



CANADIAN  
PARENTS  
FOR FRENCH

# THE STATE OF FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN CANADA 2017

FOCUS ON FRENCH SECOND  
LANGUAGE STUDENTS





**CANADIAN  
PARENTS  
FOR FRENCH**

The State of French Second Language Education in Canada 2017

Canadian Parents for French

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# PREFACE

It is a pleasure to present the 2017 edition of Canadian Parents for French's *The State of French-Second-Language Education in Canada*, brought back by popular demand from parents, second language educators, scholars, and CPF volunteer advocates. Last published in 2012, this edition of the report provides an opportunity to update readers by conducting an extensive review of current French as a Second Language (FSL) education literature with a focus on FSL students. The next two editions will focus on French as a second language (FSL) Teachers and FSL Programs respectively.

An extensive review of current FSL education literature was conducted by Stephanie Arnott, Mimi Masson, Sharon Lapkin, & Ibtissem Knouzi in order to identify key trends. The authors found that a majority of research studies they reviewed were focused on French immersion programs with attention to French language form and literacy. The studies reviewed highlight findings related to early prediction of student success in reading and writing and identify teaching practices that can lead to greater student engagement and accuracy. The reviewers wish to underscore the need for more research on students' experiences in FSL contexts other than immersion.

We would like to share three regional updates from across Canada on research topics of interest to CPF stakeholders: student French proficiency, English language learner (ELL) participation and performance in FSL programs, and core French students' motivation to learn French.

- Callie Mady, Professor, Schulich School of Education, Nipissing University, describes new research in Ontario pertaining to ELLs in immersion programs and reports on how some perspectives about their participation in FSL programs have shifted, while others have not.
- Joe Dicks, Professor and Director, Second Language Research Institute of Canada, Faculty of Education and Paula Kristmanson, Professor, Faculty of Education, University of New Brunswick revisit long-standing questions about what proficiency results can be expected for students in immersion programs. They share some very recent and somewhat surprising study findings for New Brunswick students who started immersion in Grade 3, tested near the end of their first year and three years later in Grade 6.
- Paule Desgroseilliers, retired educator and independent researcher, shares her doctoral research conducted with a small group of secondary core French students in BC as they navigate their way through program experiences with mixed results. She points to

key elements to maximize student motivation and success.

Other items in this report include a summary of recent provincial and territorial ministry of education resources, policy documents and reports, the latest Canadian FSL education program statistics, updated CPF position statements and a glossary of terms.

Research plays a critical role in supporting advocacy and, to that end, we conclude the State of French as a second language Education in Canada with our "Agenda for Change" that we hope CPF volunteer and staff leaders can use to support and promote Canadian bilingualism as they consult education stakeholders across Canada.

Canadian Parents for French is hopeful that these recommendations, drawn from the research findings in this report, are considered thoughtfully and encourage national, provincial, and territorial governments to build upon this work by conducting more comprehensive studies about multiple approaches to learning French as a second language, including contexts other than immersion (e.g., core, intensive, extended).

As a nationwide, research-informed, volunteer organization that champions the opportunity to learn and use French for all those who call Canada home, we strongly urge the Government of Canada, ministries of education and school districts to play a leadership role in the delivery of and access to quality FSL education programs.



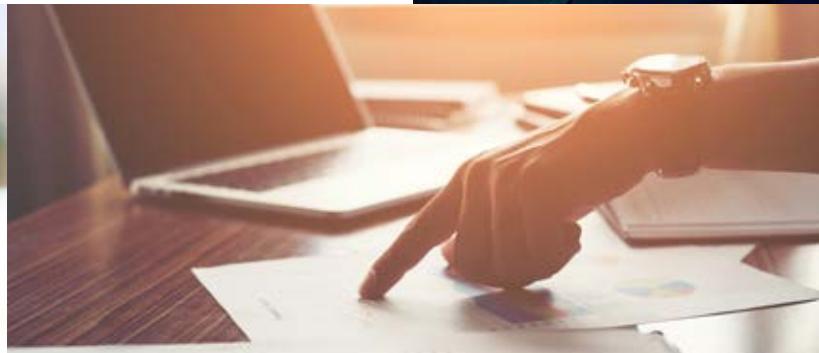
Wendy Carr and Sharon Lapkin  
Chairs of the CPF National Research Support Committee  
2016-2017





# STUDENTS IN K-12 FSL PROGRAMS: WHAT ISSUES ARE TOP OF MIND IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY RESEARCH?

Authors: Stephanie Arnott, Mimi Masson, Sharon Lapkin, Ibtissem Knouzi



## INTRODUCTION

This review of trends in the French as a second language education literature, drawn from a larger study conducted by Stephanie Arnott, Mimi Masson, Sharon Lapkin, and Ibtissen Knouzi (Arnott, S., Masson, M., Lapkin, S., Knouzi, I. (in progress)), found that:

- Of 145 peer-reviewed articles that appeared between 2000-2016, 93 focused on students (other groups included teachers, parents, administrators or policy);
- Of the 93 studies focusing on students, most (68%) related to the French immersion (FI) program, mainly from the primary grades. The size of the research groups varied from one student to several classes, and reflected research methods ranging from large-scale quantitative studies to small qualitative exploratory studies;
- Of the 93 student-focused articles, we chose 42 to discuss in depth on two themes: French language form, and literacy. In this edition of the CPF State of FSL report we explore the literature relating to these topics and synthesize the findings to paint a picture of what the research tells us.

## FRENCH LANGUAGE FORM

Most of the form-related studies attempted to diagnose and/or describe language use at the onset of FSL learning and test the effectiveness of pedagogical interventions at this early stage. Others examined the relationship between exposure to French and English proficiency development.

In the following section, we summarize four sub-themes that emerged from these studies: a call for the explicit teaching of form in FI classes, growing support for the judicious use of students' first language (L1) (e.g., English and other languages) in the FSL classroom, the endorsement of peer collaboration as a valid learning tool, and suggestions for integrating a focus on form within a literacy development approach.

### EXPLICIT TEACHING OF FORM

Since the 1990s, research has documented the persistence of FI students' low accuracy, most notably with target forms that they rarely hear in the classroom (e.g., past tenses) or that are not linked to the meaning of the message. Several studies attribute this to an inadequate and inauthentic exposure to French in the FI context (Netelenbos, Li & Rosen, 2015), which results in the fossilization of some aspects of their pronunciation. Germain, Netten and Seguin (2004), confirmed that Grade 6 FI students showed more control over fluency than accuracy in their writing. Nadasdi (2001) also noted a widespread failure to mark 3rd person plural correctly in their speech (e.g., dit substituted for disent). Llinares and Lyster (2014) found that FI students were more likely to

notice their own mistakes and repair them in response to more explicit forms of feedback, which their teachers did not provide.

Several studies (e.g., Lyster, 2004; Tipurita & Jean, 2014) showed an overall positive effect of instructional interventions that facilitate student noticing of specific target forms (called explicit "form-focused instruction" (FFI)). In terms of ideal forms of corrective feedback (i.e., teacher feedback when students commit errors in their oral or written production), researchers agree that form-focused corrective feedback is useful and necessary, but they continue to debate which form of feedback is more likely to yield better results. For example, reformulating a student's incorrect utterance (implicit – Swain & Lapkin, 2002) and prompting the students to self-repair (explicit – Lyster, 2004) have both been shown to lead to student noticing and retention of target language forms. While directly comparing these findings is not prudent since other variables may have influenced the level of student achievement in these studies, there is a definite movement towards encouraging FI teachers to provide feedback that addresses grammatical errors to promote accuracy and prevent fossilization.

### USE OF L1 IN FRENCH CLASS

Several researchers question the rigid exclusion of students' L1 from the FI classroom, drawing on work by Cummins (1979) suggesting that there is a common underlying language proficiency facilitating bilingual learners' use of both languages. For instance, Hermanto, Moreno and Bialystok (2012) found that English remained the stronger language of Anglophone FI students even after three years of immersion education in French. Yet, these same students developed a significantly higher metalinguistic ability in both English and French than monolingual children. This is one example of the growing consensus that the metaphor of 'language interference' does not adequately capture the relationship between the L1 and L2. Instead, there is a call for a dynamic approach that acknowledges and capitalizes on the L1 as a strong cognitive tool, especially in facilitating the learning of linguistic forms. For example, using some L1 during language-focused pair tasks has been shown to help students both cognitively (e.g., understanding and making sense of the content of the task) and socially (e.g., establishing the tone of the collaboration) (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). Lyster (2015) also found similar functions for L1 as a cognitive tool while students were studying language forms in the same novel being presented in their English and French language classes.

### PEER COLLABORATION

Peer collaboration was researched and endorsed as a valuable classroom practice in several studies. Studies have shown that peer collaboration often results in students negotiating meaning and form, as well as noticing and self-repair (Lapkin & Swain, 2004; Lapkin, Swain & Smith, 2002; Swain & Lapkin, 2002). Also, Ballinger (2013) showed that verbalization and

# “more research on the student experience in FSL contexts other than immersion is warranted”

collaboration between student pairs helped individual learners articulate and test incorrect hypotheses, and subsequently correct them. Tocalli-Beller and Swain (2005) explained that the peer collaboration helped learners discover and address cognitive conflicts when they were faced with discrepancies between their production and corrected forms.

## *FORM AND LITERACY*

In several studies, the focus on form was part of a larger approach to enhance or support FI students' literacy achievement. Researchers compared findings from L1 and L2 studies with special attention to the role of linguistic form in literacy skill development in both languages. For instance, Hipfner-Boucher, Lam and Chen (2015) found a link between young FI students' ability to produce oral narratives in French that are grammatically accurate with higher reading comprehension; a fact that is already established in L1 studies. The authors recommended that FI students be given ample opportunity to listen, process and tell narratives in French so as to become accurate, literate language users.

Noting a lack of attention to structural aspects of words in FI classes, Lyster, Quiroga and Ballinger (2013) designed an instructional unit that integrated attention to word parts (such as prefixes and suffixes) within a biliteracy approach, where the same novel was introduced in both the French and English classes of an FI program. They found that the intervention had a positive impact on students' literacy skills.

In Lyster (2015), a literacy-focused way of integrating FFI across the FI curriculum was proposed. Coordination between teachers of different subjects (e.g., language arts, social studies, and science) whereby grammatical gender instruction was introduced explicitly in some classes (but not in others) and further consolidated through tasks assigned in other subjects led to significant long-term improvement on both oral and written tasks.

## **LITERACY**

Some studies (reviewed above) integrated a focus on literacy development with a focus on form. In this section, we introduce others that focused on FSL learners' emerging literacy skills with a special attention to identifying early predictors of literacy achievement and risk, describing best practices for building FSL students' literacy skills and exploring their effects on the identity constructing of FI students.

## *IDENTIFYING EARLY PREDICTORS OF LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT AND RISK*

Several studies explored the possible link between proficiency in a learner's repertoire of languages (e.g., English or other languages as L1, French as an L2/ increasingly as an L3) in view of predicting, identifying and assisting students at risk of experiencing literacy delays. For example, early English cognitive measures were shown to predict students' later reading ability in both English and French (Jared, Cormier, Levy & Wade-Woolley, 2011). A similar trend emerged in Bérubé and Marinova-Todd (2014), where early measures of oral language proficiency and reading comprehension in English (L2) predicted oral language proficiency and reading comprehension in French (L3). In terms of reading delays, Bourgoin (2014) found that students who showed signs of reading delays in English in Kindergarten experienced reading issues in French when they entered FI at Grade 3. Early testing in Grade 3 at the beginning of FSL exposure was another predictive factor of the level of French reading achievement at the end of Grade 3.

Another subset of studies was more clearly focused on tracing FI students' achievement in reading and writing, either as a way to assess the performance of the program in general or in relation to results usually expected in monolingual programs. For instance, Turnbull, Hart and Lapkin (2003) found that Grade 6 FI student achievement in reading, writing and math was comparable to that of students in regular English language programs, thus

demonstrating that any delays or gaps in FI students' literacy achievement noted in the early FI years disappear by Grade 6.

### **PROMISING LITERACY-RELATED PRACTICES**

Many studies documented the impact of literacy teaching practices designed to help FI students improve their reading and/or writing abilities or overcome delays, with several reporting on innovative practices tapping into students' strengths (e.g., L1 knowledge, L2 proficiency or literacy). For instance, Le Bouthillier and Dicks (2013) documented the improvement in Grade 7 students' writing following a systematic teaching unit that included writing process modeling, structural analysis of text, peer collaboration and feedback. The results showed improvement in text organization, ideas, voice and word choice. Bournot-Trites, Lee and Séror (2003) described an intervention approach pairing Grade 1 and 2 FI students identified as at-risk with Grade 5 and 7 student-tutors. After seven weeks of peer interaction focusing on modeling successful reading strategies (e.g., making predictions, guessing meaning from context, etc.), positive results were reported with Grade 1 and 2 students who had had minor issues, and limited progress was noted for students who had had more severe delays.

### **FI STUDENT IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND LITERACY PRACTICES**

Recent publications show a growing interest in investigating the formation and negotiation of the FI student "literate" identity, both inside and outside the classroom. For instance, Roy and Schafer (2015) document how expectations of near-native proficiency in French encountered in schools and the community can alienate the FI student as a language user. There are also calls to recognize the FI student as an active participant in a multitude of complex literacy practices they encounter beyond the classroom (e.g., see Sabatier, Moore & Dagenais, 2013). These studies suggest a broader definition of literacy that goes beyond the mere act of decoding.

### **CONCLUSION**

Research from 2000-2016 shows that FSL students are active learners, with interpersonal skills and linguistic and cultural repertoires that can be used to advance their French proficiency development. A concern for examining and promoting FSL students' accuracy and literacy skill development is evident. Findings show that students seem to benefit from an explicit teaching of form and peer collaboration. Also, French language ability can be predicted based on select English language measures, facilitating early detection and possible intervention to address potential French reading delays. Proposed form- and literacy-focused interventions yield mixed results; nonetheless, they denote a commitment to identify promising teaching methods.

Considered collectively, findings from these studies support the notion of a common underlying language

ability that can transfer across languages, which in turn justifies the call for a more prominent role of students' L1 (English or other languages) in the FSL classroom. Certainly, the biliteracy projects described above represent a practical application of this, while also pointing to the benefits of organized collaboration between the FSL teacher and teachers of English/other subjects.

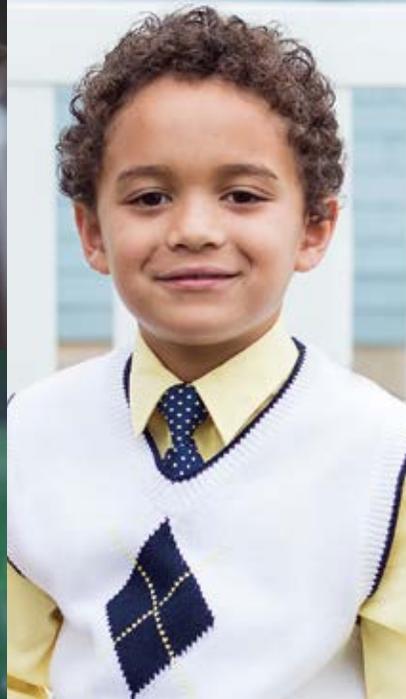
To conclude, it is evident that the FI context is the main focus of student-related research from 2000-2016. Of the 42 studies covered in this article, only 3 were based in other Canadian FSL program formats (i.e., core French, extended French, intensive French). We find this to be problematic considering that over 85% of K-12 students are enrolled in programs other than FI. Certainly, given the multiple pathways to bilingualism in Canada, more research on the student experience in FSL contexts other than FI is warranted.



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# GUEST COMMENTARIES

Canadian Parents for French is known for sharing evidence-based research on a variety of contemporary issues in French as a second language education. With these three guest commentaries, we revisit some of the key issues: two share updates from commentaries originally published in 2008 on French immersion and access for allophone learners, while a more recent study of core French students adds to findings of a CPF-commissioned survey of core French graduates, published in 2004.



# FRENCH IMMERSION STUDENTS: HOW GOOD IS THEIR FRENCH NOW?

By Joseph Dicks and Paula Kristmanson

The question of students' French proficiency has preoccupied parents, administrators, educators and researchers since the earliest French immersion programs appeared half a century ago. In a special issue of *Language and Society* published in 1984, Dr. Birgit Harley published an article entitled simply "How good is their French? ". In 2017, this question is still being asked and the statement serving as a header to Dr. Harley's article is just as accurate and relevant today as it was then: "The quality of French spoken by immersion children has been eulogized by some and criticized by others" (Harley, 1984, pp. 55-60).

Indeed, the perspective of another contributor to that special issue, Dr. Gilles Bibeau in an article entitled "No easy road to bilingualism" reflects one side of that reality:

"Authentic pronunciation and delivery, the major linguistic goals of early bilingualism, are only partially satisfied through immersion. Although the best students do develop a certain facility with delivery, their ease with the language modeled on the teacher's own fluency usually falls far short of that of young Francophones" (Bibeau, 1984, pp. 44-47).

Dr. Bibeau clearly chose to determine the success of French immersion in relation to the fluency of "young Francophones". He also states that "authentic pronunciation and delivery" are the major linguistic goals of early bilingualism. From this native-speaker perspective, it could be argued that thousands of fluently bilingual adults in the world are unsuccessful. Many speak a second, third or more languages very well but with an accent that is not native-like. Immersion students are not and never will be "young Francophones" or older Francophones for that matter! They are non-Francophones who are learning to speak the French language at a level that is quite impressive, albeit imperfect.

Dr. Harley recognized this when she wrote this much more nuanced description of immersion students' French abilities:

"The spontaneity with which young immersion children, despite their limited grammatical resources, endeavour to express themselves in French stands in obvious and refreshing contrast to the inhibited efforts of students from traditional formal classrooms .... Their remarkable ability to comprehend spoken and written discourse in French is a strength which no doubt reflect the emphasis of their schooling" (Harley, 1984, p.60).

Those two quotations from 33 years ago could just as easily be written today. The crux of the issue comes

down to what we mean by bilingual or proficient, and the standard by which we are measuring that bilingualism or proficiency. As Graham Fraser, the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada, wrote recently in a carefully articulated piece in the *Globe and Mail*, immersion is not perfect:

"Some of the disenchantment with immersion comes from unrealistic expectations. Immersion doesn't – and isn't intended to – produce graduates who speak French with the fluency of native speakers. What immersion does provide is an important building block on which graduates can develop their language skills." (*Globe and Mail*, June 12, 2016)

Despite the caveats about lack of native-like pronunciation or grammatical complexity, French immersion students continue to demonstrate levels of proficiency that no other school-based program has even approximated.

## “French immersion students have a level of proficiency that is the envy of many”

In a recent research study, we interviewed Grade 3, 6, and 9 students in a Francophone school, and in both English and French immersion classes to explore their ability to express the concept of probability in mathematics. We debated whether we should even bother interviewing the Grade 3 FI students in New Brunswick since, due to program changes in that province, they only began FI at Grade 3 and, at the time of our research study, had

only 8 months of French immersion. We decided that we would and we were, quite honestly, amazed by what we heard and observed. These Grade 3 students, after just 8 months of instruction and exposure, were able to engage in classroom activities and follow up interviews in French and quite clearly expressed their understanding of probability in their second language. Moreover, students at Grade 6 in French immersion, after 3 years in FI, demonstrated a greater metalinguistic ability than their unilingual francophone counterparts.

Three decades of oral proficiency interview (OPI) results in NB also show that over 40% of early French immersion graduates meet or exceed advanced proficiency levels, and nearly 85% surpass intermediate plus proficiency. According to the OPI descriptors, students at the intermediate plus level “show considerable ability to communicate effectively on topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence”. Advanced level students are “able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social and professional topics”.

Given these findings, it is hard to characterize FI graduates as unsuccessful second language learners. Can the programs do better? Of course. Recent research is helping inform new teaching methods that put the right balance on meaning and accuracy. Initiatives to bring everyday French language into the classroom and the learners into everyday French communities are also helping FI students to become more versatile in their use of French.

As anyone who has attempted to learn an additional language knows, there is no easy road to bilingualism. It is hard work and perfection is elusive. However, many French immersion students have a level of proficiency that is (and should be) the envy of many.

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# INCLUDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES: AN UPDATE

By Callie Mady

In 2008, at the request of Canadian Parents for French, I described my graduate research with English language learners (ELLs) studying French as a second official language (FSOL) in the article *Opening the Doors to Official Language Learning for Allophones*. The short summary revealed ELLs to be more motivated to learn FSOL and more successful than their Canadian-born peers in the core French program at the secondary level. In addition, the participants revealed their previous language learning experiences, the teaching methods, and the Canadian context as advantageous to their FSOL learning. Despite their desire and success, however, ELLs were at times advised by principals and/or counsellors to opt out of FSOL studies. In this article, I offer a brief update of new research pertaining to ELLs in FSOL and suggest some of many possible future directions.

What research has been conducted since 2008? Since 2008, research comparing immigrant ELLs' FSOL achievement to the achievement of two groups of Canadian-born students: English-speaking and multilingual students, has been done in two different contexts: within the core French program at the Grade 6 level and at the same level in the French immersion program (e.g., Mady, 2013; 2015). Where there were statistical differences, both studies favoured the immigrant ELL group. In fact, in the research conducted within the French immersion program, the ELL group outperformed the other two groups in components of the English test.

Why do ELLs continue to outperform the Canadian-born groups? The two studies described above also sought to examine the reasons for ELLs' success. The studies did not reveal advantages due to language learning knowledge, strategy use, or motivation as may have been anticipated. I hypothesized that ELLs' advantage may be grounded in their voluntary immigrant status that is often accompanied with a belief in the Canadian education system transferred from generation to generation.

Have ELLs been afforded greater access to FSOL learning opportunities since 2008? Research suggests that a shift in perspectives has begun, which may lead to greater access to FSOL programming for ELLs. For example, in response to a questionnaire, principals in elementary French immersion schools revealed very positive attitudes toward accepting ELLs into the French immersion program (Masson & Mady, submitted). Similarly, FSOL teachers expressed not only their belief that ELLs should be included in FSOL programs but that they were well

equipped to make adaptations to support such inclusion (Mady, 2012). Research with teachers outside of FSOL programming, however, has shown that teachers within the English mainstream program have continued to question the suitability of FSOL for ELLs (Bourgoin, 2016; Mady, 2016).

## WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

The options for future research are many. One possible avenue could be to conduct similar research with different groups; refugees to Canada are a group that have yet to participate in such research. Dissemination of research information is also an avenue in need of expansion in order to continue to inform all FSOL stakeholders. Pursuit of such directions, and others, may prove to support greater inclusion of ELLs in FSOL.

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# BC STUDENTS SPEAK UP ABOUT CORE FRENCH

By Paule Desgroseilliers

For my doctoral research, I conducted small group interviews with twelve secondary school core French (CF) students. They agreed with a majority of Canadians that bilingualism is an asset, expanding career and social opportunities. As young people growing up in a pluralistic society, learning French is a way of becoming global citizens open to the world (Desgroseilliers, 2012). These students expressed admiration for allophones who have added one or both official languages to their first language, and were determined to enhance their own linguistic capital and status as world citizens.

## “bilingualism is an asset”

The CF students in my study were of the opinion that French is neither necessary nor useful in BC as they do not see it, hear or experience it. Nevertheless, they recognized its prestigious position in an era of globalization, and were convinced of the advantages of speaking two international languages (Reagan, 2009). They linked the usefulness of English-French bilingualism to work and travel opportunities in other parts of the world, yet were unaware of such opportunities in government, the service industry and education in Canada. Interestingly, the students did not refer to English-French as official bilingualism, using instead the provincial discourse where French is often labeled «minority, international or L2».

The CF students in my study echo what thirty years of research on student retention conclude: that teachers' L2 proficiency and use of L2 best practices are the primary motivators for retaining students (Carr, 2007, Lapkin, McFarlane, & Vandergrift, 2006; Salvatori & McFarlane, 2009). After beginning CF in Grade 5, students' initial enthusiasm waned as they progressed through a program they described as marginalized in terms of intensity, resources, teaching expertise, and position in a hierarchy of core academic areas. They envied the language progress and cultural opportunities of their immersion counterparts and perceived learning French in an early immersion setting as cognitively less demanding. They spoke of their own learning as intellectually challenging, requiring greater concentration and effort than in other curricular areas; however, they also found it tedious, noting that initial expectations of spontaneous communication with French speakers are lowered as students navigate through a secondary program lacking cultural opportunities and necessitating constant self-

motivation and determination to reach a basic level of proficiency.

Some of the recommendations from my study included ensuring that preservice teachers meet minimum French proficiency levels and/or take an L2 methodology course as part of their teacher education program and that language courses and/or immersive experiences be included in these programs. At the school level, it is important that those teaching FSL classes are able to speak French and are encouraged to chart their language proficiency development using a portfolio approach, with professional learning opportunities provided by school boards and/or universities. School boards should be encouraged to explore varied delivery models for CF education, such as instructional time blocking, intensive French or other approaches. Partnering with Francophone schools and cultural associations could provide opportunities for sociocultural activities. Through these means, it is hoped that the CF program can lead future learners to becoming effective communicators in French by the time they graduate.

In 2004, CPF surveyed 105 Canadian university students who provided retrospective information about their core French programs in elementary and secondary school.

Respondents were mainly satisfied with their elementary (K – 8) core French programs, citing good teachers, interactive and fun activities, and the excitement of learning a 'secret code'. Like students in the Desgroseilliers study, respondents in the CPF survey also found their secondary core French experience to be less enjoyable, with 52% reporting that they had not had a good experience in the program. Of these, almost half found the program difficult, about a third found it boring, while a quarter thought it not useful.

Most significantly, a quarter of CPF's respondents believed, as did those in the Desgroseilliers study, that they had had no chance to speak French or become bilingual. Indeed, almost half of those who passed Grade 12/OAC French felt that they could not understand spoken French. Over 40% envied French immersion students' proficiency, and the majority of students who had dropped French in high school now regret the decision, having recognized the employment advantages in Canada in the global community.

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# RECOMMENDED READING

Our report contributors have gathered a listing of many newly published documents as further reading.

We begin with three literature reviews of publications from official language organizations sharing a national and international perspective on the benefits of bilingualism. These are followed by recent policy and related documents from provincial and territorial ministries or departments identifying principles, goals and suggested actions to guide school boards in their decision making to enhance teaching and learning French as an integral component of education in English-language school boards. Finally, we provide a listing of school board and related organizational reports sharing results of *Diplôme d'études en langue française* (DELFP) proficiency testing in various jurisdictions. These address the benefits of bilingualism for students and student proficiency.



# NATIONAL FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION LITERATURE REVIEWS

The first literature review referenced below is dated 2017 and documents the benefits of bilingualism (not necessarily French-English). The second listing is a new publication from Canadian Heritage on the economic advantages of bilingualism. The third study from the Council of Ministers of Education documents FSL issues that are top-of-mind from across Canada and suggests areas where interprovincial/territorial cooperation can enhance the FSL learning experience for all.

## **Literature Review on the Impact of Second Language Learning**

<https://www.caslt.org/files/media/news/Lit-review-Impact-L2-Learning.pdf>

## **Economic Advantages of Bilingualism: Literature Review**

Available upon request from Policy and Research, Official Languages Branch, Department of Canadian Heritage

<http://canada.pch.gc.ca/eng/1458073441370>

## **French as a Second Language in Canada: Potential for Collaboration**

<http://cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/370/CASLT-Report-FSL-in-Canada-EN.pdf>

# PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL POLICY DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS ON FSL EDUCATION

The following listing of policy and related documents focuses, as does the current State of FSL report, on students. We canvassed the electronic sites of the provinces/territories and reached out to CPF branch executive directors to identify recent documents that might offer insight to policies and guidelines relating to FSL and be useful for anyone, anywhere in Canada, to consult.

Where a particular document focuses on teachers (to be the focus of the 2018 State of FSL) or programs (the focus of the 2019 State of FSL), we decided either to include it here (because it concerns students as well) or to defer it to one of the later reports. Atlantic Canada is currently working on new policy documents, and they will be included in the online listing when they are available.

## **BRITISH COLUMBIA**

### **The State of French Second Language Education in BC: A Roadmap Moving Forward**

<http://bc-yk.cpf.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2013-State-of-FSL-in-BC-A-Roadmap-Moving-Forward-English.pdf>

Provides information about of French as a second language education in British Columbia including FSL program enrolment, benefits of learning French as a second language, and challenges around program access, students with learning disabilities and a shortage of qualified French as a second language teachers.

## **YUKON**

### **Summary Report: French Second Language Programs Focus Groups Yukon: 2015-16**

[http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/pdf/schools/FSL\\_focus\\_group\\_report.pdf](http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/pdf/schools/FSL_focus_group_report.pdf)

This report documents: (i) findings of focus groups with staff and students of all the urban schools with core French, intensive French and immersion programs and with Department of Education staff from Learning Support Services; and (ii) consultations focused on FSL programming in rural schools with principals, superintendents and Yukon First Nation language representatives from the Department of Education and Yukon Native Language Centre.

## **ALBERTA**

### **Handbook for French Immersion Administrators**

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/3115178/frimmhandbook.pdf>

## **Yes You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for Parents of French Immersion Students**

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/563591/yesyoucanhelp.pdf>

Designed as a reference and guide for parents, the publication provides a summary of the information now available since the inception of French immersion education, including information on how to support students in language programs.

## **What School Administrators Need to Know about the Inclusion of Students with Diverse Needs in French Immersion Schools**

<http://cpf.ca/en/files/inclusionofstudentswithdiverseneeds.pdf>

This document presents a series of questions and answers to help the school administrator support teachers in meeting the needs of students who may be struggling in the French immersion program.

## **SASKATCHEWAN**

### **Handbook for Leaders of French as a Second Language (FSL) Programs 2015**

[https://www.edonline.sk.ca/bbcswebdav/xid-858306\\_1](https://www.edonline.sk.ca/bbcswebdav/xid-858306_1)

"The purpose of this handbook is to provide support for division and school administrators responsible for French Second Language (FSL) programs... This guide may also be useful to French immersion, core French, intensive French and Post-intensive French teachers" (p.1).

## **MANITOBA**

### **French: Communication and Culture Grades 4 to 12**

[http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/m12/frpub/ped/fdb/cadre\\_4-12/docs/1\\_document\\_complet.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/m12/frpub/ped/fdb/cadre_4-12/docs/1_document_complet.pdf)

In its introductory comments, the document is intended to "set out the philosophical and pedagogical foundations for learning French" and "to present general and specific learning outcomes as well as achievement indicators..."

### **Provincial Report: French Language Education Review, 2013-2014**

[http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/reports/fr\\_eng\\_prog\\_report/prov\\_report\\_fr\\_eng\\_prog.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/reports/fr_eng_prog_report/prov_report_fr_eng_prog.pdf)

Provides a "synopsis of the provincial data from The French Language Education Review, an initiative of the *Bureau de l'éducation française Division* (BEF) regarding the delivery of French courses (English Program) in Manitoba for the 2013-14 school year. The analysis of the data provides insight regarding how well students are doing, what factors influence student success and what should be prioritized going forward" (p.1).

### **The French Immersion Program in Manitoba: A Renewed Vision – 2017**

[http://ecolebonaventure.weebly.com/uploads/2/5/3/3/25339330/a\\_renewed\\_vision.pdf](http://ecolebonaventure.weebly.com/uploads/2/5/3/3/25339330/a_renewed_vision.pdf)

"This renewed vision has been created in response to current realities and research in French immersion education and is intended to support educators and parents as we guide our students on the path to become confident, proud, engaged, plurilingual global citizens."

Please note that this renewed vision is the foundation of the French Language Education Review (FLER) and consequently is an integral part of teaching and learning in all curricular areas in the French immersion Program."

## **ONTARIO**

### **A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12**

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/frameworkFLS.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/frameworkFLS.pdf)

This document presents the overarching principles of FSL education in the province and can best be summarized by its vision statement: "Students in English-language school boards have the confidence and ability to use French effectively in their daily lives."

Subsequently, the Ministry released two companion documents to the Framework entitled:

**Including Students with Special Needs in French as a Second Language Programs: A Guide for Ontario schools**  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/includingFLS2015.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/includingFLS2015.pdf)

This companion document to the Ontario Ministry of Education's Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12 is intended "to promote discussion among various stakeholders about issues related to the inclusion of all students, particularly students with special education needs, in FSL programs. It is also intended to serve as a resource for school boards, educators, and other stakeholders as they embrace diversity and work to ensure that schools are places where all students are welcomed and respected, and where all students can succeed."

**Welcoming English Language Learners into French as a Second Language Programs**  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/welcoming.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/welcoming.pdf)

This companion document to the Ontario Ministry of Education's Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12 is intended to promote discussion among various stakeholders about issues related to the inclusion of English language learners in FSL programs. It not only describes the benefits of FSL education for English language learners but also addresses the misconception that FSL programs are too difficult for English language learners and reinforces how current FSL teaching strategies can meet the learning needs of these students.

**FSL Student Proficiency and Confidence Pilot Project 2013-2014: A Synopsis of Findings**  
[http://www.edugains.ca/resourcesFSL/PDF/Research/Synopsis\\_FINAL-1.pdf](http://www.edugains.ca/resourcesFSL/PDF/Research/Synopsis_FINAL-1.pdf)

434 self-selected students in Grade 12 from Core, Extended and Immersion programs took the DELF (A2 B1, or B2) and completed a 'confidence' questionnaire. The summary report details findings for each program group and each level of the DELF that was challenged.

### QUEBEC

**Cadre d'Évaluation des Apprentissages: Français, langue seconde**

[http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site\\_web/documents/dpse/evaluation/francais-langue-seconde-programme-d-immersion-pri.pdf](http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/dpse/evaluation/francais-langue-seconde-programme-d-immersion-pri.pdf)

This framework (published in French) provides guidelines for the evaluation of learning specific to French as a second language.

## PROFICIENCY TESTING

Development and implementation of common, national French as a second language proficiency benchmarks will make important contributions to educating post-secondary institutions and potential employers vis-à-vis the language skills of FSL graduates and to supporting opportunities for FSL teacher mobility. The following references share findings of studies designed to assess the suitability of French language proficiency tests for use with elementary and secondary French as a second language students.

**Grade 12 French Proficiency Test Spring 2010 Pilot Project**

<https://www.caslt.org/files/pd/resources/research/2013-panorama-empirical-research-cefr-en.pdf>

This article reports findings from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board pilot to determine the appropriateness of using the *Diplôme d'études en langue française* (DELF) proficiency test with Grade 12 students enrolled in a French as a Second Language course. Includes test scores and questionnaire responses for each DELF level.

**Edmonton Public Schools: DELF scolaire Spring Session 2008 District Level Results**

This report shares results of the 2008 district and school level DELF *scolaire* results for French immersion and FSL (core French) students, compares these to 2007 findings and makes recommendations for continuing to improve student proficiency.

**Frequently Asked Questions about the DELF in Canada**

[http://www.acpi.ca/documents/outils/delf-cest-quoi/delf\\_depliant\\_en.pdf](http://www.acpi.ca/documents/outils/delf-cest-quoi/delf_depliant_en.pdf)

This article provides frequently requested information about the DEFL-DALF proficiency testing including a description of proficiency levels, advantages of participating in this testing, the appropriateness of DELF-DALF for Canadian

students and the relevance of DELF to school curricula.

**TF1-DELF**

[http://www.acpi.ca/documents/outils/delf-cest-quoi/tfi\\_delf\\_en.pdf](http://www.acpi.ca/documents/outils/delf-cest-quoi/tfi_delf_en.pdf)

Compares the audience, objectives, certification, and administration of the DELF and the *Test de français international*, as well as identifying the language skills assessed by each.

**French as a second language (FSL) student proficiency and confidence pilot project 2013-14: A report of findings**

[http://www.curriculum.org/fsl/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Student\\_Proficiency\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://www.curriculum.org/fsl/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Student_Proficiency_Full_Report.pdf)



# AGENDA FOR CHANGE

Canadian Parents for French is pleased to feature the extensive review of literature conducted by Arnott, Masson, Lapkin, and Knouzi, which provides stakeholders with an overview of research in French second language education in the 21st century (2000-2016). This comprehensive database of 145 research articles will also be drawn upon for our 2018 report focusing on FSL teachers and 2019 focusing on FSL programs.

An analysis of the database shows that, with respect to students, the literature is rich in its discussion of accuracy in French and literacy skill development. Consistent with early research on FSL education in Canada, we find that a common underlying ability transfers across languages, suggesting an important role for students' first language in the classroom. Importantly, we note that there is a dearth of articles on FSL programs other than immersion. This evident gap in the literature calls for more research in core French, intensive French and other FSL contexts.

## CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH RECOMMENDS

- That the Government of Canada increase investments in official language research, much needed to inform FSL approaches and provide insight into students' experiences in FSL contexts other than immersion (e.g., core, intensive, extended).
- That the ministries of education, faculties of education and school districts build upon this work by conducting more comprehensive studies in current, literacy-focused and other innovative pedagogies that maximize student engagement, participation and success.
- That the Government of Canada increase investments in official language promotion and learning, taking into account the active promotion of bilingualism, increased official language proficiency, innovative practices and funding.
- That the Government of Canada put an emphasis on increased dialogue and cohesion between Ministries of Education and among school districts to increase parental understanding of the supports available to and for FSL students in their choices of appropriate French language learning opportunities – in and out of classroom settings - as well as interaction opportunities with Francophones to enhance student / youth confidence and motivation to sustain bilingualism in Canadian society.
- That the ministries of education, faculties of education and school districts enhance support for professional development for FSL teachers in current, literacy-focused pedagogies and bring attention to pedagogical strategies that maximize student engagement, participation, and success.



# CPF POSITION STATEMENTS

Canadian Parents for French represents 26,000 members across Canada. We are a nationwide, research-informed, volunteer organization that champions the opportunity to learn and use French for all those who call Canada home. Canadian Parents for French is the most recent recipient of the Commissioner of Official Languages Award of Excellence – Promotion of Linguistic Duality.

We promote and create opportunities for youth and support parents in all aspects related to French language learning.

## 1. Universal Access

In Canada, every student has the opportunity to learn French and access the French as a second official language program that meets his or her needs and aspirations.

## 2. Effective Programs

All students have access to a wide variety of effective, evidence-based French as a second official language programs from Kindergarten to post-secondary

## 3. Recognized Proficiency Levels

Proficiency levels and goals are in place so language learners, parents, teachers, post-secondary institutions and potential employers have a common understanding of each learner's French-language abilities and expectations of respecting programs.

## 4. Leadership Accountability

Education leaders are accountable for reporting on the achievement of students and French as a second official language programs, setting education policies, providing sustainable funding, ensuring a sufficient supply of FSL teachers, pursuing research and evidence-based enhancements of current education variants, and facilitating parent and community stakeholder engagement and inclusive decision making.

Within the findings of the research reported here, Canadian Parents for French sees shared key priorities that will provide opportunities for the Government of Canada, Ministries of Education, Faculties of education and school districts to work together to increase the dissemination of information regarding the importance of promoting official language bilingualism and French as a second language education programs across the country.

# GLOSSARY

NOTE: Since education in Canada falls under the authority of provinces and territories, terminology varies by jurisdiction. Readers are advised to consider the context from which a reference may originate.

Allophone	An individual whose first language is neither English nor French.  See also: English Language Learner
Bilingual Program	Also known as 50/50 or early partial immersion, bilingual programs usually begin in Kindergarten or Grade 1, with students receiving 50% of their instruction in French. Bilingual programs are less common than early, middle and late immersion programs.
Bilingualism	The ability to speak two languages. In Canada, the term usually refers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the ability to speak both English and French, the two official languages of Canada, and</li><li>• Canadian federal government policies that encourage the use of the two official languages in Canadian society.</li></ul>
Common European Framework of Reference for Languages(CEFR)	The CEFR provides a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the development of language syllabuses and curricula, design of teaching and learning materials, and assessment of language proficiency. Language proficiency is defined by six global levels of performance expressed in 'can do' statements, which are useful to language learners for self-assessment. This framework is used by 47 member countries and 6 observer countries (of which Canada is one): <a href="http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf">www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf</a>  See also: European Language Portfolio; DELF; DALF; Action-Oriented Approach; <i>Diplôme d'études en langue française</i> (DELF); <i>Diplôme approfondi de langue française</i> (DALF)
Core French Program Basic French Program	A program in which French is taught as a subject among others in a regular English program in two to five lessons a week for usually 30 to 40 minutes.  Also known in some jurisdictions as Basic French Program, French Second Language Program, and as French Communication and Culture in Manitoba.
Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)	Intergovernmental body founded by ministers of education to serve as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a forum to discuss policy issues;</li><li>• a mechanism through which to undertake activities, projects, and initiatives in areas of mutual interest;</li><li>• a means by which to consult and cooperate with national education organizations and the federal government; and</li><li>• an instrument to represent the education interests of the provinces and territories internationally.</li></ul> See also Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP)
<i>Diplôme d'études en langue française</i> (DELF)	The official French-language diploma awarded by France's Ministry of National Education to recognize French as a second language proficiency. It is recognized around the world and is valid for life. DELF testing is offered by 965 accredited centres throughout the world, including 19 in Canada. The DELF tests the ability of students to use French in real-life situations and uses the six reference levels identified in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).  See also: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR); <i>Diplôme approfondi de langue française</i> (DALF)
Diverse learner / student with diverse learning needs	Describes learners whose learning needs present challenges to their performance in school.

Early French Immersion (EFI)	<p>Early French immersion (EFI) is the most common immersion option and is offered in all Canadian provinces and in two territories, Yukon and Northwest Territories.</p> <p>Early immersion students usually begin in Kindergarten or Grade 1, receiving 90-100% of their instruction in French. English Language Arts are introduced between Grades 2 and 4 and, over the years, the percentage of French-language instructional time is reduced. Early French immersion generally produces the highest proficiency levels and is considered to be the optimal immersion entry point as it meets the needs of the widest range of student abilities.</p>
English Language Learner (ELL)	<p>Students in English-language schools whose first language is other than English and may initially require educational interventions to assist them in attaining English language proficiency. Research indicates that exposing English language learners to FSL may have a positive influence on their English acquisition.</p> <p>The term includes newcomers from other countries as well as children born in Canada and raised in families or communities where languages other than English are spoken.</p> <p>See also: Allophone</p>
Enhanced FSL Programs	<p>A collective term for a variety of enhanced core/basic French programs in which students take two or three courses in which French is the language of instruction, in addition to French Language Arts. The term encompasses Extended, Expanded, and Post-intensive French programs.</p>
Expanded Core French	<p>A French as a second language course option in which students enroll in accelerated core French courses and in courses chosen from other subject areas, also studied in French. Offered only in Nova Scotia.</p>
Extended Core French	<p>A French as a second language program in which students take two or three subjects taught in the French language in addition to French Language Arts.</p> <p>The Junior extended French program begins at the Grade 4 level. Students in this program spend 50% of their day in French instruction from Grade 4-8. The subjects taught in French are generally French Language Arts, Social Studies and Arts.</p> <p>The Grade 7 extended French program offers students who have successfully completed three years of core French the option to enter into a more intensive program in Grade 7. These students spend approximately 40% of their day in French. Offered only in Ontario.</p>
French First Language Education Programs / Schools	<p>Describes any program designed to teach children of parents who are French language rights holders. Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms addresses the right to instruction in English or in French of a minority population. Children whose parents are French-language rights holders are automatically admitted to a French-language school. Other children who apply may be granted admission based on criteria determined by the school board or provincial / territorial education authority.</p>
French Immersion (FI)	<p>A second-language education program in which French is the language of communication and instruction using the same curriculum as that offered in the regular English program. The term is an inclusive one that can be used to refer to a number of variants of immersion (based on entry year, amount of time and intensity, etc.)</p> <p>See also: Early French immersion, Middle French immersion, Late French immersion, Bilingual programs (also known as 50/50 programs) and early, middle and late partial immersion variants.</p>
French as a Second Language (FSL) education	<p>French language education for students who do not have French as a first or additional language. This includes core French, French immersion, intensive French, and various enhanced FSL program options.</p>

Intensive French/ Intensive Core French	<p>Intensive French (or Intensive core French) is an FSL approach in which French is taught intensively for most of the day during five months of the Grade 5 or 6 year. The students in the program receive about 80% of their instruction in French, with a focus on literacy learning rather than a language-through-content approach (used in immersion), during the first half of the year and 20% during the second half; the rest of the subjects (except for Math) are “compressed” into the second half of the year. In some jurisdictions, the term “neurolinguistic approach” is used to denote the same approach but with certain pedagogical specificity.</p> <p>After the initial intensive year, there are a number of options, depending on the school board, whereby a similar pedagogical approach continues in higher grades (called <i>Français approfondi</i>, Enhanced French, and more).</p>
Late French Immersion (LFI)	Late immersion students begin between Grade 5 and 8, depending upon the jurisdiction, and generally receive 80% of their instruction, using a language-through-content approach in French, at the beginning of the program. Over the years, the percentage of French-language instructional time is reduced. Late immersion produces proficiency levels that are generally higher than those associated with core French programs. Students in LFI are often more involved in the choice to enroll than those in other FI programs and are often academically capable.
Middle French Immersion (MFI)	Middle immersion students usually begin in Grade 4, receiving 90% of their instruction in French at the beginning of the program. Over the years the percentage of French-language instructional time is reduced. Middle immersion programs generally lead to proficiency levels lower than early FI but higher than late FI programs.
Ministry of Education / Department of Education	<p>A provincial or territorial government department with responsibility for overseeing the development of education legislation, regulations, and policies. Responsibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of legislation, regulation, and policies</li> <li>• Funding and fiscal management</li> <li>• Setting policies and guidelines for school system management</li> <li>• Developing or stipulating curricula; setting requirements for student diplomas, certificates and learning resources</li> </ul>
Official Languages	The term refers to either of Canada’s two official languages: English and French.
Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP)	<p>A program administered by the federal government Department of Canadian Heritage to provide funding to provinces and territories in order to assist them in providing second-official-language education programs as well as official minority-language education.</p> <p>See also Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)</p>
Proficiency Benchmarks	<p>A standard or reference by which language-learners can be measured or judged.</p> <p>See also: Common European Framework of Reference</p>
Student Achievement	The amount of academic content a student learns in a determined amount of time. Each grade level has learning goals or instructional outcomes/standards that educators are required to teach.
Student Participation	The rate at which students enrol in an educational program (statistics, percentages, enrolment rates)
Student Performance	See: Student Achievement

## Student Proficiency

Refers to the degree to which a learner uses a language. Proficiency levels may be assessed by locally- or internationally-developed tests (in relation to established performance levels).

- The Oral Proficiency Evaluation is an example of a locally developed test (used in New Brunswick) that measures one area of proficiency: [www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/post-secondary\\_education\\_training\\_and\\_labour/Skills/content/AdultLearningAndEssentialSkills/LanguageTesting.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/post-secondary_education_training_and_labour/Skills/content/AdultLearningAndEssentialSkills/LanguageTesting.html)
- The *Diplôme d'études en langue française* (DELF) is an internationally-recognized test that assesses 4 areas of proficiency: [delf-dalf.ambafrance-ca.org](http://delf-dalf.ambafrance-ca.org)