

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 4 Increasing Engagement in FSL at the School Level

IN THIS ISSUE

The focus of this issue is to offer practical suggestions to principals and vice-principals for increasing student engagement in FSL.

Student Engagement in the FSL Classroom

Engaging students in learning is a goal for all educators. Students who are engaged in their learning demonstrate greater success, express interest in and take ownership of their learning.

As in other subjects, student engagement in FSL takes many forms, but above all, the approach must be student-centred. It begins with relevant, authentic tasks carried out in French and supported by authentic materials. For example, students can use French samples of menus, travel brochures, catalogues, and newspapers as resources for oral discussion and written work. Communication

can begin in the form of questions and answers or simple dialogues, with the goal of progressing to spontaneous conversations. Media accessed through technology can further support this progression, as it facilitates exposure to French around the world. Topics of student interest can motivate student participation. The more engaging the topic, the more students will practise speaking and become comfortable and confident in spontaneously using French for communication.

Connections beyond the classroom can also serve to engage students and promote the value of learning French. Guest speakers have the power to motivate and inspire students, while community partnerships can offer opportunities for French tours or career-day presentations. Overall, exposure to French-speaking individuals provides students with role models for the daily use of French and an idea of the value of French in their community and beyond.



Knowing the Learner

In any subject area, it is essential that teachers get to know their students in order to engage them in meaningful learning. For example, focusing on what students find interesting makes tasks such as learning new vocabulary engaging. A multi-disciplinary approach is a way of teaching content as well as language, and of demonstrating that French is a language of communication, not an end in itself.

Surveys are helpful tools to ensure a student-centred focus. All teachers are familiar with the role of differentiation in supporting student learning. Understanding the learning modalities and multiple intelligences of students helps educators create learning profiles that support lesson planning that meets individual needs.

French-language skills are an asset in a wide range of occupations. Whether or not an individual sees opportunities to use French in the immediate future or in the local environment, the benefits present compelling reasons to continue the study of FSL throughout secondary school and beyond.

A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, p. 4, 2013

Making French Visible in Your School

The school building itself is very important to consider when increasing the visibility of French within and outside the school. Bilingual school signs (e.g., Bureau [Office]) and bulletin boards that showcase student French work provide opportunities for students to learn French during the course of everyday life. Additionally, French signage and displays of student work motivate students and convey the message that French is valued in the school community.

WHAT'S MY ROLE?

School newsletters and websites can support and validate FSL programming through the inclusion of a section for FSL. Content may range from description of the FSL program offered at the school to examples of current student work and links to articles about FSL and language learning.

This type of information increases parent and community engagement and highlights the importance that is placed on learning additional languages. For example, the Ministry of Education FSL webpage (<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/fls.html>) describes FSL programs, as well as the benefits of second language learning. The CBC news article “Bilingual kids gain benefits in literacy skills” (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/health/bilingual-kids-gain-benefits-in-literacyskills-1.1252909>) describes the recent study completed by York University professor Ellen Bialystock on second language acquisition and cognition.

Modelling is another powerful strategy for engaging students. Most staff has enough functional French to be able to greet one another and say the date. Making an effort to exchange a few sentences in French with a colleague demonstrates risk-taking for students and sends a positive message about learning French. Morning announcements can also include some French language, from stating the date to singing “O Canada.”

Ontario FSL Student Quotes 2014/15:

“I like the idea that I get to speak in another language.”

“Hearing other people speaking the language, it helps me with more vocabulary and then I can understand it more.”

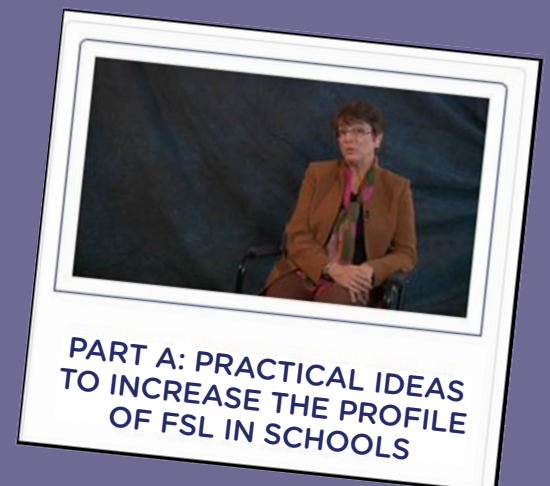
“I like French. Being bilingual is helpful and for a job, it’s important to be able to speak French and English.”

“It’s hard for me but I try as hard as I can.”



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

1. ***Principals Want to Know: Engaging Students***. This is a tip sheet written for principals and vice-principals and is designed to support instructional leadership practice. <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/pdfs/issue9.pdf>
2. **“Our students need to know that the work they’re being asked to do is relevant and important to them — right now. That means we teachers need to start with the why of our learning activities: Why is it relevant to students? How can students connect what they’re learning to their own lives?”** Jackson, R., & Zmuda, A. (2014). *4 (Secret) Keys to Student Engagement*. *Educational Leadership*, 72(1), 22.
3. **From Awareness to Action** - Video Segment 2: Heightening Awareness of FSL Programs and Benefits. This project presents practical ideas from the Provincial Principal Focus Group members on increasing awareness and engagement in FSL. <https://transformingfsl.ca/en/components/part-a-practical-ideas-to-increase-the-profile-of-fsl-in-schools/>



PART A: PRACTICAL IDEAS TO INCREASE THE PROFILE OF FSL IN SCHOOLS