

A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers

MODULE 5

Assessment and Evaluation



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Context

This module is intended to support elementary and secondary Core French teachers in promoting students' success through effective and constructive assessment and evaluation of their learning. It draws on relevant research and the experiences of Core French teachers, and provides suggestions for planning assessment and evaluation, as well as for reflection on practice.

Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario's Schools (2010) guides all assessment and evaluation practices. Core French teachers plan and assess based on the Ontario French as a Second Language curriculum and the achievement chart. Core French teachers assess and reflect on students' learning on a daily basis to inform and guide their practice. Through frequent assessment, they determine what their students know, understand, and can do. By listening to students' daily oral production and interactions, and to their questions and answers, by reading their written work, and by observing and conferencing with them, teachers gather evidence of students learning so they can adjust their instruction to help students achieve learning goals.

How students feel about themselves as learners and whether they enjoy learning and strive for excellence are closely related to their teachers' professional skills both in differentiating instruction and assessment and in helping students understand how they can improve. Teachers create environments in which all students feel valued and confident and have the courage to take risks and make mistakes.

Growing Success p. 8

Assessment is the process of gathering student data from a variety of sources and at various points to reflect how a student is achieving the expected learning. Core French teachers realize the positive impact that assessment has on student understanding and achievement, and they use a variety of assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning strategies.

Evaluation is the process of judging work against a standard. Evaluation should only occur after there have been ample opportunities for students to practise, receive feedback, and improve their knowledge and skills.

As stated in *Growing Success*, learning skills should not be considered in the determination of a grade or mark. Core French teachers assess students' learning skills separately from their achievement in French.

Planning with the End in Mind

To be purposeful, assessment and evaluation must be planned and be part of the instructional process. Core French teachers plan instruction and assessment simultaneously as part of a program designed to allow all students to succeed in learning French. Using curriculum expectations and the achievement chart as a basis for planning, Core French teachers consider their students' strengths, needs, readiness, learning styles and interests (*Learning for All*, 2011). Richard Dufour writes about the shift between a professional focus on *teaching* and a professional focus on *learning*. In his 2004 article on professional learning communities, he poses three critical questions for teachers to consider:

See Planning Assessment with Instruction video series *Ontario Ministry of Education* (2012).

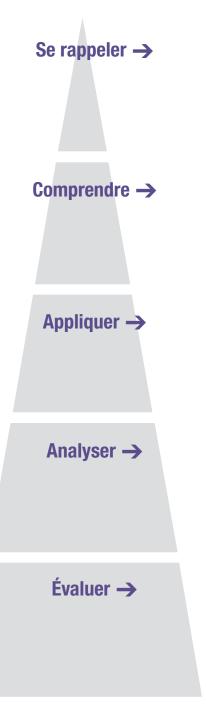
- → What do we want each student to learn?
- → How will we know when each student has learned it?
- → How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?

When Core French teachers think about achievement, they reflect on the importance of students' ability to interact in French in the context of real-world situations. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR) synthesizes research about second language learning and teaching, with a focus on increasing students' ability to communicate in a second language. Core French teachers design communicative and action-oriented tasks, sustain differentiated instruction through the planning and assessment of appropriate student-centred performance tasks, and continue to build on their reflective practices.

See Module 3: *The Action-Oriented Approach* in A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers.

In planning both instruction and assessment, Core French teachers keep in mind the importance of developing higher order thinking skills. Embedded in their planning are effective questioning, relevant tasks, and self-assessment to help students develop and refine their critical thinking skills. The following examples based on Bloom's taxonomy support Core French teachers in reflecting on the types of questions they pose as part of their teaching and assessment practices. Core French teachers guide students' thinking from the first level (Se rappeler) to the subsequent levels by using powerful verbs.

Questions to Build Students' Critical Thinking Skills



Créer →

Habiletés de la pensée: reconnaître, identifier

- · Identifier les objets dans l'illustration.
- Encercler ...
- Répondre aux questions: Qu'est-ce que c'est? Qui? Où? Quand? Combien?
- Vrai ou faux?
- Faire une présentation orale mémorisée.

Habiletés de la pensée: reformuler, expliquer, décrire, associer, différencier

- Que veut dire ...?
- Quelle est la différence entre ...?
- Donner un exemple de ...
- Choisir la meilleure définition de ...
- Discuter l'idée principale.

Habiletés de la pensée: résoudre un problème, classer, choisir, sélectionner, transférer, faire des hypothèses, établir des liens

- Discuter des solutions aux problèmes ...
- · Qu'arriverait-il si ... et pourquoi?
- · Discuter des liens possibles avec ...
- En s'inspirant du modèle, faire une autre ...
- Prendre part dans un jeu de rôle.

Habiletés de la pensée: tirer des conclusions, raisonner de façon critique, inférer

- Expliquer pourquoi ...
- Expliquer le but de ...
- Faire une comparaison entre ...
- Expliquer ce qui s'était passé quand ...
- Discuter les problèmes avec ...

Habiletés de la pensée: juger, critiquer, choisir, apprécier

- Que feriez-vous ...?
- À votre avis ...
- Convaincre ...
- Défendre votre position à propos de ...
- · Donner de la rétroaction ...

Habiletés de la pensée: prédire, développer une idée, supposer, réfléchir à un sujet

- Suggérer une autre façon de ...
- Proposer une nouvelle ...
- Imaginer comment ...
- Décider et expliquer comment améliorer ...
- Quels changements proposez-vous ...?

Planning a Balance of Assessments

Core French teachers use the Ontario Core French curriculum to plan instruction and assessment, ensuring that students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning. It is important that teachers plan and track the assessment opportunities they provide during each learning cycle so that over time, they address all categories of the achievement chart.

Core French teachers integrate the teaching and assessment of all curriculum strands, including how students respond to aural and written texts and interact orally and in writing. Assessment tasks that are meaningful for students and through which they demonstrate what they can do in French are open-ended and involve them in constructing a response. Although assessment methods such as multiple choice and fill-in-the-blanks provide some information about their progress, students can perform well on such tests without being able to apply their French language skills effectively in communicative situations.

Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- Examines overall expectations to identify what students need to know, understand, and be able to do.
- Clusters specific curriculum expectations to design action-oriented tasks.
- Designs scaffolded learning experiences that support students in achieving success.
- Makes adjustments to their instruction based on assessment data.
- Implements strategies to encourage students to develop self-monitoring and metacognitive skills.

Assessment for Learning

Assessment *for* learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.

Assessment Reform Group (2002), p. 2

Assessment *for* learning is both diagnostic and formative and is used by students and teachers to improve program planning and achievement.

Diagnostic assessment usually occurs before instruction begins so that teachers can plan instruction and assessment based on what students already know and can do with respect to the knowledge and skills identified in the expectations, students' readiness to learn new knowledge and skills, and their interests and learning preferences. Through diagnostic assessment, Core French teachers are able to differentiate instruction and assessment to support student success.

Formative assessment is ongoing and occurs during instruction to monitor students' progress towards achieving the learning goals. Core French teachers provide timely and specific descriptive feedback to students, scaffold next steps, and differentiate instruction and assessment in response to student needs.

Learning Goals

Learning goals clearly identify what students are expected to know and be able to do, in language that students can readily understand. Teachers develop learning goals based on curriculum expectations and share them with students at or near the beginning of a cycle of learning.

Growing Success, p. 33

Core French teachers use learning goals to clarify for students the purpose of what they are learning, and as a guide for differentiating instruction. Learning goals may be for a lesson or for a period of instruction, and should be regularly reviewed with students. Learning goals are created by the teacher and shared with the class at the beginning of the instructional cycle.

Core French teachers write the learning goal in student-friendly language. The example learning goal below is based on 'stating an opinion.' Note how the language could change depending on the grade level and experiences of the students, as well as the vocabulary the teacher has modelled.

Junior grades: Je peux dire ce que je préfère et pourquoi.

Intermediate grades: *Je peux expliquer ce que je préfère et pourquoi, en ajoutant des détails importants.*

Senior grades: *Je peux justifier mes préférences*, et développer un argument pour convaincre les autres.

Core French teachers help students to learn the value of setting their own goals and regulating their own learning, and to recognize the powerful effect this process has on their present and future achievement.

Deconstructing the Learning Goal through Questioning

Core French teachers ensure that all students have a clear understanding of what they will be learning and why by deconstructing the learning goal. Through questioning, Core French teachers gains insight into the students' knowledge and skills, which informs further instruction. Core French teachers revisit the questions as they gather evidence throughout the learning cycle.

Examples:

Learning Goal: Nous pouvons trouver l'idée principale dans un texte.

- → Quelle est la différence entre le titre d'un texte et l'idée principale?
- → D'habitude, quand est-ce que l'auteur introduit l'idée principale?
- → Que savons-nous du texte? (l'auteur, le format, le genre, l'origine, l'intention)

Learning Goal: *Nous pouvons distinguer les détails importants dans un texte.*

- → Lisons le titre. Qu'est-ce que nous savons déjà de ce sujet?
- → Comment le texte est-il organisé?
- → Quels autres stratégies connaissez-vous pour trouver l'idée principale?
- → Comment est-ce que ces stratégies nous aident à apprendre le français?

Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- · Determines key learnings based on the curriculum expectations for the grade.
- · Identifies incremental steps to build students' knowledge and skills.
- · Writes the learning goals in French in student-friendly language.
- · Uses verbs that describe specific and observable actions.
- · Talks with students in French to reach a common understanding of the learning goal.
- Introduces new vocabulary and structures through discussion and explicit instruction.
- Posts the learning goals and make them available to students.
- Determines the supports and strategies students require to understand and achieve the learning goals.
- Clarifies and reviews the learning goals during instruction.
- Provides students with opportunities to reflect on their progress, next steps, and strategies.

Success Criteria

Success criteria are linked to clear, well-understood learning goals. Studies show that students learn better when a clear goal is set and when they co-construct the success criteria with the teacher. When students help create the criteria, they have a clearer understanding of what they are expected to learn and how they will know if they are successful. Success criteria describe, from the students' perspective, what successful attainment of a learning goal looks like, and provide a point of reference for students to check in with the teacher along the way. Core French teachers use a variety of approaches to support students through the process of co-constructing success criteria in French.

I wanted to co-create success criteria for the learning goal, « Je peux utiliser des strategies différentes pour comprendre mon partenaire. » I began by creating an anchor chart of strategies with the students. I suggested two strategies: « J'utilise les objets » et « Je cherche les mots amis. » Students observed two conversations and identified when they noticed these strategies being used. I asked the students to note any other comprehension strategies they observed during another conversation. The class agreed that use of gestures and asking questions (« J'utilise les actions » and « Je pose les questions supplémentaires ») were important strategies. We added these strategies to the anchor chart. Then I co-constructed success criteria with the students using the anchor chart.

Junior Core French teacher

It is important that students be involved in the development of assessment criteria so that they understand what a "quality demonstration" looks like and so that they "own" the results.

DI Educator's Package, 2010

Success criteria are:

- → Clear, detailed, and focused descriptions of student performance.
- → Modelled, used, and referred to over time.
- → Co-constructed in French in student-friendly language.
- → Used by students and teachers to provide descriptive feedback and self- and peer-assessment opportunities.
- → Reviewed and revised regularly.

Setting clear targets for student learning involves more than posting an instructional goal for students to see. It also requires elaboration of the criteria by which student work will be judged.

Shepard et al. (2005)

Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- Communicates to students a clear understanding of a high level of performance.
- Provides samples of quality work for students to analyze.
- Creates success criteria with students in French.
- Posts or provides a handout with success criteria for students' reference.
- Provides and/or models sentence prompts for students.
- Uses vocabulary and structures that are familiar to students.
- Poses leading questions to prompt students.

Descriptive Feedback

Feedback provides students with information about their performance. The most powerful feedback is descriptive since it is focused, precise, and designed specifically to improve student learning. Descriptive feedback leads students to reflect on their progress and the strategies they can use for improvement during the instructional cycle.

Descriptive feedback is presented in positive, constructive statements that answer three questions:

- → What has the student done well?
- → What does the student need to improve?
- → What steps does the student need to take to improve?

Core French teachers link descriptive feedback to the established success criteria to make it more meaningful to the learning process. When giving feedback, Core French teachers use the familiar language of the co-created success criteria to describe what students have done well and how they can improve.

Descriptive feedback is most effective when given in a timely fashion. Students need to receive the feedback while they are engaged in a task so that they can improve their work, and then can apply the feedback in a similar learning situation or task.

Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- Refers to and reuses the language of success criteria when giving descriptive feedback.
- · Tracks feedback (e.g., in a portfolio, journal or log).
- Asks students to refer to previous feedback at specific times.
- Varies the format of the feedback (e.g., oral, written, conferences with individuals or groups, whole-class feedback).
- Varies how feedback is delivered (e.g., orally or in writing).
- Plans frequent assessment opportunities for informing instruction (e.g., check-ins, traffic lights, thumbs up, exit questions or passes).
- Provides multiple opportunities for students to practise their skills individually and in a variety
 of groupings.
- Encourages students to review learning goals and success criteria.

Ongoing descriptive feedback linked specifically to the learning goals and success criteria is a powerful tool for improving student learning and is fundamental to building a culture of learning within the classroom.

Growing Success, p. 34

Assessment as Learning

Assessment *as* learning focuses on the explicit fostering of students' capacity over time to be their own best assessors, but teachers need to start by presenting and modelling external, structured opportunities for students to assess themselves.

Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (2006)

Research shows that including students in the assessment process helps them to take responsibility for their own learning. Creating a classroom environment where students feel safe to take risks in using the language and in their learning builds their confidence. Involving Core French students in goal setting, co-constructing success criteria, and thinking about their own learning benefits students not only in French language learning, but also in other aspects of their learning.

Core French teachers provide class time for students to peer-assess and self-assess. Peer and self-assessment shift the focus from the teacher being the sole provider of feedback to one that includes students, which helps to place the responsibility for learning with the students. Self-assessment is a process that students use to think about their learning and to adjust their work to meet the success criteria before they complete the task.

Core French teachers model the metacognitive and feedback process so that students see and hear what it is like to reflect on and express their thinking about their learning. Peer and self-assessment serve to improve students' work and to support them in monitoring their progress toward learning goals.

Core French students who are engaged in self-assessment:

- → Can articulate the learning goal in their own words in French.
- → Co-construct success criteria with the teacher.
- → Understand what success looks and sounds like.
- → Have access to oral and written samples that show quality work.
- → Identify language or structures they need for communicating.
- → Apply feedback they receive.
- → Monitor their learning.
- → Collect evidence of their own learning (e.g., language portfolio, recordings, projects).
- → Present evidence of learning to others (e.g., teacher, peers, family)
- → Provide descriptive feedback to their peers.

See Module 6: Learner Autonomy and Metacognition in a Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers.

I wanted the students in my Core French classes to think about their own learning, so I tried a variety of strategies, using French, but found the students were limited in their ability to fully express themselves in French. My attempts resulted in a number of students being off-task and in tasks that were not successful. When I spoke to a colleague, she suggested the gradual release model, where initially students would require more guidance from the teacher in order to acquire the key vocabulary, but eventually they could work independently to do their own self-reflection.

I started by reviewing the success criteria that we co-created in French. I used pictures and gestures to help students put the language into context. This helped the students to learn the key vocabulary and to review the steps necessary to be successful in the task. I asked students to work in partners first and then to try a simple self-assessment. I was happy to see how far they had come – and in French!

Grades 7 and 8 Core French teacher

Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- Provides tracking systems, such as checklists, so students can see their progress and next steps.
- Makes success criteria accessible to students (e.g., post in classroom, copy in student notebook).
- Shows and discusses samples of student work that reflect the success criteria.
- Creates an environment where students discuss and self- and peer-assess their learning using French.
- Conferences with students in groups or individually, as required.
- Provides a reflection journal and/or reflective questions for student response.
- Has students collect samples of their work in a portfolio.

Sample Self-Assessment Tool

The following example states specific, observable behaviours that describe what learning is expected. It also invites students to reflect on what they did well and steps or strategies for improvement. The example includes "look fors" during a survey activity. After learning about some francophone cultural activities as a whole class, students were asked to survey their classmates and participate in brief conversations to learn about each other's cultural activities, and record their findings.

Nom de l'élève		
Date	Activité (Je discute les activités culturelles préférées de la classe)	
Critère	Oui	Non
Je pose une variété de questions.		
Je comprends les réponses données.		
Je pose des questions supplémentaires.		
Je vérifie ma compréhension avec chaque partenaire.		
Je suis fier/fière de moi parce que:		
Mes prochaines étapes sont:		

Assessment of Learning

Assessment of learning is the assessment that becomes public and results in statements or symbols about how well students are learning. It often contributes to pivotal decisions that will affect students' futures.

Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (2006)

Assessment *of* learning is summative and occurs at or near the end of a period of learning. The information from assessment *of* learning is used by Core French teachers to make judgments about the quality of students' learning based on established criteria, to assign a mark to their learning, and to support the communication of information about achievement to students, parents, teachers, and others.

According to *Growing Success* (2010), the evaluation of student learning is the teacher's responsibility and must not include the judgment of the student or of the student's peers. Core French teachers collect evidence of student achievement in a variety of ways, such as observations, conversations, tests, exams, and rich performance tasks.

Core French teachers recognize the importance of performance in second language learning. Through the action-oriented approach, Core French teachers create purposeful performance tasks that are relevant and interesting, and require students to use their language skills in authentic contexts to accomplish a tangible result. Well-constructed performance tasks are open-ended and allow for a range of student performance. Core French teachers scaffold both learning and language in order to support student success. When students understand what a high level of performance looks like, they are more likely to achieve that level. Core French teachers provide samples of student work to review with the class.

See Module 3: *The Action-Oriented Approach* in a Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French

Practical Tips

The Core French teacher:

- Assesses students in a variety of situations (e.g., conversations, observations, products).
- · Supports students by providing samples of quality work.
- · Collects evidence of student learning over time.
- Uses multiple sources for assessment of learning, including purposeful performance tasks.
- Uses evaluation tools that correlate students' performances/demonstrations of their learning with achievement of the learning goals (e.g., rubrics, checklists, success criteria, scoring guides for discussions or observations).

Reflective Practice

- ✓ I plan assessment concurrently with instruction.
- My assessments and evaluations over the course of an instructional unit reflect an appropriate balance across the achievement chart categories.
- My assessments and evaluations reflect an appropriate balance across the Core French curriculum strands.
- My instruction and assessment practices are informed by students' interests, learning styles, and readiness.
- ✓ I involve students in assessing, setting goals, and improving upon their learning.
- ✓ I model assessment language and scaffold assessment discussions in French.
- ✓ I design assessment tasks that are purposeful, interesting, and relevant for students.
- ✓ I design assessment tasks that include communicative language skills in all strands of the Core French curriculum.
- I provide individual descriptive feedback that helps students improve their learning and work prior to evaluation.
- ✓ I work with small groups of students to support them in using feedback to improve their learning.
- ✓ I evaluate student achievement after students have received feedback and have had multiple opportunities to practise.
- ✓ I ensure through my assessment practices that students are aware of what they can do.
- I assist students in collecting evidence of their learning and provide opportunities for them to share this with family.
- I communicate regularly with parents, sharing constructive feedback on their child's progress in learning and in using French.

Questions for Reflection

- ✓ How do I scaffold learning so that students are able to articulate learning goals, co-construct success criteria, and discuss feedback, in French?
- How do I use the gradual release of responsibility model in my assessment practices to move students toward independence?
- ✓ What strategies do I use to monitor individual student progress on a regular basis?
- ✓ What strategies do I use so that students benefit from self- and peer assessment?
- ✓ What strategies do I use to provide descriptive feedback while students are engaged in a task?
- ✓ How do I promote higher order thinking through assessment tasks?
- ✓ How do I collaborate with other Core French teachers in order to refine my assessment practices (e.g., moderating student work, reviewing summative tasks)?

Suggestions for Further Reading

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