

FROM AWARENESS to ACTION

Reflections of the FSL
Provincial Principal Focus Group

VIEWER'S GUIDE



From Awareness to Action: Reflections of the FSL Provincial Principal Focus Group was developed to support principals and vice-principals in strengthening French as a Second Language (FSL). The reflections in this video emphasize how *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12* (Framework) can be applied in a practical way by school administrators. These video presentations were filmed at an FSL Principal Focus Group session held in Toronto in February 2014.

Principals and vice-principals play a key role in FSL. As a result, the FSL Principal Focus Group was created by the Ministry of Education in 2013 to provide a forum for feedback on how to best support school administrators.

This viewer's guide provides a synopsis of the key ideas presented in the video, as well as practical tips, hyperlinks to further reading, and questions for reflection. Together with the video, the guide allows school administrators to become more familiar with the Framework and reflect on the engagement of stakeholders in its implementation.

The video and questions for reflection may be used as part of a presentation at a school administrator meeting to engage participants in a dialogue regarding FSL and the role of the school administrator as an instructional leader.

“School leadership acts as a catalyst without which other good things are quite unlikely to happen.”

Leithwood et al., 2004



Viewers of this resource may also be interested in [FSL for School Administrators: From Awareness to Action](#) a series also found on the Transforming FSL website.

This video consists of four segments organized by topic. Segment 1 presents group discussions with an overview of the topics, while segments 2, 3 and 4 focus on providing in-depth individual reflections on each topic.

SEGMENT 1

Setting the Context

The first segment sets the context for the FSL Focus Group reflections and is divided into the following four short parts, each of which may be viewed separately.

Part A: Heightening Awareness of FSL Programs and Benefits

Part B: Instructional Leadership in the Context of FSL

Part C: Supporting All Students in FSL

Part D: The Framework for FSL as a Catalyst for Discussion

The members of the FSL Principal Focus Group reflect on actions that principals and vice-principals may take to respond to the call of action laid out in the Framework. The discussion is prompted by a 2010 article entitled “[The Big Ideas Behind Whole System Reform](#)” by Michael Fullan.

School administrators wishing to lead similar discussions may find the following to be of interest:

Ontario Ministry of Education (March 2014). “[Calling Upon Other Language Skills to Enhance Second Language Learning](#).” What Works? Research into Practice 51.

Ontario Ministry of Education (November 2013). “[Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: Towards Equity and Inclusivity in Ontario Schools](#).” Capacity Building Series 35.

Ontario Ministry of Education (January 2014). “[Making Better use of Research](#).” *Supporting the Ontario Leadership Strategy/Principals Want to Know #25*.

Practical Tip

At a staff meeting of all educators, consider beginning the discussion with an article that is not directly related to FSL, but is read in the context of FSL. This not only promotes inclusiveness, but gives all educators an entry point into the dialogue.



QUESTIONS for REFLECTION

How can I continue to promote a culture that places a high value on learning FSL?

How can I support FSL educators in their professional learning?

What conditions need to exist in order to ensure that students with special education needs can experience success in FSL?

SEGMENT 2

Heightening Awareness of FSL Programs and Benefits

In the second segment, the members of the FSL Principal Focus Group look more closely at Strategic Focus Area 1 of the Framework, “Heightening Awareness of FSL Programs and Benefits” (p. 14). The group also expands on the practical applications the document offers principals and vice-principals. It is divided into two parts:

Part A: Practical Ideas to Increase the Profile of FSL in Schools

Part B: Parents and Communities as Partners in FSL

The FSL Principal Focus Group members discuss how they have raised the profile of FSL in their own schools, highlighting the fact that communication with parents is a key element. Another perspective on the importance of communicating with parents can be found in Lorna Costantini’s article, “[Parent Engagement: Building trust between families and school](#)” in the Summer 2014 issue of *Education Canada*. In the article, the author outlines several “lessons learned” concerning parent engagement.

“The number one way to engage parents is for you to personally believe that it works and makes a difference in the learning of your students.”

Costantini, Lorna, “Parent Engagement Building trust between families and school”, *Education Canada*, Summer 2014.

Practical Tip

If parents who do not speak French have questions regarding how to help their children in FSL, principals and vice-principals may wish to refer them to the Frequently Asked Questions section of the Framework (p. 26). This section speaks directly to this question in several instances and provides a link to an online resource, The FSL Toolbox, which offers a variety of information for parents in this context.



QUESTIONS for REFLECTION

How can I further engage community partners in FSL?

What steps can I take today that will increase the visibility of FSL in my school?

SEGMENT 3

Instructional Leadership in the Context of FSL

The third segment presents the FSL Principal Focus Group members' reflections on instructional leadership in the context of FSL and looks more closely at Strategic Focus Area 5 of the Framework, "Implementing Effective Practices in Planning, Teaching and Assessment" (p. 17–18). It is divided into four parts:

Part A: Building Courage

Part B: Collaboration

Part C: Moderated Marking

Part D: Professional Resources

The FSL Principal Focus Group members highlight effective professional learning models in FSL to support principals and vice-principals in the role of instructional leader. One of the key elements discussed is the power of principals' participation in professional learning, regardless of whether they have an FSL background. Affirmation and feedback, in addition to creating a supportive structure, are means by which principals and vice-principals support FSL educators in their professional learning.

As stated in John Hattie's 2009 book, *Visible Learning*, "It is school leaders who promote challenging goals and establish safe environments for teachers to critique, question, and support other teachers to reach these goals together that have the most effect on student outcomes" (p. 83). Hattie states that based on meta-analyses of data, it is instructional leaders, rather than transformational leaders, who have the greatest impact on student outcomes.

The following article regarding instructional leadership may be of interest to principals and vice-principals:

Ontario Ministry of Education (Spring 2013). "[Know thy Impact: Teaching, Learning and Leading \(An Interview with John Hattie\)](#)." *In Conversation*, IV (2).

"When teachers work together, led by an instructionally-focused principal, they are much more successful than when they work alone."

Fullan, Michael (Summer 2010), "The Big Ideas behind Whole System Reform"

Practical Tip

During a collaborative inquiry involving FSL educators, consider participating with staff in developing the inquiry question and the co-learning process.



QUESTIONS for REFLECTION

**How might I include all educators in collaborative professional learning?
In what ways can I foster a culture of risk taking in learning for both students and staff?**

SEGMENT 4

FSL Programs are for All Students

In this segment, the FSL Principal Focus Group members examine in more detail the guiding principle, “FSL Programs are for All Students” along with Strategic Focus Area 4 in the Framework, “Supporting All Students” (p. 16–17). The segment is divided into three parts:

Part A: Levelling the Playing Field for All Students: The Introduction of a Second Language

Part B: English Language Learners in the Context of FSL

Part C: Individual Education Plans and the Role of the Principal

The members of the FSL Principal Focus Group reflect on the importance of including all students in FSL programs, and the benefits related to learning a second language. *The Capacity Building Series* monograph (November 2013) “[Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: Towards Equity and Inclusivity in Ontario Schools](#)” discusses the mindset of culturally responsive educators.

The monograph cites the work of Ladson-Billings and Dei and of Portelli, Vibert, and Shields to highlight the importance of reflecting on the inclusion of students with special education needs: “The perceptions we hold of students’ abilities have a significant impact on student achievement and well-being. However, historically, some social identities — particularly those linked with disabilities or intersecting with race and low socio-economic status — have been deemed as contributing to notions of ‘at-risk-ness’ in students.” In the context of FSL, this quote may resonate when reflecting on the participation of students with special education needs in FSL classes.

Practical Tip

When planning a meeting with guidance counsellors, consider exploring alternatives to substitutions for Core French to support the participation of all students.



QUESTION for REFLECTION

How can I promote the inclusion of all students in FSL?

As principals and vice-principals reflect on ways to strengthen FSL, it is hoped that viewing the reflections in this initiative will be a catalyst for discussion with staff.

References and Additional Reading

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