portion of their education.</td>
<td>Usually about 20 - 40 minutes/day. Starting grades vary, with the program being introduced between K and G4.</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>The goals for a high school graduate of core French include language knowledge, basic communication skills and cultural knowledge.</td>
<td>Core French programs are not known to produce enhanced English-language skills.</td>
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English Language Skills
Parents and educators may be concerned that studying in French will prevent students from developing good English language skills. Forty years of research, however, have shown that students can add a second language without compromising their first language proficiency. This is known as additive bilingualism because languages are interdependent and skills developed in the second language are available for learning and use in the first language and vice versa. English-language arts are introduced in school by the middle elementary years, while family and community also reinforce first language skills. Research has shown that “the effect of learning a second language on first-language skills has been positive in all studies done… [and] the loss of instructional time in English has never been shown to have negative effects on the achievement of the first language.” In fact, immersion students match and often surpass English program students’ performance by Grade 4 or 5 after first-language arts are introduced in the middle elementary years.2

French Language Proficiency
Immersion programs have generally produced better French proficiency results than traditional foreign language teaching methods. In Core/Basic French programs, the French language is the subject of instruction, while immersion programs use French both as the language of instruction and as a means of communication. This authentic communication allows students to learn a second language in a similar manner to the way that they have learned their first.

RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT INTENSE INSTRUCTION IN FRENCH IS MORE EFFECTIVE THAN PROGRAMS OFFERING THE SAME OR MORE INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS OVER THE COURSE OF THE PROGRAM.

By the end of elementary school, immersion students have native-like levels in listening, comprehension and reading in French, although they are still less proficient in speaking and writing. High school immersion graduates should be able to work in or pursue post-secondary studies in their second language. In fact, many retained an intermediate or higher level of second-language proficiency on Public Service Commission of Canada tests.3

Instructional Time and Intensity
Generally, EFI students achieve higher French proficiency than MFI students who, in turn, are more proficient than LFI students. It is important to note, however, that the FSL programs associated with the highest levels of proficiency offer extensive instructional time in French and, most importantly, provide intensive instruction in French at the beginning of the program. Research has shown that intense instruction in French is more effective than programs offering the same or more instructional hours over the course of the program.

Intensive exposure to French at the outset of a program allows students to quickly reach the proficiency they need to study other subjects such as science or math in French.4 Late French Immersion, for example, is associated with greater French proficiency than partial immersion programs, though LFI may provide more hours of instruction over the course of the program. This is because 50/50 programs do not provide an initial period of intensity.

Equitable Access
While all French Immersion programs succeed in producing proficient graduates, not all immersion programs meet the needs of a wide range of student abilities. Middle Immersion enrollment reflects students’ performance in English in the early grades, and students with learning difficulties are less likely to enroll. Late French Immersion programs are demanding due to the complex subject matter to be learned in French. Not surprisingly, Late Immersion attracts students who are academically skilled or highly motivated to master the second language despite the academic challenges presented. The later the immersion entry point, the more students are excluded from the program. Early French Immersion is the least likely to be affected by academic ability.5

CPF strongly believes that Early Immersion presents the most advantages because it is associated with the highest French proficiency results and is the most inclusive program. ❖

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Between 2006 and 2011 the number of Canadians who could conduct a conversation in both English and French rose from 5.5 million to 5.8 million.

These maps illustrate where the changes are taking place.

The number of Official Language bilinguals is clearly increasing across the country.
Percentage of Canadians who can conduct a conversation in both Official Languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Vancouver</th>
<th>Calgary</th>
<th>Edmonton</th>
<th>Greater Toronto Area</th>
<th>Ottawa &amp; Gatineau</th>
<th>Montréal</th>
<th>Québec City</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>0-9%</td>
<td>0-9%</td>
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<td>0-9%</td>
<td>0-9%</td>
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THE BILINGUAL ADVANTAGE

By Fred Genesee, McGill University
Learning another language has value in its own right. This is clearest when it comes to communication. Knowing and using more than one language makes it possible to communicate with others who speak those languages, take advantage of the internet to track down information in other languages, and even compete for jobs that require communication skills in other languages. The utility of bilingualism is evident even for people who speak English, the widely recognized global language – it is estimated that there are now more second language speakers of English than native speakers. Clearly, knowing English is important; but knowing only English is not enough. Monolingual English-speakers will be competing in the international marketplace with people who know English and other world languages.

The bilingual participants in their study were superior on tests of creativity, mental flexibility and attentional control.

Researchers and non-researchers alike have long been fascinated by the possibility that there are advantages to being bilingual that go beyond knowing two languages and the increased communication and employment opportunities that this affords. Because language is such a fundamental part of human development, it has long been thought that being bilingual might have significant consequences for our general intellectual or cognitive abilities. There is growing and compelling evidence that, in fact, bilinguals often demonstrate certain cognitive advantages in comparison to monolinguals. This was not always the case. Early research on the cognitive consequences of bilingualism painted an unfavourable portrait (Darcy, 1953). Research in the early part of the 1900s reported that bilinguals often exhibited intellectual and cognitive deficits in comparison to monolinguals. However, this research was seriously flawed – for example, bilinguals were often tested in their weaker, second language and, therefore, were unable to express their full intellectual abilities in comparison to monolinguals who were tested in their fully mastered native and only language. Research in the mid-1960s began to change the picture of bilinguals. A pioneering study by Wallace (Wally) Lambert and his graduate student, Elizabeth Peal, at McGill University found that, when appropriate and rigorous research methods were used, bilinguals actually performed better than monolinguals (Peal & Lambert, 1962). The bilingual participants in their study were superior on tests of creativity, mental flexibility and attentional control. This study began an ongoing research effort that seeks to understand the cognitive ramifications of learning and using two languages. Much of this research has a strong Canadian history.

Bilinguals show an advantage in two domains – metalinguistic awareness and executive control. It was advantages in metalinguistic awareness that were the focus in some of the early research, such as the Peal and Lambert study.

Metalinguistic awareness is the ability to think about the structural properties of language independently of meaning. Metalinguistic awareness is particularly important when it comes to reading and writing. Awareness that words can be broken up into individual sounds (“cat” consists of three sounds) and that these sounds can be represented by individual letters are good examples of metalinguistic awareness where the meaning of the language, words in this example, are unimportant. It is generally thought that bilinguals have superior metalinguistic awareness because they can compare and contrast their languages to see that there are different ways to refer to the same object (a dog is “dog” in English but “chien” in French), that languages have different sounds and those sounds are organized in different ways to produce words, and that words are sequenced differently in each language to form grammatically correct and meaningful sentences.
A lot of recent research has focused on executive functions. Ellen Bialystok at York University in Toronto is best known for this research (Bialystok, 2001). These are cognitive functions that reside in the frontal lobes of the brain and are like mental CEOs—they retain information and control the flow of information during mental activity or complex tasks that require planning. Of particular importance to bilinguals, executive functions direct, redirect or inhibit attention during problem solving and other complex cognitive tasks. It is generally thought that bilinguals have superior executive control functions in comparison to monolinguals because they have to exercise attentional control to avoid interference between their languages, monitor the language of others, know when to mix languages and when to keep them separate, and so on. The additional attentional vigilance that bilinguals must exercise enhances their executive control functions and often gives them an advantage not only when performing language-based tasks, but also during spatial, mathematical and other kinds of cognitive tasks. In effect, learning and using more than one language is like a cognitive workout that results in stronger “executive control muscles”.

Even pre-verbal, 7-month-old infants exposed to two languages from birth have been found to exhibit enhanced attentional control in scientific experiments (Kovacs & Mehler, 2009). Moreover, a number of studies have found that the onset of Alzheimer’s in bilinguals was delayed by up to 4.5 years in comparison to monolinguals who also suffered from Alzheimer’s (Alladi et al., 2013). The common explanation in all of these is that bilinguals have extra cognitive reserves that facilitate mental activity in the case of infants, children and adults with normal cognitive abilities, and protect seniors against the consequences of aging, at least to a certain extent.

Indeed, there is growing scientific evidence among researchers who study brain-based aspects of aging that greater intellectual activity creates cognitive reserves that can buffer individuals from decreases in cognitive capacity that is a normal part of aging. However, not all bilinguals are alike and show the same advantages in executive functions and metalinguistic awareness. Jim Cummins of the University of Toronto was one of the first researchers to argue that the advantages that bilinguals reap from being bilingual are linked to their level of proficiency in their two languages. According to his “threshold hypothesis”, a certain relatively high level of proficiency in both languages is necessary for bilinguals to demonstrate cognitive advantages in comparison to monolinguals (Cummins, 1976). Recent research by Bialystok (2012) similarly indicates that gains in executive functions among bilinguals are related to how much experience the individual has in bilingual environments. More accumulated experience in bilingual environments is linked to enhanced executive control functions. In other words, just a little bit of knowledge or experience with an additional language is not likely to result in an advantage.

It is important to understand that there are limits to the real-life significance of these findings. These results are based mainly on comparisons between groups of bilinguals and groups of monolinguals. Although bilinguals as a group outperform monolinguals as a group on executive control and metalinguistic awareness tasks, there is variation among the bilinguals in these studies. Some score at the low end and do not perform better than monolinguals. Moreover, the bilingual advantage is demonstrated in experiments that use carefully-controlled tasks designed to reveal advantages, if they exist, and to reduce the effect of outside factors (e.g. stress). Cognitive advantages might not be evident in real life tasks that can be influenced by multiple factors all at the same time. This does not mean that the bilingual advantages reported by researchers are insignificant, but that they may not be obvious in all bilinguals outside the lab.

We have come a long way from early thinking about bilingualism when scientists and laypersons alike commonly characterized the bilingual as cognitively weakened from knowing more than one language. While we still have much to learn about the complex relationships between bilingualism and cognitive ability, it is clear there is a bilingual advantage in cognitive ability that results from learning, knowing and using more than one language. More bilingual proficiency and experience in bilingual environments enhance these advantages. Taking bilingualism seriously pays off.

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French is a GREAT OPPORTUNITY: An interview with Premier Robert Ghiz

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) recently interviewed the Premier of Prince Edward Island, Robert Ghiz. Premier Ghiz is a graduate of French Immersion and a former CPF Concours d’art oratoire participant. Son of former PEI Premier Joe Ghiz, his career path has included working for Canadian Heritage Minister Sheila Copps and Prime Minister Jean Chrétien.

We spoke to Premier Ghiz about French Immersion, Concours, and the role of French in his life.

CPF: What advice would you give to current participants in Concours?

PRG: It is a great opportunity — not only do you get a chance to practice public speaking, but you do so in a second language that you are learning. It builds confidence in speaking in a second language.

CPF: You’ve given many speeches during your political career. How would you now rate your Concours speech?

PRG: Compared to other speeches I have presented, the Concours speech was very light, and not very political. I remember it was comical, and received many laughs. I believe that this distinguished me from the rest of the participants. It is important for a speech to make the subject matter distinctive, that way it becomes memorable.

CPF: Before becoming Premier of PEI, you worked for then-Minister of Canadian Heritage Sheila Copps, and later for Prime Minister Jean Chrétien after a stint with the Bank of Nova Scotia. Did knowledge of French help you in all three positions?

PRG: I did use French throughout my career, and in those positions. Knowing French was never considered a requirement, it was considered an asset. That being said, knowing French was very important in opening opportunities for my work in those instances, and continues to be an asset in my current role as Premier. Knowing French is definitely an advantage.
CPF: You are also the Minister Responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs. How does being fluent in French as a second language help you with this portfolio?

PRG: It is important to communicate with the public as both the Minister and the Premier. Knowing French allows me to effectively connect with the Acadian community and to reach a larger portion of the population.

CPF: Is this where you get to use your French on a regular basis, or are there other opportunities in your life to do so?

PRG: As Premier I have at least one meeting a week which is entirely in French. Knowing French allows me to communicate with the Acadian community and the Acadian nationalists. Also, French is helpful when working with national media outlets such as Radio Canada. It is through such interviews that I was able to really practice and improve my French on a professional level.

Actually, I use French more now than I ever have in my career.

CPF: Are your children enrolled in a French Second-Language program?

PRG: My oldest daughter will be entering French immersion kindergarten this year.

CPF: What convinced you and your wife to enroll her in the program?

PRG: My wife and I were both enrolled in Early French Immersion, so we understand the benefit of learning French from an early age. We both believe that knowing French is an asset, and that it will help open doors to new opportunities for our children.

CPF: What would you say to parents to convince them to enroll their children into a French Second Language (Immersion, Core French or other) program?

PRG: Learning French is a great opportunity. In Canada, with a large Acadian and French-speaking population, it helps to be able to communicate with everyone. If you are looking for a job in government, it is almost mandatory to know both official languages. And, if one chooses to move around the world, knowing both English and French will help create opportunities in many countries in Europe and Africa.

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Since its inception, Canadian Parents for French (CPF) has organized and promoted French second-language learning opportunities across the country, opportunities like the Concours d’art oratoire, or Concours for short. A decades-old French language public speaking competition, Concours is arguably CPF’s most successful and well-known public event.

While Concours has grown and evolved over the years, developing some interesting local and regional traits as it took root across Canada, the fundamentals of the competition remain the same: students research, write, memorize and give a three- to five-minute-long speech on a topic of their choosing before a panel of judges in a live presentation, with only the occasional glance at a set of cue cards to help them. In an interview with 2013 Concours participant, Liam Bekirsky from Ontario, he stated that he picked the topic regarding the Internet after having read an article that intrigued him. He researched his topic, performed at the Ontario Concours where he won and qualified for the National Concours, which he also won in the Early French Immersion category.

An estimated 80,000 children from grades 4 to 12 participate in Concours each year, moving from classroom to school, school district, and provincial and territorial levels of competition. Provincial and territorial finals can be loud, exuberant affairs with, in the case of larger CPF Branches, over 300 competitors in all five categories of the competition. Throw in parents, siblings, friends and teachers, and audiences can top 1,000 or more. As in any competition, there are nerves, tears and outbursts of wild joy, with competitors much calmer than their supporters as a rule.

In a promotional video for the CPF British Columbia and Yukon Branch’s Concours, Jim Pratt, a parent of one of the winning students, spoke about the value of the skills learned by the students: “People talk about public speaking as being the number one fear that they have. For these kids to be able to conquer that fear in high school is tremendous, particularly if it is in a second language.”

Concours also promotes post-secondary studies in French, with students in Grades 11 and 12 competing for scholarships to various Canadian post-secondary institutions, including the University of Ottawa, a major backer of Concours, Glendon College, La Cité Collégiale, Université de Moncton, Université de Saint-Boniface, and others.

Concours winners who receive scholarship offers often find themselves re-examining their post-secondary choices. Tae Hoo Kim became eligible for a scholarship to the Université de Moncton when she won her category at the New Brunswick provincial finals. “It’s on that very day,” she says, “that I made a big decision: pursuing my university studies in French. Of course, I was very hesitant since French is my third language and I’ve only been studying it for four years now. But meeting people who are as passionate as I am about the French language encouraged me to pursue my studies in French.”

The National finals of the competition usually take place in Ottawa. In 2014, however, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference, the National finals of Concours will move to Prince Edward Island, offering some
When you donate to Canadian Parents for French you can request that your donation be sent to your local Chapter, provincial or territorial Branch or the National office. CPF will earmark half of all donations made to the National office this year to help cover the costs of Concours 2014.

CPF always appreciates the help of individuals like you who ensure that they can continue running various programs like the Concours d’art oratoire, so please consider making a donation to your local CPF family today!

Interested in making a donation? Make cheques payable to Canadian Parents for French, and clarify in the “memo” field whether you’d like your donation directed to your Branch, Chapter, or the National office. Send cheques to Canadian Parents for French, 1104 -170 Laurier Avenue W., Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5V5. Tax receipts will be provided where applicable.

30 to 40 young Canadians an opportunity to visit the birthplace of Confederation. Concours is more than just a competition: it gives young French second-language learners a practical reason to improve their French language skills; it provides them with an opportunity to meet peers from outside their local community, sometimes leading to lasting friendships spanning the breadth of the country; and it offers them a platform to speak to the world at large about the things that really matter to them. Charles Park, a 2010 National Concours participant, says, “Concours was a perfect opportunity for me, an FSL student, to present my great passion for both the French language and my speech topic, which explored the struggle between cultural and religious ideals in the French and North American context.”

If you, or someone you know, would like to participate in Concours, please visit your CPF provincial or territorial Branch website for more information.

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Montréal is Canada’s second largest city and has been referred to as “Canada’s Cultural Capital.” It is the second largest primarily French-speaking city in the world after Paris. According to Statistics Canada, while more than 67% of the population speaks French at home, more than half can speak both English and French.

Yet one does not need to know French to live in Montréal. Just ask Josh Freed, an award-winning filmmaker, writer and journalist who was born and raised in Montréal and loves his city. Freed is a regular humour columnist for the Montréal Gazette and L’actualité (the francophone equivalent to Macleans) and as such pokes fun at the daily trials and tribulations of his city and province of Québec. He writes books and gives talks in both English and French.
We asked Josh to answer a few questions for us:
What is life like as an Anglophone in Montréal? What is the role of French and English in Montréal and Québec?
In typical Josh Freed fashion, we received answers that were both insightful and humourous. Have a read and see what life is like as an Anglo in Montréal.

Montréal is a unique city in Québec, where one does not need to know French to live day-to-day life. What opportunities do you feel Anglophones are missing out on by not knowing French?
I think most Anglos in Montréal (over 80%) understand French well enough to enjoy the city’s basic street life, festival life and restaurant menu life.

But becoming more bilingual lets you read French newspapers, watch French news and get a different perspective on the place you live.
It lets you see terrific Quebec films like “Gabrielle” and fabulous playwrights like Robert Lepage. It also lets you watch RDS [Réseau des sports] hockey games in French, where they always cover the Montréal Canadiens, instead of English CBC, which favours the Leafs. That’s why most Anglos I know watch their hockey on RDS.

In your article for L’actualité, you describe how you enrolled your children in French schools. Why did you choose French schools instead of English schools with French Second Language programs?
The French immersion schools here are very good, but they’re attended by other English-speaking kids who spend their off hours speaking English. We wanted Daniel to be surrounded by French kids so he’d have a better chance of being genuinely immersed (and develop a better French accent too).
It largely worked, though he did manage to find other English kids to talk to in the corridor about the latest English TV shows and video games. He speaks excellent French today, which is why he just got a part time student job as a fashion salesman at Target. I suspect he can thank French school for that.

Is your choice different from a minority Francophone in Canada choosing to send his or her child to an English language school?
It’s the same principle – but my guess is there’s even more pressure on Francophones, in that I suspect you really must speak good English to get by in the rest of Canada, not to mention the United States. There may be more of a sense of social necessity for francophones to make their kids totally bilingual in English Canada than isn’t as strong for us Anglos in Quebec. Here we can always get by with half-decent French. But to be honest, I don’t really know.

In the same article you mentioned that your son started to speak a hybrid language of English and French.
When your first enrolled your son in French school what steps did you take – if any – to make sure that he spoke his first language well?
For a while, we worried that many sentences he was saying, like “Dad, I want to take a dodo” or “Mom, I’m hungry – I want a collation”, would leave Daniel fluent in neither language. But my wife and I are both Anglos who speak English around the house so inevitably my son learned to master his first language, as almost all kids studying bilingually eventually do.
That said, he still thinks dépanneur is an official English word—like métro and Cégep, but why spoil his surprise when he eventually travels to Toronto on his own and tries using them?

In some of your articles in the Gazette you make light of the English/French discussions in Montréal. What are your real thoughts on bilingualism?
I think Montréal is a bilingual French city, the only one in the world – a place where the English and French languages go back and forth in the street sometimes like one language.
I think knowing and speaking two languages is a great gift – and Montréal is a place you really get to develop and use that gift. That is what makes the city so interesting. That is largely why I live here.

This is a two-language city that works very well in practice even if it doesn’t always work well in theory. It works great when we live in it out on the streets, instead of debating it.

On November 7th, 2013, Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages, released his Office’s annual report. Part of the report examines whether minority language communities in Canada (French communities outside of Québec, and English communities in Québec) are thriving. As someone who has been able to travel throughout Canada, how do you think these communities are doing across the country?
I’m not familiar enough with francophone communities in the rest of Canada to speak for them, but I certainly hope they’re thriving. For me, French is one of the things that makes Canada, Canada.
The English community in Montréal is shrinking, but still thriving. English speaking communities in the rest of Québec really are shrinking and vanishing (apart from the Eastern Townships). It’s no one’s fault really—just the draw of the big city, Montréal.

Also, on Nov. 7th the government of Québec released their Chartes des valeurs québécoise. Would you consider bilingualism a valeur québécoise?
I think for now [bilingualism] is a valeur montréalaise—but I hope one day it will be a valeur québécoise too. It is a beautiful thing to be.
Canadian Parents for French (CPF) works with decision makers from all levels of the public education system, from the classroom to the Ministry of Education. We often hear positive feedback regarding our work from some of these decision makers. Carole James, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Victoria-Beacon Hill in British Columbia and former leader of the New Democratic opposition in the provincial legislature, is one such supporter of our work.

Before her election as an MLA in 2005, Carole James served as President of the BC School Trustees Association for an unprecedented five terms, as vice-president of the Canadian School Boards Association, and 11 years as a trustee on the Greater Victoria Board of Education.

After giving a warmly received speech at the opening reception of the 35th Annual General Meeting of CPF in Victoria last October, Ms. James agreed to share her thoughts on the importance of organizations like Canadian Parents for French in helping change the face of official language instruction in Canada.

It has been my great pleasure over many years to work with the exceptional leaders and volunteers at Canadian Parents for French. In my time as a school trustee in Greater Victoria, with the BC School Trustees Association, and more recently as an elected representative, I have witnessed firsthand the incredible difference that CPF makes in our communities here in British Columbia, and across our country.

We’ve seen a lot of changes in the last 36 years with how Canadians look at languages – and organizations like CPF deserve a lot of the credit for that. You have raised awareness, educated citizens, and built support to the level where French Immersion is one of the most sought after components in our education system. When we’re seeing parents camping out overnight to get their children into French immersion programs, that’s a remarkable achievement.

In a time of great divisions in our society and a sadly too-frequent emphasis on where we don’t agree, the drive for greater availability of French language instruction is a breath of fresh air. It’s all about opportunities and opening doors.

That coming together and the energy about building something positive is so very refreshing. Your position statements on equitable access for all, and the need for quality programming, speak to values that are the lifeblood of a successful education system.

Investing in education is the best way to build a better future. A strong system helps build healthy communities, a strong society, and a strong democracy. And with our world and its challenges becoming increasingly more complex, well educated, creative, curious, caring citizens are essential keys to success. Providing the resources needed for instruction for all children, infrastructure, and programs is an investment with the best return – now, next year and for the next generation.

We also need more investment in skills training and to provide our young people with the most tools possible to open doors to opportunities for the economy of tomorrow. Your work to increase opportunities for students to have the ability to communicate in both of Canada’s official languages is an advantage on so many levels.

Thank you to Canadian Parents for French for your advocacy, and your passion for education across our country. Here’s to many more years of amazing work.
ON EQUITABLE ACCESS TO FRENCH SECOND-LANGUAGE (FSL) PROGRAMS

Every child should have equitable access to the French second-language program of their choice. French second-language programs are accessible to all students when:

- There is open enrollment so that no child is turned away;
- Transportation is provided at no cost;
- Distance learning is available to provide FSL learning;
- There are no additional fees;
- Programming and specialist services are provided;
- Every parent is fully informed about FSL options and entry points;
- All students receive information about continuing to learn French at the secondary and post-secondary levels as well as outside of the education system.

QUALITY FRENCH SECOND-LANGUAGE (FSL) PROGRAMS

Canadian students deserve high quality, effective French second-language programs. Excellent French second-language programming is ensured when:

- Ministries of education and school districts have written FSL policies and guidelines which provide goals for student French proficiency for all programs;
- Graduates receive official recognition of their French proficiency achievements;
- New technologies are used to enhance FSL learning;
- Research on FSL education is used to inform policies, program design and student proficiency expectations;
- There is an adequate supply of quality teaching/learning resources;
- FSL teacher qualifications specify French language proficiency, second-language teaching methods and subject competence;
- A sufficient supply of qualified FSL teachers is ensured;
- There are adequate professional activities for FSL teachers to keep up with current pedagogical practices;
- School administrators receive the resources they need to effectively plan and supervise the FSL programs in schools.

Visit www.cpf.ca to read all of CPF’s position statements.
I have two beautiful teenagers at home; Jean who is thirteen, and Philippe, whose last birthday cake had sixteen candles. My partner Steven and I are getting accustomed to their needs for independence, however I must admit that I miss the days we would all go together to the museum, or skating on the local pond. Happily, we still have our family dinners, and our Monday night sessions watching Les Parent on Radio-Canada. You see, I am convinced that Les Parent is based on my family. There must be hidden cameras scattered around our house and wardrobes, and that by spying on us they came up with such a family comedy (and such messy closets!)

Les Parent is a comedy which explores the relationships between parents and children, and the extreme sport of parenting. These segments, each only a few minutes long, propel us into the reality of a family’s everyday life. It is the story of Louis-Paul, Natalie and their three sons. Thomas (a real dear!) is the sensible, intelligent one; Olivier is the athletic rebel; and Zak, the youngest child, is an adorable ball of energy. We get front-row seats to real family life. There is love, there are hugs, but there’s also Natalie’s frustration with the kids’ junk lying around, Louis-Paul’s ire over the empty milk carton, and the piles of laundry which never seem to get folded. We see all the small storms and beautiful rainbows which make up family life. Their home really does remind me of my own. The “ben là!” from the children on the show echo the same words coming from my boys. When we see Natalie getting angry while tripping over the maze of backpacks and shoes at the front door, my boys look at me with sly smiles on their faces. You don’t get bored watching Les Parent!

So now, my inner educator is going to suggest a little homework for you: watch Les Parent. Check out the episodes on Netflix or online at www.tou.tv. Each show is easy to understand, and will appeal to boys and girls, young children, teenagers and parents, and is certain to raise a smile. I’m pretty sure that if my boys had homework like this, they would be at the top of their class!
French for the Future founders Lisa Balfour Bowen and John Ralston Saul envisioned a future where all Canadian youth would value Canada’s linguistic duality and enthusiastically pursue bilingualism through learning and mastering the French language. Seventeen years later, the national non-profit organization remains committed to that vision.

“Once an ambassador, always an ambassador!”
– Kelly Thompson
The Horizon Project was introduced in 2003 with this goal in mind. The event gathered students in Montreal for several days of cultural events and excursions. The Horizon Project then evolved into the National Ambassador Youth Forum (NAYF). The first official NAYF was held in Calgary, Alberta, and was moderated by John Ralston Saul. It quickly became one of French for the Future’s most important programs. “We know the many benefits bilingualism, and French specifically, can bring students in their personal and future professional lives. Our goal is to help spread an appreciation and passion for the French language amongst Canadian youth. Developing the capabilities of our ambassadors is an excellent way to achieve that goal,” says Danielle Lamothe, Executive Director of French for the Future.

Now in its 11th year, the NAYF prepares 30 Canadian students annually to act as French language ambassadors in their communities. The forum brings together Core French, French Immersion and French First Language high school students from across the country for a week of interactive workshops and activities focused on the advantages of French and English bilingualism.

Geared to help youth develop public speaking and leadership skills, the five-day event also aims to instill an appreciation for the vibrancy of francophone cultures within Canada. Through a variety of challenging, engaging team and character building workshops, the 30 participants develop confidence in themselves and in their knowledge of French.

Max Cooke, French for the Future President adds, “French is way more than a strict set of grammar rules, and our National Ambassador Youth Forum will kickstart a lifelong connection with francophone culture, friendships, travel, and so much more for Canadian youth.”

The facts bear out; learning a second language increases academic performance across the board. Students who learn a second language show higher average test scores in English-language skills, science, and mathematics. Those who take full advantage of the opportunity to learn a second language are primed to take the top spots in their classes in coming years. As Graham Fraser, Canada’s Commissioner of Official Languages recently stated in an op-ed, people learn French because they are ambitious and “because they want to understand the whole country.”
We asked past French for the Future ambassadors for their thoughts on their NAYF experiences and they were happy to share:

What is your most memorable experience of the National Ambassador Youth Forum?

My most memorable experience from the National Ambassador Youth Forum was meeting so many incredible people from across the country who were just as passionate as I was about promoting bilingualism in our respective communities.

Henry Annan from Halifax, Nova Scotia
NAYF Halifax 2010

What was your best experience after the event as you fulfilled your role as an ambassador?

While manning a booth at a community event, one lady asked me why she should care about bilingualism. I was able to share my experience and benefits of being bilingual, and actually convinced her to put her two children in French Immersion.

Kelly Thompson from Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta
NAYF Quebec 2011

Did the NAYF change your life in any way? If so, how?

The NAYF was an eye-opening experience. Having been too young to choose the French immersion program on my own, this was largely my parents’ decision. I am so grateful for their choice and what it has meant for me! The NAYF and the Local Forums are an amazing opportunity to learn from the perspectives of peers, workshops, mentors and speakers representing so many places the French language can take you, whatever your aspirations may be. The NAYF in particular gave me the means to share this message.

Aleksandra Damjan from Toronto, Ontario
NAYF Winnipeg 2009

After acting as a French for the Future ambassador for a year, do still consider yourself a French language ambassador? How does that play out in your life?

In the year after the NAYF, I became co-president of my high school’s French club, allowing me to promote and spread French culture throughout the school via after-school activities and morning announcements. I have also begun tutoring high-school students in French, and I have successfully encouraged many of them to continue learning French until the end of Grade 12. They understand the importance of knowing French in today’s culture and workforce, and even though it might be true for some, they won’t take “French is hard” as a reason to give up. Every student who decides to continue French for one more year is a small but important success in my eyes.

Mitchell Au from Toronto, Ontario
NAYF Edmonton 2012
Why should French-speaking students apply to be French for the Future ambassadors?

Being a French for the Future ambassador gives you so many advantages and opportunities that it’s an opportunity nobody should miss out on. Being an ambassador gives you a chance to be part of a network of amazing young people who are motivated and passionate about the French language and culture and it gives you a chance to make a really big difference.

Joël Lefort from Louisdale, Nova Scotia
NAYF Edmonton 2012

The 2014 French for the Future National Ambassador Youth Forum will be held in Sudbury, Ontario, from August 7th to 12th. This year’s event is hosted in partnership with Laurentian University.

French for the Future will begin accepting NAYF applications in February 2014. Grade 11 students from across Canada (Secondary V in Quebec) who are passionate about their bilingualism are encouraged to apply.

French for the Future partners with Canadian Parents for French within the French as a Second Language Network. Together they work to increase the number of Canadians who acquire French as their second official language. Past NAYFs have benefitted from CPF sponsorship. Furthermore, many of French for the Future’s ambassadors take part every year in the CPF’s annual Concours d’art oratoire, for example: Patrick Butler and Rachèle Paquet, ambassadors from the 2012 NAYF, and Ahmad Qureshi, ambassador from the 2013 NAYF. Both CPF and French for the Future are committed to encouraging youth to persevere with their French studies.
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KEY CPF CONTACTS

National Office
1104 - 170 Laurier Ave. W., Ottawa, ON K1P 5V5
T: 613.235.1481  F: 613.230.5940
cpf@cpf.ca  cpf.ca

British Columbia & Yukon
227-1555 W 7th Ave., Vancouver, BC V6J 1S1
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Disclaimer: Please note that all content marked with an asterisk (*) is mandatory. CPF reserves the right to cancel any application that is missing mandatory information.

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For applicants registering as a household, please note that we do not require your child’s name. Please apply under your own name. CPF members must be at least 18 years of age. You may register up to two members per household under one membership, though the second member must also be an adult.

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Organization phone number (If AMO)

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(Please note that we need a valid e-mail address to ensure you receive CPF communications)

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(For household members, please enter the name of school(s) that your child(ren) attend(s).)

About Membership
To find out more about membership benefits and about AMO membership and its benefits please visit our website at www.cpf.ca

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To complete the Membership Application Form online or for more information on CPF please visit our website at www.cpf.ca
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**Fall and Winter Opportunities**
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