

CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH
THE STATE OF FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN CANADA 2019:
FOCUS ON FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

1. In this report* you will find a review of current FSL education literature conducted by Stephanie Arnott and Mimi Masson to identify key trends in relation to FSL programs, which include *literacy instruction*, *grammar instruction* and *inclusive practices*. Particular attention was paid to research in core French contexts, especially areas where innovations could inform other FSL approaches, such as French immersion. Two such areas were: *arts-based instruction* and *instructional experimentation*.

Literacy Instruction

- Core French and French immersion teachers plan for literacy instruction emphasizing cross-linguistic transfer
- Core French constraints mean less opportunity to plan for transfer, less instructional time, and where generalist teachers also teach core French, limited methodological proficiency

Grammar Instruction

- Positive impact of explicit grammar instruction characteristic of core French is also useful in French immersion
- Effective corrective feedback techniques such as prompts and recasts are linked to the communicative orientation of second language classrooms, which implicates the transfer of findings between FSL programs

Inclusive Practices

- Research on English language learners in FSL originated in core French; findings across programs show that ELLs can succeed in FSL
- Differentiated instruction in FSL is documented extensively in core French, whereas research has focused predominantly on identifying at-risk students in French immersion
- In both programs, teachers report needing more professional development to implement inclusive practices

Arts-Based Instruction

- Arts-based instruction can lead to enhanced self-esteem and willingness to speak
- It promotes developing the four skills holistically and improves cultural knowledge

Instructional Experimentation

- Findings from core French experimentation (e.g., research on AIM) can expand to French immersion and beyond

Lessons from research in core French and French immersion

- No need to isolate research-based knowledge re FSL instruction to any one program (although the transfer is not always direct)
- Drawing from research in both contexts for decision-making is appropriate and helpful to break down barriers between FSL programs

2. The report also includes a spotlight on three key French as a Second Language programs offered across Canada, considering not only their history and pedagogical hallmarks but also the lessons they can impart to other FSL approaches.

Focus on Core French – Stephanie Arnott & Sharon Lapkin

Measures that can be taken to improve core French student outcomes

- experiment with compact models of core French or “massed” instruction to benefit from intensity of instructional time
- student self-assessments are more positive and teachers find they have more opportunities to implement communicative activities

Reflecting on learner motivation to retain students in the core French program

- acknowledge and address motivational ‘divides’ (gender, newcomers)
- focus simultaneously on addressing demotivating factors (e.g., negative attitudes toward French) and reconsidering the power and relevance of traditional motivating factors (e.g., enhanced job opportunities) to sustain learner motivation to continue learning French in school

Focus on French immersion – Roy Lyster

- Language acquisition requires both proactive and reactive pedagogical approaches
- Immersion’s success is due to the integration of content while students learn language
- Student motivation is increased by purposeful language learning

* The State of French as a Second Language in Education 2019 is available for download:
<https://cpf.ca/en/files/The-State-of-FSL-Education-in-Canada-2019-1.pdf>

Focus on Intensive French – Wendy Carr

- This literacy-based approach focuses on oral language development through use and reuse
- Well subscribed in some provinces/territories (NB, YK, NT, NL, NS); less so in others
- Viable pathway to bilingualism → B1 or B2 by Grade 11 & 12

3. Assessing French Proficiency in French Second Language Programs: DELF Update

- DELF testing is available across Canada and provides a consistent measure of proficiency across regions/programs
- Sample results show that Grade 12 students who opt to take the test attain A2 & B1 in core French; B1 in Extended or Integrated French; B1 in Post-Intensive French; and B1 & B2 in French immersion.

4. Provincial/Territorial Reports and Policy Documents provide

- Examples of effective FSL initiatives and teaching practices.
- Recent program reviews in various jurisdictions.

5. An Agenda for Change: Canadian Parents for French recommends that:

- Government of Canada increase investments in various forms of official language research needed to inform multiple approaches to learning French as a second language, including studying various delivery models, programmatic innovations and pedagogical strategies.
- Ministries of education, faculties of education and school districts build upon this work by supporting preservice and inservice teacher education in inclusive, literacy-based second-language instructional practices that maximize engagement, participation and success.
- Government of Canada increase investments in official language promotion and learning, including actively promoting and funding official language proficiency assessment practices, such as DELF testing.
- Government of Canada place an emphasis on increased dialogue and support to increase understanding of the various FSL program options and how each can contribute to and learn from the others through shared professional learning opportunities that will ultimately improve program quality and learning outcomes for Canadian youth.