



Prologue

FOR FRENCH IMMERSION AND EXTENDED FRENCH EDUCATORS

A PUBLICATION FOR PROFESSIONAL CONVERSATIONS

Kindergarten in a French Immersion Setting

The focus of this publication is supporting educators in French Immersion Kindergarten classrooms with the implementation of *The Full-Day Early Learning – Kindergarten Program (Draft, 2010)*. Throughout, there are opportunities for reflection on practices that foster the development of French-language skills through a play-based inquiry approach.

In this publication you will read about: developing a community of French language learners, responding to children's own communicative needs as they learn a new language, and connecting French-language learning with *The Full-Day Early Learning – Kindergarten Program (Draft, 2010)* program document.

Prologue is a professional learning publication for educators working in entry level French Immersion and Extended French programs. It includes an element of research, questions for reflection, translations of key educational terms and teacher voice, which are intended to inspire professional conversations. *Prologue* is available electronically in English and French on Curriculum Services Canada's website (<http://www.curriculum.org/fsl/projects/prologue-a-publication-for-professional-conversations>).



MARCH 2015

Kindergarten in a French Immersion Setting

The Kindergarten document, released in 2010, articulates the vision, purpose, goals, fundamental principles and learning expectations that early learning educators, including those in French Immersion classrooms, use in planning and implementing the program.

In French Immersion kindergarten, children are immersed in the French language from the beginning of the school year. Educators speak French during purposefully planned, intentional teaching in whole group, small group and individual learning situations, as well as during informal conversations. As communication is a valuable life skill, and language and communication are inextricably connected, a strong French Immersion kindergarten program, characterized by consistent interaction in French, is critical in building the foundation for further learning.

There are clear connections between *The Full-Day Early Learning – Kindergarten Program (Draft, 2010)* and the Grade 1 curriculum for French Immersion. The Ontario Curriculum French as a Second Language (2013) curriculum document focuses on the importance of making real-world and relevant connections, engaging in authentic oral communication, and in developing critical and creative thinking skills.

“The ECE and the teacher are always conversing with each other in French, questioning and thinking aloud. A big part of the French language development is due to their relationship.”

Early Learning Consultant

REFLECTION How can I support children’s comprehension of French from their first day in French Immersion?

The Full-Day Early Learning – Kindergarten Program (Draft, 2010) document promotes an inquiry approach that enables children to make connections “with their own lives and the world around them” (p. 16). Critical thinking skills, such as “questioning, predicting and hypothesizing” (p.45) are key components of the inquiry approach, and oral language is recognized as “the basis for literacy, thinking, and relating in any language” (p. 18).

Teaching and Learning in an Inquiry Stance

French Immersion educators in Kindergarten provide opportunities for children to learn French in an inquiry stance. This approach capitalizes on children's natural curiosity as educators encourage them to question and learn by investigating. Educators model life-long learning by asking authentic questions, and by using the children's questions and wonderings as the basis for individual and small group inquiries. By offering materials and planning experiences that provoke and challenge thinking, educators guide children to new discoveries and further inquiries. Children self-direct some aspects of their learning, but not all. Educators make connections to the program expectations as they focus and extend the learning as co-learners with the children.

“Inquiry comes in the form of questions, misconceptions, or debates between children who have different theories, for example, I was reading *Comment attraper une étoile*. One child said “Look at the shadow of the star in the ocean; another said “That’s a reflection.” So I asked « Qui pense que c’est une réflexion? Qui pense que c’est une ombre ? » and that started an inquiry.”

French Immersion Kindergarten Teacher

Educators apply their understanding of child development, and teaching of French-language skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing and numeracy to plan explicit instruction that supports children in moving forward. Focused literacy and numeracy instruction in French is part of an integrated day, as educators reinforce and extend learning during play, daily routines, and the arts, as well as through whole and small group lessons, providing individual support as needed.

French Immersion educators in Kindergarten engage children in learning through inquiry while supporting them in developing French-language skills. This is accomplished through all interactions, from casual conversations to focussed discussions, starting with simple words and basic language structures, and through learning songs, rhymes, poems or engaging in dramatic play. Through modelling and explicit teaching of listening strategies from the beginning of the year, educators support children in maximizing learning through oral communication (i.e., listening, speaking and interacting).

“Inquiry-based learning concerns itself with the creative approach of combining the best approaches to instruction, including explicit instruction and small-group and guided learning, in an attempt to build on students’ interests and ideas, ultimately moving students forward in their paths of intellectual curiosity and understanding.”

“Inquiry-based Learning”,
Capacity Building Series,
May 2013

Educators model appropriate French-language expressions in response to the children's own communicative needs, from requesting help to expressing opinions and asking questions. Educators also note how children respond to the French they hear, and then plan ways to support listening comprehension. In this way, children develop skills in interpreting oral messages and texts accurately.

“French Immersion and inquiry fit so well together. The inquiry becomes the vehicle to learn French by building a context that is meaningful to the students. This approach just makes sense.”

French Immersion Principal

There should be a balance between educator-initiated and child-initiated activities.”

The Full-Day Early Learning - Kindergarten Program (Draft, 2010), p.8

While children in French Immersion Kindergarten begin the year communicating in English or their home language, educators, by communicating in French, continually strive to reinforce Ontario's vision for FSL, that children will “have the confidence and ability to use French effectively in their daily lives.” (*A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12*, p. 8)

Once children are engaged in inquiry, educators make connections to the program expectations and provide support, explicit instruction, prompting, and feedback based on the targeted expectations and language needs.

Developing a Community of French Language Learners

Action-oriented and communicative approaches to teaching FSL focus on meaning over form; emphasize meaningful interactive activities; centre on communicative language needs; and, when possible, highlight authentic tasks within the context of a classroom environment.

The Ontario Curriculum, French as a Second Language: Core French, Grades 4-8, Extended French, Grades 4-8, French Immersion, Grades 1-8 (2013), p. 31

From the start of the year, Kindergarten French Immersion educators build a community of learners, in which children's questions and ideas are valued, while at the same time, they are building a community of French language learners, in which children's efforts to communicate in French are valued.

Educators encourage children to support each other in using French. They may direct children to groupings in which peer collaboration leads to increased use of French. Educators circulate to provide models of French expressions needed at the moment, and encourage children to be models of oral language for each other, as well as to help each other locate written models throughout the classroom.

Establishing routines provides children with a sense of security and helps them develop critical self-regulation skills needed to build positive relationships and to function effectively in their learning community. In French Immersion Kindergarten, the daily routine provides numerous opportunities to teach and reinforce, through modelling, demonstration, and re-use of those French-language structures which children need to understand and /or be able to use on a daily basis. Engaging children in language-rich routines ensures efficient use of time to maximize learning opportunities.

REFLECTION How can I strategically support children’s development of critical thinking and French-language skills?

“I speak to the children in French in the class and on the yard. Other staff members take risks and step out of their comfort zone to speak French to students”.

French Immersion Principal

By speaking only French in the classroom, educators create an immediate need for children to learn the language. Educators draw from a repertoire of communication strategies to provide comprehensible input, the intentional choice of language so children understand the general idea of the message even if they do not know every word. Comprehensible input can be supported using visuals, technology, actions, and concrete materials. If absolutely necessary to differentiate nuances in meaning or to clarify abstract terms, educators might use other strategies, such as saying the French word or expression, then the English, and then repeating the French, or they might use an ‘English-speaking’ puppet to help clarify messages spoken in French.

REFLECTION How do I create a sense of community and build relationships in my classroom, school, and with families in support of children’s French language development?

The community of learners extends beyond the classroom. French Immersion educators encourage others to help create a French learning environment throughout the school. Opportunities to share and celebrate learning range from providing an audience for children to announce discoveries or demonstrate their learning, to using technology to record and communicate growth in learning with others.

Regular home-school communication is important as parents welcome opportunities to know more about inquiry in a French Immersion classroom and what their children are learning, as well as to share valuable information about their child’s interests and lives beyond the classroom. Children’s growing ability to communicate in French can be valued and celebrated in the classroom, throughout the school, and through connections with their home and community.

“Team members recognize that their own learning is a continuous and reciprocal process – they learn from each other, and from the children and their families.”

The Full-Day Early Learning –
Kindergarten Program
(Draft, 2010), p. 7

Responsive Planning and Instruction

Kindergarten French Immersion educators enrich the classroom environment with a variety of materials and intentionally plan for learning through manipulation of these materials. Then, they observe and listen to discover what intrigues the children, what misconceptions they may have, and questions they want to pursue. They continuously support children's thinking by encouraging further questions and sharing of ideas.

As well, educators are listening to determine French-language expressions they will need to explicitly teach, in individual and group situations, to allow children to express themselves and to be able to understand the French that is of immediate use to them. This highlights a shift from teaching pre-determined vocabulary to introducing language structures that children can use to communicate in a meaningful way.

REFLECTION How does our classroom environment and variety of resources support children in learning French?

To help children understand and communicate messages in French, the Kindergarten French Immersion team models the use of simple, basic language. Educators choose their words carefully, intentionally reusing and emphasizing key expressions so the children can learn to use these appropriately themselves. They use intonation to support meaning, and enunciate clearly so that children are able to hear and distinguish sounds. Educators speak at a pace that provides time for children to process what they have heard, and they encourage children to watch them when they speak to learn how to reproduce French sounds accurately.

“I do guided reading with students who are ready. I take them in small groups for 5 - 7 minutes and we do read-alouds, practise reading strategies - all those good pedagogical practices that we used before.”

“While she is doing guided reading, I will work with small groups as well, focussing on their names, their friends' names, and playing with sounds. That is their first link with literacy.”

French Immersion Kindergarten Educators

Educators also encourage children to communicate their ideas and messages in writing in all learning areas of the classrooms. Explicit teaching through modeled, shared, and guided writing lessons prepares children for independent writing. By co-creating French texts, (e.g., labels, name walls, word and sentence walls), educators support children in connecting oral language with reading and writing. Providing children with independent access to writing models, illustrated words and sentences, and a variety of writing tools and materials, enables them to experiment with written French throughout the day.

Kindergarten French Immersion educators support inquiry by making available French texts related to children's interests. Interactive read-alouds, modeled, shared and guided reading experiences are all important aspects of early French Immersion programs. Children recognize that texts can be a source of pleasure and of information, and can present different points of view. Meaningful French texts can support children in making inferences, predictions, and connections. These texts introduce children to a variety of language structures, styles, and voices, and help develop vocabulary, particularly when children are encouraged to use new vocabulary and structures heard in the text. Kindergarten French Immersion educators may adapt texts at times so they are comprehensible or in order to reinforce specific language structures the children are learning.

Documenting Growth and Reflecting on Learning

Educators use a variety of assessment practices before, during and after inquiries to document growth, to determine next steps for learning concepts, skills, and French language structures, and to communicate with families. For example, educators document processes, conversations and quotes related to children's learning, and support this documentation with photos, audio recordings, work samples or video clips, to create "learning stories" that can be shared with the children themselves, their parents, peers, and other members of the school community.

On-going assessment for learning allows educators to be responsive in planning appropriate instruction to meet the needs of individual children based on their strengths, needs, and interests. Assessment for learning provides valuable information about the children's development of French-language skills as well as their progress in relation to the Kindergarten program expectations.

Educators also encourage children to reflect on what they can do in French, and celebrate those milestones. During daily sharing time, children can build on each other's understandings, share strategies they use to learn, provide feedback to each other, and discuss learning goals. Educators model how to reflect on learning and provide tools (e.g., a simple, visual checklist) to help the children self-assess and provide feedback to their peers.

We use learning stories, which is sharing a "Wow" moment. We want parents to know about this. We quote the child, add a reflection, and then parents add a reflection. When a child shines, we take a picture, write the quote, show the picture to the child, and asks her/him to elaborate....

French Immersion Kindergarten Educators

REFLECTION How do I encourage children to reflect on their learning?

"A well-planned program provides Early Learning-Kindergarten teams with many opportunities for ongoing observation and assessment of children's strengths, needs, and interests. On the basis of this ongoing assessment, teachers should plan instruction to help children build on what they know and extend their thinking."

The Full-Day Early Learning -
Kindergarten Program
(Draft, 2010), p.12

Strategic Development of French-language Skills in Play-based Inquiry

“By using literacy materials in the learning centres, children learn to see reading and writing as integral aspects of their daily lives. Literacy experiences can be embedded throughout the day in authentic and meaningful ways.”

The Full-Day Early Learning – Kindergarten Program (Draft, 2010), p.70

REFLECTION How might technology be used as a tool to develop French-language skills?

Educators think strategically about what the children need to understand and what they need to be able to communicate in French. Children learn French expressions they are most frequently exposed to through conversations, role play, technology presentations, books, songs, rhymes, plays, and explicit instruction in a balance of whole group, small group and individual situations. Through intentional re-use of targeted language structures and embedding literacy skills throughout the day educators provide manageable chunks of language for children to learn.

Educators involve children in creating a language-rich environment and intentionally plan ways to help children develop their understanding that written text is meaningful and is a useful means of communicating messages. For example, they may co-create and post labels and signage throughout the classroom, such as “Magasin ouvert, Tirez pour ouvrir, Prenez un numéro;” direction signs that help children remember classroom routines, such as “Faites la queue ici” or “Mettez les enveloppes dans ce panier;” and messages related to their inquiries, such as “Regarde avec la loupe.” Having a classroom mailbox is another way to motivate children to write and read meaningful and personally relevant messages to each other and to the adults in the class and throughout the school.

“The words on our word wall are not alphabetized. They are on a magnetized 2 x 3 card with a picture. It is not a bulletin board. We also have a binder with card pockets that we put the cards in for children to access at any time. They also use books and clipboards. We put poems and songs on chart paper and hang them on pant hangers. Children use a pointer to read these, and also use them when writing.”

French Immersion Kindergarten Educators

How can I help students develop French-language skills using a play-based inquiry approach?

We record what the children are saying regardless of the language they use while they are engaged in play and inquiry, analyze this to find trends, and then model and reinforce expressions that are most commonly needed.

We do frequent comprehension checks because we know children are inferring meaning a lot and we want to clear up any misconceptions right away. We find that one of the best ways to check comprehension is to observe the children's responses.

We create our own texts about our experiences, so the children are reading about themselves, their classmates, and us. That connects their inquiry to oral language and then to reading and writing.

We are explicit about what the children are learning to be able to say and do in French. We share these goals and successes, for example "Maintenant, on peut demander de l'aide."

We work hard to create risk-takers, and to develop the children's confidence and sense of pleasure whenever they speak or write French.

We encourage thinking, questioning and expression of ideas, and balance that carefully with how we develop French skills. What we say and do depends so much on the individual child.

We encourage the children to play with the language. They learn songs and poems that they can then adapt.

Questioning: An Integral Aspect of Inquiry

French Immersion Kindergarten educators support children's critical thinking through purposeful questioning as they engage in inquiry-based learning. They model questions in concrete situations, using think-alouds to reinforce language structures and thought processes, while supporting comprehension using objects, pictures and demonstration.

Example of modelling questioning in inquiries:

PURPOSE
To predict possible outcomes of actions.
SITUATION
The educator predicts and then demonstrates what happens when different colours are mixed in water.
DEMONSTRATION AND THINK-ALoud
« Qu'est-ce qui se passe quand je mets du jaune dans l'eau bleue ? Hmm. Je ne sais pas. Je me demande...? »
The educator shows several pictures that illustrate possible predictions (e.g., the top half of the water turns yellow while the bottom half stays blue, the water has swirls of blue and yellow, the water is blue with yellow spots, the water is green) and reuses the language, encouraging children to repeat the structure that is being introduced (e.g., Qu'est-ce qui se passe ?).

REFLECTION How do I decide which French expressions and functional language structures are most useful for the children to learn?

Functional Language

By focussing on functional language structures required for interacting and communicating ideas and questions, educators respond to children's communicative needs while making connections to the curriculum. Many learning expectations can be expressed as functions of language.

Example:

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS	
1.1 act and talk with peers and adults by expressing and accepting positive messages FDELKP, p. 52	
SITUATION	EXAMPLES OF BASIC FRENCH EXPRESSIONS
Give compliments	J'aime ça. C'est bon. Tu dessines bien.
Give constructive criticism	J'ai une idée ! On peut faire ça. Fais comme ceci.
Accept compliments	Merci beaucoup ! Toi, aussi.
Accept constructive criticism	Bonne idée ! J'aime ton idée. Merci pour ton aide.

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS	
1.2 demonstrate the ability to take turns in activities and discussions FDELKP, p. 53	
SITUATION	EXAMPLES OF BASIC FRENCH EXPRESSIONS
Ask for a turn	C'est mon tour? Et moi après?
Suggest turn-taking	Moi, puis toi? Toi en premier. C'est ton tour après.
SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS	
1.3 demonstrate an awareness of ways of making and keeping friends FDELKP, p. 54	
SITUATION	EXAMPLES OF BASIC FRENCH EXPRESSIONS
Invite	Tu veux jouer? Viens voir.
Ask to join	Moi aussi? S'il-te-plaît? Je peux jouer?
Offer help	Je peux t'aider?
Offer to share	Tu veux ceci?

Nurturing Children's Capacity to Learn

Through intentional planning of integrated, scaffolded French-language skills and provision of a literacy-rich, inquiry-based learning environment, educators in French Immersion Kindergarten support the development of the whole child and provide a solid foundation for French-language learning.

“We first try to get the children engaged, then we look at the curriculum and make connections. That is where the purposeful planning comes in. We steer children toward where we want them to go after having looked at the curriculum.

Investigating questions opens the door for learning and learning languages. We build opportunities to develop the language after talking about questions using the philosophy of “just in time” instead of “just in case”. We provide vocabulary that is needed rather than the pre-packaged words we think they should know. Then, we strategically re-use focus expressions in conversations. Thinking comes first, allowing second language acquisition to grow with the children.”

French Immersion Kindergarten Educators

Professional Resources

EduGains.

<http://edugains.ca/newsite/earlyPrimary/primaryresources/videoresources.html>

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Special thanks to Kindergarten French Immersion educators from Rainbow District School Board and Keewatin-Patricia District School Board for sharing experiences and reflections that added richness to this issue of *Prologue*!