REVIEW OF MINISTRY OF EDUCATION POLICIES AFFECTING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO FSL PROGRAMS

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[H1] **Part 1: Research-based explanation of the benefits of formal Ministry policies**.

In Canada, the regulation and supervision of education resides with the provinces and territories[1] who are proud of their educational systems[2] and carefully guard their constitutional jurisdiction over education.[3] However, the provinces and territories have not used their authority to create many formal policies that would ensure access to French-as-a-Second-Official-Language (FSOL) education. This absence of direction can lead to inconsistent and inequitable access to FSOL education.[4] Formal policies may be the most effective starting point to achieving more equitable access. Cooper, Fusarelli, and Randall (2004), in fact, posited that the formal policy process is the most effective method to improve education.

Currently in Canadian schools, policies for access to FSOL programs range on a continuum from informal to formal. Some Ministries of Education have developed informal policies that Delaney described as defacto policies or practices that have become legitimized over time. "These policies develop where no official or stated policy is written down and might be referred to as an 'unofficial policy.'"[5] Unfortunately, the "spirit" of an informal policy may be interpreted differently from one school to the next, creating further inconsistencies.[6] At the other end of the continuum, Delaney (2002) found that some Ministries of Education have formal policies that were developed through a process that included stakeholder input.

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[1] Marsh & Willis, 2003

[2] Levin & Farthing, 2004; Levin, Glaze, & Fullan, 2008

[3] Levin, 2009

[4] Mady & Arnett, 2009; Mady & Turnbull, 2010

[5] Delaney, 2002, p. 164.

[6] Loreman, 2007.

The adoption of formal policies has advantages. The benefits include increasing public awareness and reducing ambiguity with regard to the goals of the school. Formal policies also provide a framework for school planning, ensuring consistency in operational procedures within and between school communities.[7] In addition, when formal policy making is grounded in research it is given greater credibility as it provides evidence to support the policy. When stakeholders believe that the policy responds to needs of the students, they are more likely to support its implementation. Cooper, Fusarelli, and Randall (2004) support the notion that legitimizing the policy by expertise and stakeholder participation improves the process. . In particular, Delaney (2002) points to the example of how formal polices provide newly appointed school administration with clear direction and stability, which promotes continuity of school programs. At the same time, policies may be perceived as a formalized act, with a pre-agreed objective, "approved or sanctioned by an institutional body or authority."[8] The weight of the government and support of the stakeholders give focus and reality to policies.[9]

Conversely, Mady (2007) found that the absence of such policies can lead school administrators, for example, to make decisions contrary to research and exclude students from FSOL studies. Loreman (2007) noted that without supportive formal policy, administrators have difficulty promoting school reform

Formally sanctioned provincial policies regarding access to FSOL education provide consistency of access between boards and among schools whereas lack of

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[7] Dalaney, 2002.

[8] Delaney, 2002, p. 15.

[9] Cooper et al., 2004.

such policies can give rise to inequities in access. An illustration of current inequitable FSOL practices occurs when school boards decide if French immersion parents are charged for busing. It is therefore feasible for a student in one region to receive busing free of charge while another student in a neighbouring district cannot access busing as the family is unable to pay the fees levied by the school board. This varied access to FSOL education can lead to inequitable opportunities for Canadian children.

[H1] **Part 2: Chart of** Existing Formal Policies

The purpose of this study was to examine formal, specific provincial/territorial policies as they pertain to Canadian Parents for French's (CPF) indicators of equitable access to FSOL programs. More specifically, the study sought to answer the following research question:

To what extent do the provinces/territories put formal, specific policies into place in order to provide for equitable access to FSOL programs?

In order to answer the above question, a formal policy document review of the Ministries of Education's websites was conducted. The review was then shared with Ministry personnel, which provided an opportunity for them to offer further direction.

The following matrix shows the findings of the study according to CPF's indictors for equitable access to FSOL programs compared with the corresponding existence of specific, formal policies.

Legend:

Y=yes

N=no

P=issue partially addressed

O=issue addressed but in opposing direction

Do the provinces/territories have policies—	AB	BC	MB	NB	NL	NT	NS	NU	ON	PE	SK	YT
to ensure that distance education is available to provide FSL learning opportunities to students in small, rural and remote districts?	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
to ensure that every parent is regularly informed about French-second-language options and entry points, as well as the French-language proficiency levels that can be expected from each option?	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
to ensure that a wide range of FSL entry points is maintained at the elementary and secondary levels?	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
to ensure that ESL students are encouraged and permitted to enrol in core French, alternate core French, and French immersion programs?	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	P	N	N	N

Do the provinces/territories have policies—	AB	BC	MB	NB	NL	NT	NS	NU	ON	PE	SK	YT
to ensure the provision of specialist services for gifted students in core French, alternate core French, and French immersion programs?	N	N	P	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	N
to ensure the provision of specialist services for academically challenged students in core French, alternate core French, and French immersion programs?	N	N	P	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	N
to ensure the admission of academically challenged students to alternate core French and French immersion programs?	N	O	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
to prevent differential program fees for alternate core French and French immersion programs?	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y
to prevent differential fees for transportation to alternate core	N	O	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

Do the provinces/territories have policies—	AB	BC	MB	NB	NL	NT	NS	NU	ON	PE	SK	YT
French and French immersion programs?												
to prevent the establishment and use of admission criteria?	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
to prevent capping the numbers in alternate core French and French immersion programs?	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

The significant finding from the study is the relative absence of specific, formal policies at the provincial/territorial level that would ensure equitable access to FSOL programming according to CPF's criteria. Although absence of formal policies pertaining to access to FSOL education does not necessarily equate to absence of commitment or equitable practices, it does provide more opportunities for potential inconsistencies. Conversely, an increase in formal policies that specifically address the above influential factors of equitable access to FSOL programming could provide a foundation grounded in research, where applicable, on which administrators could base their decisions.

[H1] **Part 3: Chart Indicating Policy Findings Only**

Do the provinces/territories have policies—	Supporting Documentation
to ensure that distance education is available to provide FSL learning opportunities to students in small, rural, and remote districts?	
to ensure that every parent is regularly informed about French-second-language options and entry points, as well as the French-language proficiency levels that can be expected from each option?	**NB** has (1st site) policy that requires districts to inform parents and a website with examples of proficiency (2nd site): http://www.gnb.ca/0000/pol/e/309A.pdf http://www.gnb.ca/0000/fsl/makingthechoice.asp
to ensure that a wide range of FSL entry points is maintained at the elementary and secondary levels?	
to ensure that ESL students are encouraged and permitted to enrol in core French, alternate core French, and French immersion programs?	**NB**'s policy indicates that FSL is mandatory for all, but it does not indicate that all students are encouraged and permitted to enrol in immersion programs: http://www.gnb.ca/0000/pol/e/309A.pdf
to ensure the provision of specialist services for gifted	**MB** addresses immersion only:

students in core French, alternate core French, and French immersion programs?	http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/fr_imm_handbook/chap_9.pdf http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/frenchimm/implem.pdf (3rd page) http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/frenchimm/document.pdf p 16 **NS** states human resources must be made available to meet special needs requirements, but specify "where available": http://fsl.ednet.ns.ca/documents/policy-fl2.pdf p9
to ensure the provision of specialist services for academically challenged students in core French, alternate core French, and French immersion programs?	**MB** addresses immersion only: http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/fr_imm_handbook/chap_9.pdf http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/frenchimm/implem.pdf (3rd page) http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/french_imm/fr-imm-mb.pdf (16, 17) **NS** states that human resources must be made available to meet special needs requirements, but specifies "where available": http://fsl.ednet.ns.ca/documents/policy-fl2.pdf p9
to ensure the admission of academically challenged students to alternate core French and French immersion programs?	**BC** does not require students with special needs to study a second language: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/language_educ.htm **NB** has a policy stating that French is mandatory for all:

	http://www.gnb.ca/0000/pol/e/309A.pdf
to prevent differential program fees for alternate core French and French immersion programs?	**NL** has a policy against any kind of fees: http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/publications/archives/schoolfeesreport.pdf page 3 **YK** has a policy against any type of program fee: http://www.gov.yk.ca/legislation/acts/education.pdf section 12 page 17
to prevent differential fees for transportation to alternate core French and French immersion programs?	In **BC**, fees can be charged to families: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/french_immersion.htm **NL** has a policy against any kind of fees: http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/publications/archives/schoolfeesreport.pdf page 3
to prevent the establishment and use of admission criteria?	
to prevent capping the numbers in alternate core and French immersion programs?	

Part 4: Additional chart with all the information pertaining to part 2

Do the provinces/territories have policies—	Supporting Documentation
to ensure that distance education is available to provide FSL learning opportunities to students in small, rural, and remote districts?	**AB** offers minimal distance education for FSL with no corresponding policy: http://education.alberta.ca/francais/teachers/progres/compl/fsl/others/distanceed/fr20.aspx **SK** offers distance education for FSL but no corresponding policy: http://www.skdistancelearning.ca/ **MB** offers distance education for FSL but no corresponding policy: http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/m12/appdist/cours.html for online courses and http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/m12/appdist/oei.html for independent study courses **NL** offers distance education for FSL but no corresponding policy: http://www.cdli.ca/ **NB** does not offer FSL education by distance: https://www.nbed.nb.ca/nbvhs/d2l_courses.asp **NS** offers FSL education by distance with no corresponding policy: http://www.fsl.ednet.ns.ca/french-programs.shtml **ON** offers FSL online with no corresponding policy. **YK** does not ensure availability of FSL education, but its Education Act provides distance education as an option for remote districts: http://www.gov.yk.ca/legislation/acts/education.pdf
to ensure that every parent is regularly	Although it does not ensure regular communication, **AB** provides a handbook and information on its website to parents that briefly includes

informed about French-second-language options and entry points, as well as the French-language proficiency levels that can be expected from each option?	information on French immersion with reference to further resources: http://education.alberta.ca/media/445751/pub1.pdf http://education.alberta.ca/parents/educationsys/frenchlanguage/immersion.aspx **BC** does not have a policy to ensure communication, but offers information on FSL options to parents on a website: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schooling_options.htm Although it does not ensure regular communication, **MB** offers explanations on its website with an accompanying brochure: http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/schools/fr_imm.html and site for parents with children in French immersion http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/parents/fr_imm/index.html In its manual for leaders in French immersion, **MB** also highlights the need to communicate with parents: http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/fr_imm_handbook/chap_6.pdf **NB** has (1st site) a policy that requires districts to inform parents and a website with examples of proficiency (2nd site): http://www.gnb.ca/0000/pol/e/309A.pdf http://www.gnb.ca/0000/fsl/makingthechoice.asp
to ensure that a wide range of FSL entry points is maintained at the elementary and secondary levels?	**BC** requires that parents be given one-year's notice before it dissolves an immersion program, and it encourages districts to create policies: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/french_immersion.htm

to ensure that ESL students are encouraged and permitted to enrol in core French, alternate core French, and French immersion programs?	**BC** does not require ESL students to meet the second-language requirements (1st site) but both the core (2nd site) and immersion (3rd site) documents acknowledge their ability to do so: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/language_educ.htm http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/cfrench512/esl.htm http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/f_fim7.pdf page 3 **ON** ESL guideline states that English language learners (ELL) must take FSL: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/esl18.pdf p 25, but does not address immersion.**MB** does not have a policy that encourages enrolment of ESL students, but does have a policy that provides ELL funding to ELL students who are in French immersion: http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/finance/enrol_reporting/enrol_cat0910.pdf p 29 **NB**'s policy indicates that FSL is mandatory for all students, but it does not indicate that all students are encouraged and permitted to enrol in immersion programs: http://www.gnb.ca/0000/pol/e/309A.pdf
to ensure the provision of specialist services for gifted students in core French, alternate core French and French immersion	Although **AB** does not ensure this, it mentions the use of specialists to determine immersion program modifications: http://education.alberta.ca/francais/admin/speced/parents/immersion.aspx **MB** addresses immersion only: http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/fr_imm_handbook/chap_9.pdf http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/frenchimm/implem.pdf (3rd page)

programs?	http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/frenchimm/document.pdf p 16
	NS states that human resources must be made available to meet special needs requirements, but specifies "where available." http://fsl.ednet.ns.ca/documents/policy-fl2.pdf p9
to ensure the provision of specialist services for academically challenged students in core French, alternate core French, and French immersion programs?	Although it does not ensure this, **AB** mentions the use of specialists to determine immersion program modifications: http://education.alberta.ca/francais/admin/speced/parents/immersion.aspx **BC** does not require students with special needs to study a second language (1st site) but core French document encourages (2nd site) this, as does the immersion document (3rd site): http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/language_educ.htm http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/cfrench512/ssnsls.htm http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/f_fim7.pdf **MB** addresses immersion only: http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/fr_imm_handbook/chap_9.pdf http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/frenchimm/implem.pdf (3rd page) http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/french_imm/fr-imm-mb.pdf (16, 17) **NS** states that human resources must be made available to meet special needs requirements, but specifies "where available": http://fsl.ednet.ns.ca/documents/policy-fl2.pdf p9
to ensure the admission of academically challenged students to alternate core	Although it does not ensure admission, **AB** states that French immersion is an appropriate program for academically challenged students: http://education.alberta.ca/francais/admin/speced/parents/immersion.aspx http://education.alberta.ca/media/1260549/depliantall.pdf & http://education.alberta.ca/media/1260545/diversityfrenchimmersionnew.pdf

French, and French immersion programs?	(above 2 documents recommend immersion as appropriate but it is information rather than policy) **BC** does not require students with special needs to study a second language: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/language_educ.htm **MB** addresses immersion only: http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/fr_imm_handbook/chap_9.pdf http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/french_imm/fr-imm-mb.pdf (16, 17) http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/fr_imm_handbook/fr-imm-mb_07.pdf see 9.2 **NB** has policy stating that French is mandatory for all: http://www.gnb.ca/0000/pol/e/309A.pdf Although **NL** does not ensure admission to immersion for academically challenged students, it acknowledges the need to accommodate: http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/french/immersion/francais/TabledesmatiereseChapitreIjan2010.pdf **NL**, also recognizes the need to accommodate academically challenged students in core French, but offers exemption if accommodations are deemed unsuccessful: http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/curriculum/guides/corefrench/intermediate/chapter5_inclusion.pdf **NS** recognizes that academically challenged students can succeed and be accommodated for, but also provide exemptions for core French and direction for transfer out of immersion under certain circumstances: **NS** also states that human resources must be made available to meet special needs requirements: http://fsl.ednet.ns.ca/documents/policy-fl2.pdf p9-10
to prevent differential program fees for	**NL** has a policy against any kind of fees: http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/publications/archives/schoolfeesreport.pdf page 3

alternate core French and French immersion programs?	**ON** does not have a policy that applies to FSL programs but a general policy in the Education Act, section 32: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90e02_e.htm#BK38 **YK** has a policy against any type of program fee: http://www.gov.yk.ca/legislation/acts/education.pdf section 12 page 17
to prevent differential fees for transportation to alternate core French and French immersion programs?	In **BC**, fees can be charged to families: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/french_immersion.htm **NL** has a policy against any kind of fees: http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/publications/archives/schoolfeesreport.pdf page 3 **SK** only mentions funding for immersion without mentioning possibility/prevention of levying fees to parents: http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/adx/aspx/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=226,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=3445&Filename=funding_manual_07-08.pdf (p.27) **YK** has a policy of providing transportation to schools, but does not include choice of program: http://www.gov.yk.ca/legislation/acts/education.pdf section 47 page 36
to prevent the establishment and use of admission criteria?	

to prevent capping the numbers in alternate core and French immersion programs?	

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