

FSL for School Administrators

FROM AWARENESS to ACTION

From Awareness to Action is a professional learning publication to support school administrators in the strengthening of French as a Second Language.



ISSUE 6 Supporting English Language Learners and Students who have Special Education Needs in FSL

IN THIS ISSUE
the focus is on strategies that support the participation and engagement of English language learners and students with special education needs in FSL.

A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12 embraces the concept that all students can learn French as a Second Language. Participation in FSL programs should reflect the diversity of the student population, including students with special education needs and students who are English language learners. What is essential to remember is that these students have many strengths. They have learned strategies that assist them in developing knowledge and skills across the curriculum. By drawing on these, teachers can program appropriately. It is also important to note that students who are English Language learners are not students with special education needs and strategies and approaches need to be designed to meet the needs of students based on their individual learning profile.

Strategies for Supporting All Students in FSL

Learning for All highlights the fact that there are educational approaches that can benefit all students. In any given classroom, students may demonstrate a wide range of strengths and needs. Teachers create programs that respond to this diversity, often through the use of action-oriented authentic tasks, technology, and individual student learning goals. Furthermore, the CEFR presents a shift towards transforming practice to think beyond rote-based, repetitious tasks. In this way, students' level of interest and engagement increases, as does their commitment to learning and communicating in French.

English Language Learners

The elementary and secondary curriculum documents for FSL articulate that “English language learners ... bring a rich diversity of background knowledge and experience to the classroom” (p. 38, elementary curriculum document; p. 41, secondary). At the beginning, some ELLs may require additional support, as they often arrive in an Ontario school after the FSL entry point. Some students may also have experienced a significant gap in their learning in their first language or limited access to formal schooling due to a disruption in their schooling or limited access to formal schooling in their country of origin and require accelerated supports to develop their literacy skills through English Literacy Development (ELD) programs. Links to their first language may prove more challenging. For those students, there are many strategies to consider in order to make appropriate accommodations and/or modifications to instruction and assessment as shared in the document [Welcoming English Language Learners in French as a Second Language programs](#).

For ELLs who are beginning to learn another language, promoting the students' use of their first language has been shown to increase their confidence and assist them with their communication skills. Since most ELLs have an age-appropriate proficiency in their first language, the transfer of one language system to another builds on skills already learned. ELLs often do very well in FSL classes, in fact “Research confirms that a prior language learning experience can facilitate and accelerate further language learning” (*Ontario Curriculum, Gr. 9 to 12: French as a Second Language, 2014, p. 42*).

As with all second language learners, ELLs benefit from strategies such as:

- Accessing appropriate technology helps students become more autonomous and self-directed as they acquire the new language

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- Creating a print rich FSL classroom environment (e.g., such as by labelling the classroom: la porte, le tableau, l'ordinateur)
- Having a variety of print resources at students' reading level, both independent and instructional (e.g., comic books, picture books, magazines, newspapers and bilingual dictionaries that are the student's first language and French)
- Providing visual cues and aids (e.g., gestures, drawings) to associate images with words and useful expressions

Students with Special Education Needs

A key process in program planning for students with special education needs is the development of the Individual Education Plan (IEP). This is a working document that outlines the special education programs and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the student's strengths and learning needs.

By considering a variety of instructional and assessment strategies, and accommodations (where appropriate), FSL teachers differentiate through teaching modalities, resources, and assistive strategies and technologies as key contributors to the success of FSL learning.

Some school principals express concern that learning French may be a burden for allophone students. However, the results of French testing show no significant difference in performance between allophone students and English-speaking students, even when allophone students have received much less French instruction.

Welcoming English Language Learners into FSL Classrooms, 2016, p. 8

WHAT'S MY ROLE?

Participation in FSL programs should reflect the diversity of the student population, including students with special education needs and students who are English language learners. (Welcoming English Language Learners in French as a Second Language Programs, p.6). School administrators need to ensure that FSL program decisions are based on current policy. First and foremost, "decisions about program

participation, including participation in FSL programs, should be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the strengths, needs, and interests of the individual student" (Including **Students with Special Education Needs in French as a Second Language Programs**, 2015 p.3).

Planning an educational program for a student with special education needs is best accomplished through the combined efforts of, and with close communication among, the student, the student's parents, school staff, members of the community, and other professionals involved with the student. A collaborative IEP process that includes the development of a transition plan provides an opportunity for all who are involved with the student to work together to provide a program that will foster achievement and success. If, for example, a student requires accommodations to successfully meet the expectations in French class, the French teacher should have an active role in providing input to the IEP. (Special Education in Ontario, Kindergarten to Grade 12, Policy and Resource Guide, p. E7)

Regular visits to the classroom by the administrator, together with ongoing, supportive dialogue with the teaching team, communicate the message that "We will do this together."



One article to read, one quote to consider, one link to click...

1. [Supporting Students with Special Education Needs in French as a Second Language A Parent Guide](#), Callie Mady, PhD, Nipissing University, Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board, 2016.
2. "In the context of FSL, research confirms that a prior language learning experience can facilitate and accelerate further language learning. Indeed, many English language learners are motivated and able to excel in French, while in other areas of the curriculum, where their success may depend on their knowledge of English, the achievement gap between themselves and their peers may be much greater." The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: French as a Second Language (2014), p. 42
3. [Supporting Students in FSL](#): A video and print resource that urges administrators to work with school staff to reflect on the impact of their decisions with respect to inclusion in FSL programming.