

Canadian Parents for French

**Provincial and National French
Second-Language Education
Stakeholder Consultations**

New Brunswick Consultation

Fredericton, New Brunswick

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Introduction

Rajinder Bajwa, president of Canadian Parents for French (CPF), New Brunswick, welcomed the participants, noting that similar consultations were taking place across Canada with the hope of yielding valuable feedback for consideration at the national level at the session in Ottawa on April 21, 2004.

While the federal goal is to have 50% of all high school graduates be bilingual by 2013, the current New Brunswick government has set a provincial goal of having 70% of its high school graduates be bilingual by 2013. CPF is the only nationwide organization dedicated to developing opportunities for French second-language programs and is proud to be a partner working with all parties to achieve these goals.

CPF has its roots in Ontario where the dream of a bilingual country was first presented in 1967. The national organization was founded in 1977, and in May 1978, the New Brunswick branch was formed. CPF New Brunswick serves the local community chapters by enhancing FSL programs and developing opportunities to make French and English a part of everyday life. CPF is committed to the belief that bilingualism is attainable.

Jane Keith, executive director of CPF New Brunswick, noted that the National Symposium, Vision and Challenges for the 21st Century, took place in Ottawa in March 2003. Currently, 24% of Canadians are bilingual. These consultations have been set to identify and address the challenges of achieving the 50% goal set by the government.

Facilitator Patrick Flanagan reminded the participants that this consultation had a number of purposes:

- To review and respond to recommendations, strategies and actions identified at the National Symposium in March 2003
- To identify additional actions that will help achieve the goals articulated in each of the six questions
- To determine which recommendations will be most effective in achieving these goals

The stakeholders introduced themselves, explained their backgrounds, and expressed their hopes for the outcome of the consultations. Participants stated variously that they hoped for a number of outcomes:

- Increased support for secondary students in French immersion
- Reinforcement of the interest in bilingualism
- Policies to become realities
- Perspective from many sectors
- Increased accessibility of FSL programs for students with learning disabilities
- Involvement of business and industry in achieving and sustaining bilingualism

Two speakers provided background information on French second-language programs currently available in New Brunswick, as well as an appraisal of the programs from a post-secondary perspective.

FSL Programs Available in New Brunswick: Fiona Cogswell, French Second-Language Consultant, Department of Education

Fiona Cogswell, a French second-language consultant with the department of education, identified the three FSL programs currently available in New Brunswick:

- The core French program, available in all schools from Grades 1 to 12
- The early French immersion program, offered from Grades 1 to 12
- The late French immersion program, offered from Grades 6 to 12

The oral proficiency goal for the core French program is to achieve intermediate proficiency, giving students the ability to satisfy routine social demands, as well as limited requirements in school and extracurricular settings. Approximately 75% of the New Brunswick school population is enrolled in the core French program. The New Brunswick government is also piloting an intensive core program at the Grade 5 level. This program has an oral proficiency goal of basic-high, which would allow students considerable spontaneity in French while initiating and sustaining general conversation in present tense.

The oral proficiency goal for the early immersion program is to achieve advanced proficiency, giving students the ability to participate as equal partners in all conversations both socially and at work. The late immersion program aims to provide students with the ability to function at the intermediate-plus oral proficiency level, which means that they are able to participate in most conversations, both socially and at work. Currently 25% of the student population is enrolled in immersion programs.

The government has set a quality learning agenda that aims to enhance basic second language programs. This agenda includes implementing initiatives that benefit core French and the continued development and growth of the intensive core French program. New provincial targets for second- and third-language oral proficiency are also being set.

Issues for consideration in maintaining French immersion as a strong and viable option include the following:

- The need for remedial help
- The need for a plan to reduce the attrition rate in high school French immersion programs
- Increased program support, both financially and philosophically
- Better data tracking
- Ongoing opportunities for teacher support
- The development of an FSL handbook

- Out-of-class opportunities
- The use of diversity in the class program

New Brunswick particularly has severe geographical limitations to offering consistent and similar programs in every school. For example, not all rural communities have access to French immersion programs. It is therefore important to focus on improvements and enhancements for all French second-language programs and ensure that there are available and qualified teachers at all levels.

Post-Secondary Perspective: Professor Joseph Dicks, Second-Language Education Centre, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton

Joseph Dicks, from the University of New Brunswick (UNB) Second Language Education Centre, began by saying that while his perspective was from the post-secondary view, his comments were made as personal observations. He emphasized that he was not speaking for the university as a whole. As a faculty of education member, Dicks is involved in program development, textbook writing and teacher education, with the latter being what he believes is the most important aspect of French second-language.

FSL teachers in New Brunswick attend either (UNB) or the Université de Moncton (U de M). The majority of French immersion teachers go to UNB, while teachers in francophone schools attend U de M. Enrolment in programs to teach FSL is greater in New Brunswick, per capita, than anywhere else in the country—25% here versus a national average of 6%—yet there are too few FSL teachers graduating. A large number of applicants (25%) are not qualified—that is, they do not possess the required proficiency level.

Professor Dicks has identified the following critical considerations for future teacher training:

- The need for more recruiting
- The need to make requirements better known
- The problem of students who are going through French immersion, doing a major in French at university, yet still failing to pass the language requirement test for admission
- The need to develop partnership programs designed to improve language levels
- The 70% of districts that have trouble recruiting FSL teachers with subject knowledge (the requirements for one in three positions have been compromised in order to fill the need)
- Counselling to help students achieve competency
- The great imbalance between arts FSL candidates and math and science FSL candidates
- The need to develop courses to respond to the needs of French immersion students entering university
- The need to ensure that students who have language competency and subject knowledge also receive methodology training to equip them for teaching
- The need to identify strategies that can be practically applied to achieve successful teacher training

Professor Dicks concluded by emphasizing that he believes good teachers are crucial to the success of achieving bilingualism.

Education

Question 1: Students and learning

What are the first steps to be taken in marketing bilingual education to students at all levels—from elementary to high school entry, from high school graduation to post-secondary education and life-long learning—and making it a genuine experience to learn a second language? How can resources and support from outside the classroom be mobilized to enrich FSL instruction and capture the magic of bilingual education?

Recommendations

Concrete efforts need to be made in order to convince and encourage students to make the FSL learning experience a lifelong journey. The experience must be seen as more than a mechanical learning process and bilingualism should be promoted as a personal and professional asset.

In order to facilitate the promotion of the benefits the following is needed:

- Make the experience authentic.
- Find ways to inspire more interest in the students.
- Identify not only those who have had completely positive experiences but those who have also succeeded in spite of . . .
- Secure political support and commitment.
- Target potential funding sources.

Discussion

In reviewing challenges and strategies identified for this issue, participants noted the following:

- The 2013 goal faces a particular challenge from New Brunswickers who do not support bilingualism and who feel it is being “forced down their throats.”
- All New Brunswickers must be encouraged to feel that bilingualism is valuable and worthwhile; not everyone will agree with the value of bilingualism, but changed expectations and behaviour will pave the way for more important ideological shifts and a new “mind-set” that recognizes the value of bilingualism.
- The notion of “marketing” bilingualism is perhaps not the most useful model as it suggests the “selling” or commodification of bilingualism; instead, it would be better conceived as bilingualism “promotion.”

- Students should be positively motivated in French language learning, for instance, by creating school-centred events that use only the French language.
- While their children are young, parents should be targeted about the benefits of early-stage French language instruction.
- Bilingualism should be disassociated from the political struggles and myths that have historically surrounded bilingualism in New Brunswick.
- New Brunswickers' fears about bilingualism must be assuaged (one participant noted that the misconception that bilingualism results in local job losses must be eschewed since, in fact, bilingualism generates work opportunities in New Brunswick).
- Bilingualism should be treated as an education issue, not an educational option.
- Bilingualism should be encouraged not just as a matter of pragmatic importance (for instance to secure a job) but as a valuable social tool that facilitates lifelong friendships between the two dominant language groups in the province.
- Tools and incentives for meeting the 2013 goal should be given to parents, teachers and students alike.

Participants were asked to consider actions that might constructively respond to the issue of students, learning, and the 2013 goal in New Brunswick, and to rank them in order of importance. Eight actions were ranked as being of special importance. In descending order of importance the proposed actions suggested the following:

- Authentic cultural experiences outside the classroom must be created and students of all ages should learn that bilingualism is a fundamental value that has real meaning and is inexorably part of real life in New Brunswick.
- The province should create district FSL mentors (as exist in other areas) to mould good teaching practices.
- The value of FSL education must be promoted within all schools, among teachers and administrators.
- FSL programs should be made available to all students, including gifted and special-needs pupils; FSL instruction should become a “given” and be a ubiquitous part of schooling for New Brunswickers.
- Political and other community leaders must be convinced of the importance of FSL education.
- Leadership role models should be promoted as part of FSL schooling, for example by incorporating the positive experiences of bilingual people, or by emphasizing the success stories of francophone corporations such as Le Château.
- Investment and funding must be available to school exchange initiatives.
- Fun “social” events should be used to encourage bilingualism and francophone–anglophone interaction.

Other proposed actions included the following:

- Providing valid statistics on bilingualism and FSL education in the province
- Encouraging students in their FSL studies by having their achievements in L2 recognized
- Developing clear and relevant expectations of FSL education

- Using students to promote the 2013 goal
- Ensuring that schools reinforce both languages by encouraging daily announcements in both French and English
- Ensuring that the target market be researched.
- Ensuring that FSL training be made more enjoyable and less intimidating to both children and those seeking to learn French in later life (participants noted how daunting the prospect of becoming bilingual can be, particularly for adult learners).
- Ensuring that bilingualism be promoted to students as being “cool.”

As instructed by the facilitator, participants considered the key priority actions that related to the question. Each action was ranked by impact (how high or low an impact would the action be likely to have on the achievement of the 2013 goals if it were implemented); and by level of difficulty in having the item implemented (how “easy” or “hard” to achieve).

The facilitator acknowledged concerns that the ranking procedure has inherent problems: implementation of the actions, as well as the impact they would have, would vary widely from region to region, especially in New Brunswick where there is such variation in both programs and the resources. However, the facilitator emphasized that the purpose of the ranking was to measure the responses of the participants present today.

Participants noted the interconnectedness of all action points, and stressed the difficulty of separating them.

The majority of participants judged eight priority actions to have a “high” impact on bilingualism initiatives, but disagreed about the difficulty or ease with which action priorities could be implemented. Most conceded that generating authentic cultural experiences outside the classroom; securing disparate FSL mentors (in literacy, numeracy, and technology, for example); promoting the value of French to school administrators and staff; convincing political and other leaders of the value of bilingualism; integrating French role models into schools; and organizing “fun” social events in support of bilingualism would be “easy” to implement.

Participants were divided about the ease with which programs could be made available to special needs or gifted students; whether political leaders could be convinced of the importance of FSL instruction; and whether investment and funding could be secured.

Three themes emerged from the prioritization exercise:

- The importance of getting support and commitment from political and other community leaders, school administrators and staff, and from role models willing to publicly support bilingualism
- The importance of bilingual cultural and community events
- The importance of the mechanisms and operations behind bilingualism (e.g., funding, program development)

Participants noted the following:

- It is important to win the support of community leaders, since funding is contingent upon such ideological support.
- Bilingualism is a fundamental New Brunswick value that should be nurtured.
- There should be greater funding accountability and local control over fund dispersion.

Question 2: Teachers and instruction

What are the prospects for attracting and training the next generation of competent, enthusiastic FSL instructors, and for ensuring that they have the resources and support that they need to succeed?

Recommendations

The presenter made a succinct presentation by holding up a dollar sign. He then suggested the following:

- Establish support groups at all levels, in both emotional and social ways.
- Ensure that there is consistent training at the university level.
- Survey recently graduated FSL instructors (two or three years into the job), asking whether their training was adequate preparation, and if not, what was lacking.
- Provide flexibility in the collective agreement: teachers should be teaching subjects related to their expertise.

Discussion

In reviewing the challenges and strategies relating to the issue of FSL teachers and instruction, participants noted that sufficient and long-term funding (particularly from the federal government) is required to attract, train, and retain qualified and enthusiastic FSL instructors in New Brunswick. Rural areas of the province are particularly in need of qualified FSL instructors. Active leadership is also needed to ensure that leaders and educators at all levels are sensitized to the importance of securing competent FSL teachers and instructors.

As well, FSL educators competent in content areas such as math and science are much needed; participants noted that without these educators, French becomes “irrelevant” to the learning experience of high school students.

Partnerships and dialogue between the province’s universities, as well as between universities and the Department of Education, should be encouraged. Participants suggested that francophone universities (e.g., Université de Moncton) and anglophone institutions (e.g., University of New Brunswick, and Mount Allison) could share resources and host exchange programs such as a “one-year swap” of students. One participant suggested that New Brunswick students be granted priority in admission to such programs.

Participants also noted that a full-time French district supervisor is needed, and that a re-evaluation of the formula for Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) is required.

Participants suggested that the public misconceptions about end results of immersion programs must be remedied, since there is often a discrepancy between people's expectations and the results of French immersion programs. For instance, the widely held expectation that French immersion schooling will guarantee jobs for high school graduates, particularly as French teachers, must be discouraged. There must be a "meeting of minds" between parents and teachers regarding immersion expectations.

Acknowledging the interconnectivity of these issues, the participants proposed and prioritized eight actions to encourage FSL instructor training and support in New Brunswick. These prioritized actions proposed the following:

- Full-time, French supervisors must be re-instituted at the district level.
- Greater support must be given to FSL teachers (participants emphasized the particular importance of improving the resources available to special-needs FSL students; one participant noted that, currently, substitute teachers are not qualified to meet the needs of FSL positions).
- An inter-university model for FSL teacher training must be implemented; universities should share resources and encourage student exchange programs.
- Support for FSL retraining programs should be increased.
- FSL educators in rural areas must also be given greater support and recognition; teachers must be welcomed into rural communities and have their efforts recognized and applauded
- School principals and district education councils (DECs) must be sensitized to the FSL program and its importance.
- Long-term planning should inform educator hiring.
- Collective agreements must have greater flexibility so that the needs of FSL instruction, and ultimately the 2013 goal, can be realized.

Participants also noted that effective FSL educator training requires that the province work towards halting the "brain drain" of qualified FSL teachers out of the province.

As instructed by the facilitator, participants considered the key priority actions that related to the question. Each action was ranked by impact (how high or low an impact would the action be likely to have on the achievement of the 2013 goals if it were implemented); and by level of difficulty in having the item implemented (how "easy" or "hard" to achieve).

The facilitator acknowledged concerns that the ranking procedure has inherent problems: implementation of the actions, as well as the impact they would have, would vary widely from region to region, especially in New Brunswick where there is such variation in both programs and the resources. However, the facilitator emphasized that the purpose of the ranking was to measure the responses of the participants present today.

Participants endorsed priority actions for Question 2 as having “high” impacts on bilingualism objectives. Consensus was less clear in participants’ rankings of the difficulty of implementing the objectives. Support for an FSL retraining program and long-term hiring planning were seen by most as “easy” to obtain. However, actions such as support for French teachers (in rural areas particularly), the prospect of reinstating full-time French district supervisors, and sensitizing officials about the FSL program evenly divided the group between those who believe them to be “easy” and those believe them “difficult.” The development of an inter-university model for FSL teacher training, and collective agreement flexibility were deemed by most to be “difficult” to implement.

Participants emphasised the importance of adequate funding, and questioned current funding allocations.

Question 3: Public opinion and community context

What are the dimensions of a community-based campaign to promote FSL instruction and support Canada’s Vision for 2013 objectives? What are the first steps, and who should be involved?

Recommendations

The participant presenting the summary told the story of an encounter he’d had just before attending this session, which he felt had related to what was being discussed in these consultations and reinforced his belief in the need for information sharing. His boss had told him that his son was registering for next year’s courses in high school, and while the son has been in an immersion program, they all felt it was the right time to withdraw, since immersion was less relevant in taking other courses that would better prepare him for university admission.

There are things that can and should be done to promote the achievement of the goals for 2013.

- Involve community leaders (not politicians, who are widely regarded as toeing the line of the day). Identify who the champions might be and give them key messages. Bilingualism in the community needs to be promoted by “words and deeds.
- Target event coordinators and involve the department of tourism to help make special events more inclusive.
- Make schools proactive in providing information and support.
- Promote and publicize the many programs already in place.
- Encourage the media to play a supportive role in shaping public opinion through exposure and awareness.

Discussion

Participants reviewed the challenges and strategies associated with encouraging community-based support for the campaign to meet the 2013 objective. They noted that students must be encouraged to participate in FSL schooling throughout their school years, from the elementary level through to secondary schooling. Currently, students often abandon their French studies when they are forced to select other courses that are offered in English only. University training should provide to FSL-education students more French “teachables.”

Public opinion and support of FSL education must be promoted. One participant stressed that French immersion programs need greater support from the francophone community. As well, the use of both French and English must become an everyday part of life nationwide.

The framework for FSL teaching and learning must be renewed and rejuvenated. To this end, one participant suggested that francophone and anglophone high schools share resources with one another; another suggested that such interaction be encouraged in extracurricular activities as well. For example, francophone and anglophone schools could collaborate on bilingual theatrical productions. Another participant suggested that funding and “social politics” are obstacles to such resource sharing.

Six actions were identified as being particularly important to community-based promotions of FSL instruction in New Brunswick. In order of descending importance, participants suggested the following:

- Involve community leaders in promoting FSL learning opportunities for students (participants noted happily that promoting the importance of FSL, once primarily the domain of women activists, is now increasingly being done by men in the community).
- Promote language-inclusive events.
- Encourage parents to understand and support French immersion and core French in New Brunswick schools.
- Help businesses and both levels of government create summer work positions for deserving students; these jobs should require and support FSL skills.
- Encourage businesses to promote FSL and urged to use French in day-to-day activities
- Give bicultural news and issues a stronger presence in the provincial media (Noting that “the media is a powerful tool,” participants suggested that community newspapers, radio and television be encouraged to cover events and issues important to both francophone and anglophone New Brunswickers. Another participant proposed that media outlets be encouraged to print or broadcast advertisements in both official languages. Although the CBC was lauded for its efforts to promote bilingualism (for example, through programs like *C’est la Vie*), participants stressed that community-based private media must become more involved in promoting bilingualism.)

Participants also suggested the following:

- Promote bilingualism’s “success stories,” such as Moncton’s officially bilingual status.

- Champion bilingualism as a matter of social importance and value; do not manipulate it as a political issue (participants observed that successfully bilingual European nations do not politicize the issue).
- Encourage francophone and anglophone school districts to work together.
- Lend support to French as a second language at future conferences of the provincial CPF; for instance, invite a francophone “role model” to address the gathering.
- Hold “expos” or job fairs to emphasize the wide range of careers that require bilingualism.
- Promote “little things,” such as encouraging schools to play a bilingual version of “O Canada” (a participant mused that this should already be a “given” at schools).

As instructed by the facilitator, participants considered the key priority actions that related to the question. Each action was ranked by impact (how high or low an impact would the action be likely to have on the achievement of the 2013 goals if it were implemented); and by level of difficulty in having the item implemented (how “easy” or “hard” to achieve).

The facilitator acknowledged concerns that the ranking procedure has inherent problems: implementation of the actions, as well as the impact they would have, would vary widely from region to region, especially in New Brunswick where there is such variation in both programs and the resources. However, the facilitator emphasized that the purpose of the ranking was to measure the responses of the participants present today.

Impact rankings showed that most participants felt that all five key action points would have a “high” impact on bilingualism objectives. Participants did not agree on how difficult implementation of each would be. Priority actions to “involve community leaders” and “promote language-inclusive events” received endorsements as being easy to implement. Participants were less sure about the following:

- The ease with which parents could be made to understand and support FI and core French
- The prospect of encouraging businesses to promote and use FSL
- The garnering of government support for summer job initiatives
- The establishment of stronger bicultural media exposure

On these issues, the “easy-difficult” ranking was divided. Participants suggested the following:

- Supportive and influential individuals should be used to sway those wary of bilingualism
- Media outlets and schools should be used to promote cultural events
- The support of many people and organizations is needed to attain the 2013 goal

Question 4: Institutional support and accessibility

What major program and policy changes would enhance FSL instruction across Canada? What are the first, most practical steps that can be taken to build a more effective, more accessible system, and who should be involved?

Recommendations

Participants divided the proposed actions into three categories: all around do-able; pipe dreams; and good product–hard to sell.

They allotted the actions thus:

All Around Do-able

- Principals playing leadership roles in the administration and promotion of programs
- Increasing ways to live and experience the language
- Mandating opportunities for increased interaction between two educational sectors
- Promoting and publicizing the practical benefits of bilingualism
- Securing a full-time FSL director

Pipe dreams

- Providing more accessible teacher training opportunities
- Aa compulsory intensive FSL learning experience at the elementary level

Good product–Hard Sell

- More interaction between schools and the local francophone community

Discussion

While discussion touched on a number of specific concerns, participants generally agreed that an effective, accessible system must involve many parties. Teachers, teachers in training, educators, parents, administrators, students, business, the private sector, and government departments must all believe that they have a stake in promoting bilingualism and that they will benefit from the achievement of the goals set by the government.

Participants identified several key challenges in FSL instruction:

- Attracting, training, supporting, and retaining quality instructors
- Continuing education opportunities for FSL instruction program participants
- Motivating students
- Cementing parental commitment
- Relating FSL to students' lives
- Creating an acceptable “image”; making the experience “cool”

Strategies for addressing these concerns included the following:

- Provide more short-term upgrading for teachers (i.e., TESL certificates).
- Develop more programs (such as the two-week course offered at U de M, Shippegan) that provide an intensive session in a short period of time.

- Promote early “intensive” experiences rather than isolated instruction—that is, exposure to immersion in environments where French is the living, working language—at an early stage, in order to develop a receptive attitude, before biases have formed.
- Offer authentic immersion experiences with exposure to other “cool” children who speak French in their daily lives.
- Make bilingualism a matter of fact (one participant suggested that just as we do not ask children if they want to take math or science, nor should we ask them to choose a language program, but rather make immersion a mandatory part of the system).

However, some reservations about mandatory programs were expressed, since mandatory intensive experiences might encourage some districts to abandon early immersion, thus undermining existing immersion programs. The concern was expressed that when parents and children have to choose one program over another at the school entry level, they often do not feel equipped with enough knowledge about the program, or know whether the child’s ability to function will be more effective in one program over the other.

Social factors may also have some bearing on the choice, meaning that final decisions may not necessarily be made based on the benefits or merits of the program. Having consistent and compulsory programs would alleviate the parental anxiety about potentially eliminating opportunities for a child. However, it was noted that caution must be exercised with regard to mandatory programs, since FSL is a contentious issue in some parts of the province and the public may resist what they feel is “forced upon them,” particularly if they think it will be at the expense of other programs in the school system.

Repeatedly, the view was expressed that much depends on the support, leadership, and direction that is provided within the system. If people in education don’t think that FSL is important, it will be difficult to garner public support. The attitudes of the minister of education, district superintendents, principals, DEC members and teachers will all have an impact on the general public perception regarding the importance of achieving bilingualism.

The group felt strongly that an effective FSL program is enhanced when the children “live the language,” experience authentic relevance through the culture, and have teachers whose commitment is measurable by their enthusiasm.

Based on the challenges and strategies identified and developed during their discussions, participants then proposed a number of actions and initiatives. When whole group input was assessed, eight key initiatives were identified and ranked in descending order of importance.

- Provide accessible, short-term, intensive, flexible teacher training opportunities.
- Ensure that principals must play a leadership role in the administration and promotion of the programs.
- Provide opportunities to live and experience the language (e.g., exchanges and visits, both virtual and real).
- Mandate opportunities for interaction between two educational sectors, especially at the high school level.

- Consider mandating an “intensive” FSL learning experience at the elementary level.
- Encourage interaction between the schools and local francophone communities within the larger community.
- Promote and publicize the practical benefits of bilingualism to both students and parents.
- Find FSL directors and supervisors who focus solely on FSL (current resource people are spread too thin and wear too many hats).

Other proposed action items included the following:

- Use marketing and promotion to play a role in retention (for both students and parents).
- Encourage more collaboration between industry and education.
- Develop more socio-cultural opportunities for French immersion students.
- Promote and market existing programs and bursaries available for FSL.
- Convince teachers and principals to “buy-in”; support needs to be both grassroots and from the top down
- Increase the bursaries from the federal government to students in higher level FSL and ESL programs.
- Develop a directory of bilingual jobs.

As instructed by the facilitator, participants considered the key priority actions that related to the question. Each action was ranked by impact (how high or low an impact would the action be likely to have on the achievement of the 2013 goals if it were implemented); and by level of difficulty in having the item implemented (how “easy” or “hard” to achieve).

The facilitator acknowledged concerns that the ranking procedure has inherent problems: implementation of the actions, as well as the impact they would have, would vary widely from region to region, especially in New Brunswick where there is such variation in both programs and the resources. However, the facilitator emphasized that the purpose of the ranking was to measure the responses of the participants present today.

All eight initiatives were ranked as having a high impact if they were to be implemented. Of all the initiatives, participants believed the following would have the greatest effect:

- Providing more accessible teacher training opportunities
- Establishing a compulsory “intensive” FSL learning experience at the elementary level

Participants were divided on which actions would be easy to implement, as assessments were often made based on the background and personal experience of the participant. All agreed that the action that would have the greatest impact—the compulsory intensive FSL learning experience at the elementary level—would also be the hardest to achieve. It was generally agreed that making something mandatory, even if it is beneficial, will often meet with resistance and arouse suspicion and concern. Promoting and publicizing the practical benefits of bilingualism to parents and students, and hiring full-time FSL directors and supervisors were perceived to be the easiest measures to implement.

On all other actions, the participants were evenly divided in their opinions of both the impact and

the feasibility of implementation.

Business

Question 5

Is there scope for ongoing collaboration between the business and education sectors to increase the proportion of high school graduates with a working knowledge of both official languages? If so, based on the initial list of strategies developed at the National Symposium, what are the most promising opportunities for early action?

Recommendations

Collaboration can be developed and nurtured with the following considerations in mind:

- Courses and training are available. The responsibility for maintaining FSL experiences cannot be given to the schools because students are leaving that system. The responsibility should belong to the business community and industry. Good initiatives have been taken by some businesses.
- Potential students should be identified as ambassadors, and industry should be encouraged to seek them out.
- Urban areas have different concerns than rural areas; support should be given accordingly.
- Not all promotion is expensive—make use of the Internet.
- Publicize and promote programs well ahead of eligibility time—student exchanges and co-op placements, for example—so that parents and students have time to “warm up” to the idea of participating.
- Business will usually take the most efficient steps to respond to clientele—recognize and work with this.

Discussion

Discussion of the potential collaboration between business and education sectors focused mainly on the goals and needs of both interests. Can the needs of business be met and linked to the achievement of the goals set for the FSL programs? Participants expressed concern that for business, money is the bottom line. While many businesses will recognize that a bilingual work force can be a good thing, other businesses see no direct benefit—they may lack resources for workplace FSL training and French may be irrelevant to their environment. Partnering business with education through a co-op program could yield benefits for both parties, but the benefits are likely to be measured against the cost involved.

Meeting graduation requirements may also be a concern for students in FSL programs who want to do a co-op placement as an elective. Students trying to accommodate specific requirements for university admission may also face complicated course issues.

A number of key challenges for business and education collaboration were identified:

- The irrelevancy of French in an English business community
- The cost of FSL training in the workplace and its impact on “the bottom line”
- Convincing businesses of the benefits of a bilingual work force
- “Lip service” only being paid to immersion programs

Strategies for addressing these concerns included the following:

- Organize interaction, such as a community breakfast..
- Develop and promote of French co-op programs that are mutually beneficial
- Involve chambers of commerce in promoting French activities and programs in their communities.

While there were concerns about implementing measures which require the support and involvement of financially oriented organizations, several actions and initiatives were proposed and six were identified as being of significant importance. Listed in descending order, the top six were as follows:

- Develop courses and programs to bridge gaps between the level of French achieved at school and the level which businesses need.
- Offer testimonials (given in the schools) from former French immersion students currently working in business and industry.
- Encourage French businesses to provide co-op placements for French immersion students.
- Increase publicity for summer employment opportunities, work exchanges, travel etc. at school through counsellors.
- Promote bilingual community radio and television stations.
- Establish strategies for the development of bilingual businesses.

In addition, other action items were proposed:

- Develop a relationship between school and business.
- Seek a commitment from business and technology sectors to maintain upgrading to increase proficiency *en français*.
- Research the level of proficiency that is demanded by the business sector.
- Developing television programs that engage student viewers (e.g., replicating *Course Autour Du Ronde* as *Course Autour Du Canada*; reality shows on linguistic duality).
- Broadcast more programs like *C'est la Vie* on CBC radio.
- Offer high school business courses in French so students will be industry-ready.

As instructed by the facilitator, participants considered the key priority actions that related to the question. Each action was ranked by impact (how high or low an impact would the action be likely to have on the achievement of the 2013 goals if it were implemented); and by level of difficulty in having the item implemented (how “easy” or “hard” to achieve).

The facilitator acknowledged concerns that the ranking procedure has inherent problems: implementation of the actions, as well as the impact they would have, would vary widely from region to region, especially in New Brunswick where there is such variation in both programs and the resources. However, the facilitator emphasized that the purpose of the ranking was to measure the responses of the participants present today.

The majority of participants felt that all six action items would have a high impact on the achievement of the 2013 goals. The action having the greatest impact was identified as “the development of courses and programs to bridge gaps between the level of French achieved at school and that which businesses need.” The group was divided on how hard or easy this would be to achieve, but more participants felt it would be difficult.

Testimonials from former French immersion students who are now in the working world was perceived to be an action that would have a high impact and was thought by everyone to be the easiest to achieve.

The most difficult action to implement was identified as having the business community establish strategies for becoming bilingual. It was generally felt that for businesses to voluntarily “buy in” to bilingualism they would have to recognize some direct benefit for their company. In some business environments, French is simply of no significant relevance. This underlines the importance of promoting the benefits of a bilingual population and emphasizes the need for widespread “PR” work. Participants felt that both co-op programs and summer employment opportunities could easily be implemented and would have a significant impact.

Arts, Culture, and Sports

Question 6

Is there scope for ongoing collaboration between the arts, culture, and sport sector and the FSL education community to increase the proportion of high school graduates with a working knowledge of both official languages? If so, based on the initial list of strategies developed at the National Symposium, what are the most promising opportunities for early action?

Recommendations

The participants concluded that there is a great deal of scope for collaboration and partnership between the FSL learning experience and the arts, culture, and sports sectors. Initiatives that will help to further the development and achievement of the 2013 goals are as follows:

- Promote local French opportunities.
- Expand summer immersion programs.
- Make use of Web sites, inventories, and exposure to French outside of school.

- Encourage all government departments, not just the language-related sectors, to promote bilingualism.
- Actively seek out funding sources.

Colour-coded responses (by show of paper) were overwhelmingly supportive of most of the initiatives expressed. There were no “red flags,” although some yellow votes cautioned stakeholders to recognize the importance of gaining public support, appreciating that needs and concerns vary widely from region to region in a province like New Brunswick, and that the success of bilingualism will be strongly linked to the development of positive attitudes towards it and the strength of the case built to “sell it.” But stakeholders can be encouraged by the fact that the New Brunswick government is already officially committed to bilingualism and that there is money there to support it “if you know where to look.”

Discussion

Arts, culture and sports are ideal arenas for promoting commonalities and setting aside differences. They are like another language themselves—universal languages that can provide common ground on which we can celebrate achievements and unity. Participants noted that there were several challenges in promoting collaboration:

- While culture is an integral part of learning another language, a fear can exist that in embracing another culture you may somehow lose your own.
- Certain protocols must be observed; sometimes, cultural differences may result in attitudinal misunderstandings.
- Promoting exchanges is very important, and yet the number of exchanges is actually decreasing.
- Promoting virtual exchanges and Internet communication, in the same way that pen pals were once used for communicating, has led to concerns over the safety of such communication.

Participants felt that several strategies could meet these challenges:

- Continue to stress the importance of cultural exchanges—the experience of another language must be lived, and culture is an integral part of learning a language.
- Tap into francophone communities, since contact with the French community is essential for fostering understanding of and appreciation for the culture.
- Involve municipalities on the larger scale.

Communication was a strong theme throughout the discussions on promoting collaboration between the arts, culture, and sport sectors and the FSL education community. Effective communication in making parents and students aware of what opportunities are available, where those opportunities are to be found, and how to gain access to resources, will have a profound impact on the level of participation in programs and activities. Exchanges of all kinds were seen as one of the most effective ways to promote cultural acceptance, and are an excellent way of building on similarities and celebrating differences. Five key action initiatives were identified

and ordered from most important to less important.

- Offer interesting, practical and “cool” courses; make the content relevant and offer French with a specific purpose (e.g., business, automotive etc.).
- Develop summer job exchange programs within the province.
- Offer inter- and intra-provincial exchanges.
- Foster communications between the anglophone, immersion and francophone sectors.
- Promote local French opportunities.

Additionally, the participants suggested other actions to promote collaboration:

- Develop a local resource inventory.
- Promote programs like *Connections*.
- Implement L2 pen pal programs (virtual encounters could be appealing, although caution and monitoring would be needed).
- Develop a Canada-wide inventory.
- Involve OCOL in the promotion of French culture.
- Promote early and late immersion programs.
- Hold teachers and administrators accountable for what they say about immersion.
- Encourage local radio stations to play French music from time to time.
- Produce bilingual 60-second vignettes on sport.
- Encourage doing sports activities, drama, music lessons, etc., in French; using a well-known bilingual sports figure to promote these activities would lend an air of “cool.”

As instructed by the facilitator, participants considered the key priority actions that related to the question. Each action was ranked by impact (how high or low an impact would the action be likely to have on the achievement of the 2013 goals if it were implemented); and by level of difficulty in having the item implemented (how “easy” or “hard” to achieve).

The facilitator acknowledged concerns that the ranking procedure has inherent problems: implementation of the actions, as well as the impact they would have, would vary widely from region to region, especially in New Brunswick where there is such variation in both programs and the resources. However, the facilitator emphasized that the purpose of the ranking was to measure the responses of the participants present today.

Most participants ranked the five identified priority actions almost identically, believing them to have high impact if implemented. Exchange programs, interesting and “cool” courses, and opportunities to interact with French communities were all valued equally as meaningful elements of a relevant second-language experience. The easiest action to implement was felt to be promoting local French opportunities. Participants could otherwise not agree on which of the other actions would be easy or hard to implement, and opinions were split almost evenly.

Participants felt that fostering communication between English, immersion, and French interests would be relatively easy to achieve and would have a fairly high impact.

Conclusions/Closing

Concluding the session, the facilitator thanked all the participants and the organizers and invited Lucille MacKinnon to make the closing remarks.

MacKinnon, vice-president of Canadian Parents for French, New Brunswick, pointed out that she was here because she supports and promotes bilingualism and is proud that CPF has partnered with both federal and provincial government offices to accomplish the goal of there being more bilingual graduates by 2013.

She thanked the participants for attending on such short notice. She also thanked Jane Keith for organizing the session, and expressed her hope of seeing many of the recommendations put into concrete action.