

FSL

FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers

MODULE 2

Positive Learning Environment

Acknowledgement

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Erin Balmer	Thames Valley District School Board
Maureen Benfey	Peel District School Board
Melissa Brown	Greater Essex County District School Board
Geoff Collins	Durham District School Board
France Dupuis	Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario
Laura Dursley	Trillium Lakelands District School Board
Jayne Evans	Niagara Catholic District School Board
Joanne Guindon	Durham Catholic District School Board
Heather Henke	Avon Maitland District School Board
Elizabeth Hoerath	Halton District School Board
Suzanne Korell	Ottawa Catholic School Board
Liliana Martins	Toronto District School Board
Sharon McNamara	Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board
Renee Meloche	Halton District School Board
Jennifer Moodie	Thames Valley District School Board
Alison Pearce	Toronto District School Board
Lorraine Richard	York Region District School Board
Brooke Robinson	Lakehead District School Board
Christina Schilling	Upper Grand District School Board
Anne Marie Sienna	Halton District School Board
Chantal Soucy	Ottawa Catholic School Board
Karen To	Greater Essex County District School Board
Karla Torrente	Durham District School Board

Contents

Context	2
Establishing a Positive Tone	3
Building Community	6
Reflective Practice	8
Classroom Practice	9
Teaching Core French in multiple classrooms or teaching at different schools	10
Looking for ways to motivate and engage students in learning French	12
Teaching in multiple grades and divisions	17
Teaching combined grades	20
Hearing French being spoken by the students as much as you would like	21
Seeking classroom management tips	22
Suggestions for Further Reading	25

Context

This module supports elementary and secondary Core French teachers in creating and sustaining a positive learning environment. It provides practical suggestions supported by classroom scenarios and current research, as well as opportunities to reflect upon individual teaching practice.

By creating a safe, positive, and motivating learning environment in your FSL classroom, you will be giving students life-long strategies for success for second-language learning and all learning.

Faulds (2010), p. 17

In second language learning, which includes a focus on understanding world perspectives and building links between cultures, creating positive connections starts with students and the learning environment. The Core French teacher creates a supportive, caring atmosphere where all students feel valued, are engaged in learning French, and are respectful of each other and the teacher. With this foundation in place, students support each other in their learning and are willing to accept the challenge of communicating only in French.

The Core French teacher creates a positive learning environment by:

- creating a need for students to communicate in French
- encouraging students to take risks when speaking in French and valuing all efforts
- modelling a positive attitude
- listening carefully to the student's message
- correcting errors at appropriate times, in a respectful and effective manner
- helping students to develop accuracy and fluency as they speak in French, realizing that these skills are refined over time
- providing ample daily opportunities for all students to practise their oral French skills
- providing individual descriptive feedback based on success criteria to help each student achieve learning goals
- acknowledging that students progress at different rates and providing appropriate tasks and supports
- stimulating student interest by planning relevant, purposeful activities and tasks

Establishing a Positive Tone

Students won't care until they know the teacher cares ... about the subject and about them.

Elementary Core French teacher

Building positive relationships with students is an essential component of creating a positive learning environment. *The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* notes that “Members [of the teaching profession] are dedicated in their care and commitment to students. They treat students equitably and with respect and are sensitive to factors that influence individual student learning” (Ontario College of Teachers, 2010). Students need to feel secure before they can focus on learning and participate actively. Creating a welcoming, risk-free, and inclusive classroom is essential to establishing this sense of safety.

Kugler et al. (2008) stress the importance of student input and of students seeing their lives represented within the classroom – a place where students’ “ideas, opinions, perspectives, wants and needs are the basis for all that happens in the building.”

When I think of a positive learning environment, the interpersonal is crucial. Each person comes to the classroom with his or her own personal narrative. As educators, we have to always keep this in the forefront. Motivation and engagement all come from building interpersonal relationships.

Secondary Core French teacher

Core French teachers inspire young people to broaden their horizons and promote understanding between cultures by nurturing attitudes of mutual respect. By sharing a passion for French language and culture, the Core French teacher sets the tone in the classroom and is a caring, supportive, and empathetic role model.

Core French teachers project a genuine warmth and interest in each student moving forward from where he or she is now. The learning and instruction are individualized. Ignoring negativity, such as a student whose body language says “I need some space,” can avoid creating or escalating conflict. Speaking to a student quietly is an appropriate way to show that you notice there is an issue without disrupting the entire class.

When Core French teachers build trust with students, the rewards become evident in their classes; students are willing to try new skills, and they put forth a greater effort when they know their teacher is patient, caring, and supportive. Teachers build trust by always being transparent, fair, consistent, and respectful.

Classroom environments are organic – they grow as we do. The best of them reflect the hearts and souls of those who inhabit them. ... They're never really 'done.' How could they be, when every day students and teachers learn something new.

D. Miller (2008), p. 42

When we work with someone who we feel is trustworthy and authentic we can feel empowered. Energy seems to arise in place of trust while it dissipates in an atmosphere of non-trust. This energy can empower others to take risks and be creative.

J. P. Miller (2000), p. 112

A critical component of establishing a positive environment is setting high standards for academic and learning skills. This conveys to students that the teacher believes in their abilities to speak French, to work together, and to complete tasks. The teacher, in turn, responds to their efforts with specific and timely feedback.

Through careful planning, Core French teachers select and present realistic tasks so that students are engaged and successful in their learning. Including the students in a discussion of success criteria helps them be clear about the expected learning, enabling them to focus on the task.

A learning environment that is positive allows students to take risks—without risks there is no new learning. Since we need our students to step out of their comfort zone in order to step into the learning zone, we must ensure they live in a positive classroom environment. For example, students may feel more comfortable and confident speaking French if they are talking to a partner or small group as opposed to the whole class. Plan a variety of different activities, such as dialogues in pairs and skits in small groups, to allow students the opportunity to communicate with each other and with you.

Secondary literacy consultant

When we focus on the nonverbal, or that silent space, we become aware of how we carry ourselves, how we engage others through eye contact, and the tone of our voice. We realize that the quality of our being and presence has as much impact on student development as anything that we say.

J.P. Miller (2000), p. 110

Core French teachers provide their students with ample opportunities to speak and interact in French. How the Core French teacher responds to errors has a tremendous impact on the classroom atmosphere. Listening carefully to the message being communicated rather than reacting negatively to errors motivates students to continue.

TIPS FOR CORRECTING ERRORS:

- Ask a question that leads the student to use the correct form, and reinforce it with examples.
- Focus error correction on the language skill related to the success criteria co-constructed with the students.
- Limit what you correct. Having too many errors pointed out at one time can be overwhelming. Stopping a student after every other word impedes the flow of the idea and the message being expressed.
- Assist with visuals to help the student self-correct. This way, the teacher doesn't interrupt the student with a verbal correction.

Emphasize effort. Create a supportive environment where students feel comfortable speaking in French and making mistakes while they learn the language. I am learning to give time for my students to think about what they want to say. By waiting, I am finding that they are more relaxed in what they say. Even if it is very simple French, it is a beginning.

Elementary Core French teacher

Practical Tips

- Convey the message that you enjoy teaching Core French.
- Value and celebrate what students can do.
- Encourage students to set goals and track their increasing proficiency in French.
- Seek feedback from students so you know they enjoy learning French in your class.
- Use the curriculum expectations to guide your planning.
- Follow Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that are in place.
- Scaffold learning and support students through appropriate planning and pacing.
- Plan explicit instruction of communication and language learning strategies.
- Use your knowledge of the students and their interests to inform the development of relevant, appropriate, and engaging tasks.
- Differentiate lessons and activities based on students' needs, readiness, and learning styles.
- Try tasks before presenting them to the students to verify that instructions are clear and concise.
- Be flexible, incorporating student voice when appropriate.

Grade 8 students were asked what they thought helped create a positive learning environment. Here are their responses:

- “a teacher who listens and is understanding”
- “a classroom that is bright and looks organized”
- “I know what to expect when class starts”
- “when we have class time to work and ask questions”
- “teachers who expect our best, but not perfection”
- “when we learn things that are interesting and meaningful”
- “a teacher who is approachable, knowledgeable, and flexible”
- “teachers who have school spirit”
- “when teachers let us work together”
- “I feel like part of the class and my opinions matter”

Creating an optimal Core French learning environment involves not only the Core French teacher and students, but also the support of the school, the community, and parents.

Cogswell & Kristmanson
(2007), p. 32

Building Community

In addition to building positive relationships with and among students in class, Core French teachers can reach out to the entire school community – students, colleagues, administrators, parents/guardians – to further enhance a positive learning environment in Core French.

By collaborating regularly with the students' other teachers, Core French teachers help students make connections between English and French literacy skills and language learning strategies.

Positive, meaningful parent involvement enhances the Core French learning environment.

Suggestions for strengthening the home-school connection:

- Invite parent volunteers to listen to students read and practise French on a regular basis
- Encourage students to practise French at home
- Extend invitations to parents to attend cultural events organized for Core French students
- Offer a Core French information session or workshop for parents
- Invite parents to student presentations of French skits, songs, debates, or speeches

Communicating regularly with parents is a vital component of building community. This can take place through newsletters, handbooks, website updates, agenda notes, and telephone calls. Personal interaction is an effective way to build positive relationships. Core French teachers may wish to keep on hand a supply of note paper or certificates to send home from time to time to recognize students' special efforts or achievements.

Core French teachers can promote the value of learning French and increase the visibility of French in the school and community in a number of ways:

To students, by:

- speaking French with colleagues in front of students
- making announcements in French
- attending student sporting events or arts performances
- participating in co-curricular activities by leading or co-leading a club or team

To colleagues, by:

- participating in cross-curricular Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- sharing literacy strategies used regularly in French class
- joining the in-school literacy committee or other school initiatives for student success
- collaborating and co-planning as much as possible

To the community, by:

- including a French expression on the school sign
- contributing an article about French events in the school to the community newspaper (this could be written by a student)
- hosting a French information night at the school

A positive French atmosphere is created through ongoing support from my colleagues. When they speak French – even a little – with me in front of my students, that gives me a boost and my students value French more.

Junior Core French teacher

The principal and vice-principal need to support their French teachers. When I go into the classroom, I speak in French, even though my French isn't that great. For the French teachers, it is important to have this sense of community and working together. It's all about relationships.

Elementary vice-principal

Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or for worse. ... Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul.

Palmer (1998), p. 2

Reflective Practice

The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* supports the importance of reflective practice (Ontario College of Teachers, 2010). Teachers apply both professional knowledge and experience to promote student learning and refine their professional practice through ongoing inquiry, dialogue, and reflection.

THINKING ABOUT MY CORE FRENCH CLASSES

- ✓ What message does my Core French class convey to students on a daily basis?
- ✓ What message does it convey to colleagues, especially to those with whom I share space or students?
- ✓ What message does it convey to administrators?
- ✓ What message does it convey to visitors?
- ✓ What do I say and do in class to make my students feel welcome?
- ✓ What opportunities do I provide so that every student speaks French in every class?
- ✓ How do I engage students in speaking French all or most of the time when interacting with me and their peers?
- ✓ What learning activities do I use to engage students from the moment the class begins to the moment it ends?
- ✓ What strategies (e.g., modelling, ample time, and practice) do I use so students can master new structures?
- ✓ What reference materials (e.g., anchor charts) do I provide for students' reference during independent and group work?
- ✓ Whose voice is heard most frequently?
- ✓ What aspects of my Core French class environment contribute to conveying a positive message?
- ✓ What learning activities occur most often (e.g., students reading, writing, speaking in pairs, answering questions)?
- ✓ How often do I make time to speak to each student individually?
- ✓ How often do I give each student descriptive feedback on his/her progress in French?
- ✓ How do I show even the least motivated student that I care?
- ✓ How do I involve students in taking ownership for their class and their learning?

KEEPING A JOURNAL

Writing is important because it gives us time to pause and reflect. Stephen Crites (1986) says that “many things are experienced retroactively.” Consciously and subconsciously, we respond to new events based on our recollections. A journal can become a tool for enlightenment. The act of writing about our teaching experiences can help clarify thoughts and release stress. Writing can generate new ideas. Coming back to what we have written and reviewing from a different perspective is part of good teaching practice. What can we learn from past experiences? What was our understanding then? What is our understanding now?

Classroom Practice

While the information for creating a positive environment that is presented in the sections that follow is relevant for all Core French teachers, we invite you to read about specific topics pertinent to your current teaching assignment.

Are you...

1. Teaching Core French in multiple classrooms or teaching at different schools?

Click here

2. Looking for ways to motivate and engage students in learning French?

Click here

3. Teaching in multiple grades and divisions?

Click here

4. Teaching combined grades?

Click here

5. Hearing French being spoken by the students as much as you would like?

Click here

6. Seeking classroom management tips?

Click here

1. Are you teaching Core French in multiple classrooms or at different schools?

Organization is key. It is always better to plan ahead and be over-prepared.

Create consistent structures and routines for students. Students like knowing what to expect, and establishing predictable structures from the beginning of the school year can reduce student anxiety and behavioural issues. Here are some areas to consider:

- Establish clear expectations for student behaviour, and plan to involve the students in decision making about classroom conduct. Ensure that consequences are firm, fair, progressive, and consistently enforced.
- Entry and exit routines should be practised from the start of the school year. These may vary depending on whether you or the students move about from class to class, but will help establish French as the language of communication.
- Decide how you will inform students of the day's plans. Will you write activities on the board, or on chart paper that can be taken from class to class?
- Ensure that students are familiar with routines for storing and distributing classroom materials and for submitting work. Set clear procedures so students know what to do if they've been away from class and need to catch up on missed work.

Establish methods to keep materials organized. Whether you have a dedicated classroom or move between multiple classrooms or schools, it is vital to be able to access class lists, seating plans, textbooks, worksheets, and resources quickly and efficiently. You might choose to use separate or colour-coded binders or folders for each class or each school. You may opt for bins, baskets, or trolleys to keep materials together and to facilitate moving from place to place if necessary.

Gather resources for each class ahead of time. Knowing what materials you will need for each class and having these ready can help your classes run smoothly, especially if you move between multiple classrooms or schools. Always do photocopying and other resource preparation before arriving in class to avoid leaving students unsupervised or interrupting office staff.

Build relationships and collaborate. Teaching in multiple classes or schools can provide opportunities to inform your own practice through collaboration with other teachers. You could team up with other teachers to create cross-curricular tasks and help students forge better connections between subject areas. It could be helpful to familiarize yourself with the homeroom teacher's structures and routines, and if these align with your teaching style and philosophy, consider incorporating some of them into your routines. Students will recognize the continuity and respond accordingly.

Stay informed of assemblies, class trips, and other events that may affect your classes, which helps you to be proactive. School administrative staff and custodians can be very helpful in this respect, so keeping open lines of communication with these important members of the school community is vital.

Get involved in the school community (or communities, if you teach at more than one site). It's well worth the effort to get involved in at least one school activity, sport, or club. Spending time with students outside of the Core French classroom is a unique opportunity for you to get to know each other better. If you teach in more than one school, the students in the respective schools may enjoy becoming penpals with each other to practise their French, and you have the advantage of knowing all the students involved.

Get to know the students. Learn their names and how to pronounce them within the first few days of the school year. Become familiar with their interests, their likes and dislikes, and their extra-curricular activities in order to find something in common upon which you can build a connection with each student – perhaps an interest in the same hockey team or a shared love of pets or movies. When meeting a student in the hall or in the yard, ask how her hockey game went the night before or where and when his next dance competition is taking place, using French as much as possible during the conversation.

It's important to be genuine and to be personal. I greet all my students at the door as they come into the classroom. I might say, "Bonjour Jake, j'aime tes cheveux aujourd'hui," or "Bonjour Sarah, quelle belle jupe que tu portes aujourd'hui," or I ask about a sports game that was played the night before . . . I make a point of referencing something personal about each student. This sets the tone for the class.

Secondary Core French teacher

Get to know students who may need additional support, such as students who have special needs and/or individual education plans (IEPs). Your special education resource team (SERT) colleagues can provide support and valuable insights on teaching strategies for reaching these students and creating opportunities for student success. Before the school year starts, find out which students have allergies or medical issues along with any procedures that accompany these conditions.

Share a sense of humour. Sometimes quirky, unplanned events happen in class. Smile and laugh with the students and don't be afraid to let your sense of humour show.

By smiling, being passionate about the French language, and having a sense of humour, I create a positive environment in my French classroom. It's incredible how liberating some laughter can be. My students know I enjoy a good joke.

Elementary Core French teacher

2. Are you looking for ways to motivate and engage students in learning French?

Research findings validate that motivation plays a critical role in learning. Following are suggestions for engaging Core French students in the learning process. These could be used to initiate professional dialogue.

DEMONSTRATE PROFESSIONALISM

- Demonstrate competency in oral and written French.
- Develop strong classroom management skills.
- Engage in professional learning activities (e.g., observing colleagues in their classes, reading and viewing resources, participating in discussion forums).
- Be professional in speech, manner, and dress.
- Attend language conferences and join subject-area organizations that promote French.

BUILD RAPPORT WITH STUDENTS

- Base the program on respect, and treat all students fairly.
- Plan varied, interesting, engaging, and appropriate lessons.
- Motivate students by incorporating their interests, needs, aspirations, and learning styles. Create surveys to gather this information.
- Show students you care about their progress by providing specific feedback and helping them set goals.
- Scaffold learning to ensure student success.

At our school, we use the Student Success model of really getting to know our students and giving them manageable tasks. This way, they build on small successes. We have many students who, when the bell rings, say, “Do we have to leave [French class] now?” They feel successful because they are aware of what they can do. In our department, we work together to create a program that is relevant and interesting for our students.

Secondary Core French teacher

ORGANIZE AUTHENTIC ACTIVITIES

- Organize a special event at least once a year for each class, such as a “Soupe aux pois” luncheon, a potluck luncheon of French Canadian recipes, Crêpe Day, a “Café au lait” class, or a French careers day.
- Invite French-speaking visitors to the classroom, such as other French teachers, official-language monitors/assistants, artists, parents, or students from French Immersion or secondary school French programs.
- Plan field trips to francophone communities.
- Organize penpals from francophone countries and regions.
- Set up email exchanges for students.
- Have students participate in a “Concours d’art oratoire” through Canadian Parents for French, or provide opportunities for informal speeches and debates.

- Organize exchanges for students to Quebec, France, or other francophone regions.
- Visit francophone schools or cultural centres in the region.
- Dine in a French restaurant, making sure to order and communicate only in French.
- Plan writing activities where students send letters or postcards to organizations in Ottawa, Quebec, or elsewhere to request information or free materials. (Older students could make phone calls to these organizations.)

INSPIRE THE STUDENTS

- Find the “star” in each student – that quality or characteristic that makes him or her special and unique.
- Celebrate all student successes, big and small.
- Announce good news stories related to the French program in the morning announcements, the school newsletter or website, or the local newspaper.
- Share with students the advantages of bilingualism.
- Discuss or have students explore career options and other possible future opportunities for students who have communication skills in French.
- Inform students of opportunities available to refine their French skills, such as through exchanges, jobs, co-op placements, and summer camps.
- Encourage students to enter national, provincial, or local contests for second language learners.
- Inform students of scholarships, bursaries, or grants for further study in French.
- Organize a French club at school.
- Have younger French students create a bag or box entitled “Mes trésors français” in which they keep projects, puppets, art, and games that they create at school. At the end of the year, organize a share-and-pair day when the students bring in their bags, share their treasures, and review French in small groups.

COMMUNICATE WITH STUDENTS' FAMILIES

- Make sure French is visible throughout the school so that families are aware of the French program every time they enter the building. Ensure that French is also visible at special events, such as concerts and assemblies.
- Send happy-grams or certificates of appreciation home to family members who have volunteered or assisted with the French program.
- Encourage family members to volunteer in the French program. They can listen to students count, read, sing, or tell stories in French; help with bulletin boards; help with fundraising for special events or outings; help host luncheons; chaperone excursions; and talk about their trips to francophone countries.

- Organize an open house night to celebrate “French in our School.”
- Create a newsletter to outline the highlights of the French program. Examples may include the benefits of learning French and career options for those with French skills.
- Telephone family members with a good news call when their children do something well.
- If family members help their children with their at-home French tasks, send them a quick thank-you note.

TAKE FRENCH INTO THE COMMUNITY

- Organize an evening to sing French seasonal songs with children in the neighborhood or in a seniors’ residence.
- Ask the local newspaper to photograph the students when you organize special events in French (“Carnaval,” Parents’ Night, “Concours d’art oratoire,” guest performers, or student plays, concerts, or air bands).
- If the community organizes a fall fair, winter festival, or parade, arrange to have the students sing or perform in French.
- Have the class read a story, present a play, or sing songs to students at a nearby school.
- Write a short article on the exceptional progress of a student or a class for the educational column of the local newspaper or for the local television station.
- Organize a display of students’ work to be shown at the board office or city hall.
- Have students create a video of songs or skits to show during community events.

Adapted with permission from Harvey, C. (2005), *100 Ways for Teachers to Motivate Students in French Second Language Programs*. AATF National Bulletin, 31(2), 31–33.

ENRICH THE FSL EXPERIENCE

The Core French teacher is key in promoting the benefits of learning French and the post-secondary opportunities available to work or study in French that this makes possible. Encouraging students to visit a francophone community and to continue studying French until secondary school graduation and beyond helps them understand the relevance of FSL and the applicability of their French skills beyond the classroom.

There are numerous opportunities for students to enrich their FSL education through visits and exchanges, particularly when they reach the intermediate and senior grades. Some examples include:

French for the Future/Français pour l’avenir

www.french-future.org

This site offers a multitude of opportunities, challenges, forums, and contests for students.

Canadian Education Exchange Foundation/Fondation Canadienne des échanges éducatifs

www.ceef.ca

The Canadian Education Exchange Foundation is a not-for-profit that organizes educational exchange programs for students and teachers via partnerships with governments and private agencies in many countries.

Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada/Société éducative de visites et d'échanges au Canada

<http://sevec.ca>

SEVEC is a national charitable organization that provides educational exchanges, trips, and forums for Canadian youth.

International Student Exchange – Ontario

www.iseontario.on.ca

This organization promotes student exchanges for one month during the summer, or for two or three months during the school year.

My Explore

www.myexplore.ca

This five-week government-sponsored bursary program enables students to study French language and culture in a university setting in Canada.

University of Ottawa and **Glendon College (York University)** are just two examples of Canadian universities that offer second language learning experiences for students.

www.uottawa.ca

www.glendon.yorku.ca

Rotary Club Youth Exchange Trips

<http://www.rotary.org/en/studentsandyouth/youthprograms/rotaryyouthexchange/Pages/ridefault.aspx>

Rotary Club community representatives can provide information about opportunities for students to participate in exchange trips around the world.

YMCA Summer Work Student Exchange

www.summer-work.com

This government-sponsored exchange program places students in a francophone setting for a summer work period.

3. Are you teaching in multiple grades and divisions?

Core French teachers often work with students in several grades across multiple divisions in the same day. They recognize the importance of understanding the different stages of physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development of students at each grade level. The Core French teacher is aware of and capitalizes on the characteristics of each developmental stage, while recognizing that these are generalizations that may not apply to all students.

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Core French teachers provide instruction and learning opportunities that engage students in age-appropriate cognitive tasks. Young students learn to use various sentence structures through modelling and reuse, whereas older students may benefit from a discussion of sentence syntax as well. By focusing on authentic learning activities, Core French teachers help students make connections between the classroom and life experiences. They encourage higher order thinking by providing open-ended tasks that require problem solving.

Students may typically be more advanced cognitively than linguistically in FSL. It is helpful to teach strategies so that even learners at the early stages of developing French skills are able to convey ideas that may be complex and abstract. Students can be encouraged to use the French language they know rather than constantly translating, and can support the meaning they are trying to convey by describing, providing examples, sketching, using actions, and miming. When the classroom atmosphere fosters risk-taking, students experiment with language and practise applying new structures rather than choosing the easiest possible message to communicate. By providing specific and timely feedback, Core French teachers help students build their French language skills and develop confidence in their ability to communicate.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Core French teachers can capitalize on the fact that developing language skills is a social activity. Whether communicating orally or in writing, students enjoy interacting with others. Keeping students engaged in the task and speaking French requires thoughtful scaffolding and careful planning.

Students at any age can be sensitive to criticism. Core French teachers are aware of the fact that expressing oneself in another language can be emotionally stressful, and they endeavour to help all students feel secure in the class.

Celebrating small successes, being patient, and listening well can go a long way to help students feel accepted and to develop positive behaviours. Speaking individually with students who are having difficulties can help reduce their stress. Taking this time to show concern is often reflected in the students' classroom performance and is an important element in maintaining a positive, caring, respectful environment.

All learners in the process of acquiring a second language have an invisible filter inside of them that has the potential to result in anxiety, stress, and lack of self-confidence. This invisible filter is theoretically called the affective filter, and it has an important role in the learning (or not) of another language.

McGrath (2011)

Adolescents are forging their own independent identity, which can sometimes lead to conflict at home, at school, and even with friends. The intensity of their emotions can raise the tone of these interpersonal interactions. Socially, adolescents are often very loyal to their peers, but can be insensitive to others outside their peer group; they need to develop empathy as they learn how to resolve conflict. Varying classroom activities to provide students with opportunities to work individually, in pairs, and in small groups can help them become accustomed to working cooperatively in different social groupings.

Low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can combine to 'raise' the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. In other words, when the filter is 'up' it impedes language acquisition.

R. Schütz (2008)

Adolescents can feel a strong desire for social acceptance. They may feel self-conscious and sometimes feel awkward pronouncing French vocabulary and speaking French in front of their peers. Rather than have one student speak while the others listen, the Core French teacher might ask a question in French, model a few possible responses, then ask students to discuss the answer in French in small groups or with a partner. This gives all students the opportunity to answer the question, present an opinion, and practise speaking French while the teacher circulates around the room, listening, encouraging, and joining into conversations spontaneously.

For further information, see the following resources:

Ontario Ministry of Education (2006). *A Guide to Effective Instruction in Literacy, Grades 4 to 6, Volume One*. http://eworkshop.on.ca/edu/resources/guides/Guide_Lit_456_Vol_1_Assessment.pdf

Department of Education, Newfoundland and Labrador. *The Adolescent Learner*. <http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/curriculum/guides/health/adolescence/learner.pdf>

ENGAGING STUDENTS

Planning engaging lessons maximizes motivation and positive behaviour, and sets the stage for effective learning. Students look forward to classes in which expectations are challenging but realistic, and activities are both enjoyable and meaningful.

Some ideas for engaging students:

- Create a positive, collaborative classroom climate in which learners are encouraged to experiment with language in a non-threatening, stress-free environment. Focus on proficiency rather than deficiency.
- Provide activities that stimulate students' curiosity. Find out their interests and differentiate your teaching accordingly. Plan a variety of activities that are challenging but not overwhelming, and set goals that are demanding but attainable.
- Enliven the French class by playing modern French music, watching French television and movies, or reading French newspapers, magazines, web pages, and other authentic texts.
- Arrange a class trip to a French concert or restaurant, or invite guest speakers. Focus on authentic activities.

- Use instructional methods that cater to different learning styles and multiple intelligences and that recognize cultural diversity. Incorporate music, drama, dance, journals, graphic organizers, and other media or tools. For specific strategies for engaging boys, see the following resources:
Me Read? No Way!/Moi, lire? Tu blagues! (2005)
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/meread/meread.pdf>
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/fre/document/brochure/meread/mereadf.pdf>
Me Read? And How!/Moi, lire? Et comment! (2009)
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/meRead_andHow.pdf
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/fre/curriculum/moiLireEtComment.pdf>
- Replace worksheets and drills that require little cognitive engagement with activities that promote thinking and communication of meaningful messages.
- Use pairs and small group work to maximize student talking time.
- Promote originality, creativity, and self-expression both orally and in writing.
- Emphasize interactive, communicative activities for oral and written French that are meaningful and relevant.
- Integrate the use of technology in the classroom, such as digital cameras, video recorders, the World Wide Web, slideshows, podcasts, and software programs that promote meaningful communication.

Adapted from <http://www.omlta.org/wpcontent/uploads/2011/09/CommunicationFall2011.pdf>

For more suggestions, visit the *On est capable!* series of FSL classroom videos.

Every student has something unique to offer. It is important to value each student's personal history and expressiveness. These puzzle pieces show how important each student is to the whole picture: the class.



The integration of technology, whenever possible, is a huge motivator for my students. In Grade 9, when I go to the electronic whiteboard, students are almost instantly more attentive as they are curious to see what I have created, found online, or am about to share with them. There are incredible and authentic video clips on the Internet which allow students to hear different people speaking French. A simple image, such as a restaurant scene, can spark student interest and initiate discussions and debates. Also, allow student choice as to how to complete and present assignments. I have students who have much experience with media software programs, and some of the products they have presented to me have been exemplary. I have had students include their parents and siblings as ‘guest stars’ in some of their movie making adventures, and at parent-teacher interviews, many parents mentioned how much fun and how much French they heard being spoken as their children worked on these assignments.

Secondary Core French teacher

CROSS-PANEL TRANSITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Core French teachers in the elementary and secondary panels each have an important role in helping students transition smoothly from Grade 8 to Grade 9. One of the most critical roles is advising on the choice of FSL courses. Some secondary school Core French teachers arrange to visit the feeder schools to talk about the different French courses students can take throughout secondary school and about post-secondary opportunities for students who continue to study French until graduation. It may be possible to arrange for students in Grades 6, 7, or 8 to visit a secondary school French class. By planning this visit early enough, students have time to ask questions and reflect before making course selections. In collaboration with the guidance department, Core French teachers can help students make informed choices.

Core French teachers who have opportunities to participate in cross-panel professional learning communities benefit by sharing information about programming, by learning from each other, and by planning activities involving students at both elementary and secondary school. Secondary school students could visit elementary classes to read to the students in French, to be discussion partners, or to lead a French fun day or share children’s stories or plays they have written.

Although classes of combined grades do provide challenges for teachers in managing the distinct content in different disciplines, there can be benefits for students both socially and academically.

Ontario Ministry of Education (2007), *Combined Grades: Strategies to Reach a Range of Learners in Kindergarten to Grade 6*.

4. Are you teaching combined grades?

Sometimes Core French classes are combined, resulting in a split-level class (e.g., Grade 9 Academic and Applied) or a split-grade class (e.g., Grade 7 and 8 Core French). In a combined class, students work towards the achievement of their grade- or level-specific curriculum expectations. When common “big ideas” or skills are involved, all students in the class can work together, but at other times, instruction can be tailored to each grade or level. Students can work together on the same themes or assignments, but assessment, feedback, evaluation, and reporting must be consistent with their respective level or grade of study.

In combined grade classrooms, it is essential to have a variety of strategies and tools that can be used as needed. The following resources provide excellent suggestions and strategies for teaching combined grades.

- **The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (2007). *What Works? Research into Practice (Monograph #9)*.**
This monograph presents effective instructional strategies for combined grade classrooms.
- **Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (2009). *Learning Together: Successful Teaching in Combined Grades*.**
This curriculum insert addresses the importance of building community in combined grade classrooms and what that community might sound and look like. It also includes instructional checklists and a sample lesson plan.
- **Ontario Ministry of Education (2007). *Combined Grades: Strategies to Reach a Range of Learners in Kindergarten to Grade 6*.**
This resource document presents strategies to support teachers and administrators in successfully managing combined grade classrooms in Kindergarten to Grade 6.

5. Are you hearing French being spoken by the students as much as you would like?

ENCOURAGING ORAL COMMUNICATION IN FRENCH

Students need ample opportunities to practise speaking and interacting in French. Provide lots of practice time for students to speak French with partners or in small groups, so that all students have a chance to speak and no individual is singled out. This approach also can be less intimidating than having one student answer a question while the entire class watches and listens.

When the students speak in French, be patient and refrain from interrupting to make corrections. When a student is answering a question or is expressing an opinion, allow time for the thinking process and vocabulary recall, and remember to listen for the message. Encourage students to monitor their own accuracy and self-correct. Be genuine in expressing appreciation when students speak French. Positive feedback builds their confidence to continue their efforts to speak in French.

Only when students are given a variety of opportunities to practise listening and speaking with others can they develop [oral proficiency] ... the affective filter that prevents many students from risking a wrong answer in front of the whole class is offset, and a student who isn't sure can immediately hear the correct response modelled in the team where s/he can rehearse the answer with little embarrassment.

High (1993)

PROVIDING APPROPRIATE MODELS AND PROMPTS

Providing students with multiple opportunities to hear spoken French also helps them understand what it sounds like and gives them a model to follow. Speak in French with the students as much as possible, first providing a model for the desired oral communication, then letting them try with a partner. Have them listen to French as spoken authentically on the radio or television and invite guest speakers from the community who speak French.

To make explicit various strategies that help students improve their interactions in French, create anchor charts together.

Example

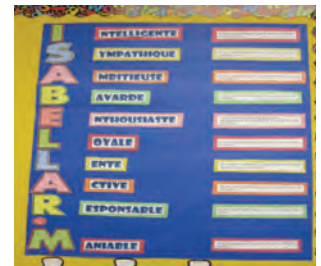
Quelques stratégies pour parler en français

- Utilise les gestes et les actions.
- Écoute et observe attentivement.
- Écoute les personnes qui parlent français.
- Utilise les mots-amis.
- Infère les idées.
- Utilise des images.
- Utilise les mots dans la question.

Adapted from *On est capable!*

Provide visual references to aid the students' oral communication, such as attaching French labels to objects or posting expressions that are pertinent to daily expression. When teaching French in multiple classrooms, label objects and post materials, after a conversation with the classroom teacher.

These samples of student work showcase their individual creativity and can be used as student-created visual references.



6. Are you seeking tips on classroom management?

Effective classroom management has a number of dimensions. A significant part of successful classroom management centres on good instructional practices, which include maintaining high expectations for student achievement and standards for student behaviour, as well as engaging them as active participants in their learning.

- Establish that French will be the language of communication by greeting students *en français* and by asking questions about their interests at the appropriate level of complexity in French.
- Establish routines for handling materials and organize materials so that lessons proceed quickly.
- Involve students in creating “Les normes pour la classe.” Focus students on desired behaviour. Be clear when reminding students of expected behaviour: “Je vous demande de parler plus tranquillement...” or “Je m’attends que vous terminiez ceci maintenant.” Ask students to rephrase to show that they understand: “Dis-moi ce que tu dois faire maintenant.”
- Obtain full attention of all students before starting the lesson. Establish routines so that excessive time is not taken during transitions at the beginning of classes and between activities.
- Explicitly state the learning goal for the lesson and involve students in the co-construction of success criteria so they understand what they are expected to know and be able to do by the end of the lesson.
- Use the gradual release model and differentiate instruction so that all students are well prepared to work independently.
- Begin interactive activities with students working in pairs on very short, focused tasks (1 minute or less). Gradually increase the length and complexity of the tasks as well as the size of the groups. Establish routines for pairing up quickly.
- As students work in pairs, groups, or individually, circulate, monitor progress, provide descriptive feedback, conference, or teach mini-lessons to small groups.
- Maintain student engagement by varying activities, providing choice, focusing on relevance, and encouraging student input.
- Ask students to rephrase task instructions to check that they have a clear understanding of how to proceed.
- Refocus inattentive students as you teach to let them know you care that they are involved in the lesson; for example: “Tu vois, *Kim*, on peut poser plusieurs questions, par exemple ...”
- Draw the lesson to a close by providing time to reflect on progress and set next steps.

PLAN THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND ROUTINES

Core French teachers can consider the following suggestions to help the students settle more quickly into a routine as they start their first day of French.

- Before the first day of school, visit the classroom(s) to get a feel for the physical space (e.g., how the furniture is set up). The arrangement of the room can indicate whether it may be better to start with an activity in pairs, small groups, or a circle.
- Speak with other teachers who also use the room to establish shared display space, storage space, and table configurations.
- Determine the time of day the students will be coming in to French class and whether this is their first class of the day or one of their later classes.
- Establish entry and exit routines as well as procedures for distributing and collecting materials.

ACTIVATE PRIOR LEARNING – BECOME ACQUAINTED

On the first day of class, asking students questions about themselves can help you assess their French language proficiency levels as you get to know them. Providing a model of a few questions and answers helps students recall the necessary language structures while allowing them to see the teacher as a real person with hobbies and interests. It may be necessary to use some English but it is important to show students that French will be the language of communication in class and that by paying close attention, they will be able to understand what is being said.

Some sample activities to help you and your students get to know each other while activating prior learning include:

- **Think–Pair–Share:** Provide students with topics to discuss in pairs. Let them know they have (for example) two minutes to interview each other about their interests and activities. Use an hourglass, egg timer, or electronic countdown to keep track of time. Pairs can then report to the class or share with another pair.
- **Placemat:** A placemat is a large piece of paper divided into sections. In the centre section, write a topic, such as favourite hobbies, movies seen over the summer, books read over the summer, or summer trips. Students respond individually to the topic prompt, then look for similarities. Groups can report to the class or share with another group. Post the placemats and refer to them as prompts and starters for the following week.

ESTABLISH CLASSROOM NORMS AND ROUTINES

The first few days in Core French class are important for setting the tone, establishing mutual respect, and creating a shared learning environment. Students can help develop group norms, but creating a list of rules might best be done later in the week, if needed. Establishing a long list of rules in the first week can be alienating and a distraction from learning French.

Establishing simple entry routines also sets a positive tone in the classroom and helps students to think in French. These routines might include discussing a focus question with a partner, listening to a French song, or watching a French music video or advertisement. Exit routines might include providing a time to reflect and consolidate learning, to focus on progress made, and to identify next steps.

Examples of engaging interaction Core French teachers can use to establish a positive classroom tone:

- ***Dans cette classe, le respect est très important.*** Using the word RESPECT, create an acrostic with the students to set an appropriate tone for the classroom.
- ***Les “E” d’excellence – égalité, écouter, élargir la connaissance, et être positif et énergique.*** Depending on their level of proficiency, students generate some appropriate words and explain how they fit with the theme.



Suggestions for Further Reading

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