

National French-Second-Language Proficiency Benchmarks

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) supports the development and implementation of national benchmarks for French-second-language (FSL) proficiency. CPF commends the Department of Canadian Heritage (CH) for its initiatives in promoting national standards, and encourages CH, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and provincial/territorial Ministries of Education to act quickly and co-operatively on this issue.

CPF supports the use of standardized FSL proficiency testing using national benchmarks to accomplish a variety of objectives. Accordingly, CPF recommends that the instrument (or instruments) chosen should be designed to support the following purposes:

- To establish national, comparable standards of French proficiency outcomes for graduates from various elementary and secondary FSL programs. These proficiency outcomes should be used:
 - *To assist parents/students to make informed choices when taking FSL education decisions.*
 - *To ensure that high school graduates are aware of their abilities in French and thus to encourage them to pursue postsecondary studies in French.*
 - *To ensure that potential employers understand the French-language abilities of candidates.*
 - *To assist postsecondary institutions to determine the appropriate placement of students in first-year French courses.*
 - *To assist postsecondary institutions to determine which FSL programs merit advanced standing in French studies.*
- To allow secondary French-second-language teachers and students to assess individual student performance and to develop appropriate individualized strategies for improvement.
- To establish national standards for French-second-language teacher accreditation: entrance assessment to determine whether language upgrading is required, and exit requirement to ensure that proficiency standards have been met.
- To establish national French proficiency standards for French-second-language teachers.
- To establish national standards for evaluating provincial/territorial performance in meeting the goals of their Official Languages in Education Program action plans.
- To establish a definition of "functional bilingualism" and to articulate national standards against which to evaluate progress toward the goals of the federal Action Plan for Official Languages.
- To ensure that all French-second-language students be accorded no-cost access to French-proficiency testing.