

FSL for School Administrators

FROM AWARENESS to ACTION

From Awareness to Action is a professional learning publication written by the Provincial Principal Focus Group members to support school administrators in the strengthening of French as a Second Language.



ISSUE 6 Supporting English Language Learners and Students with Special Education Needs in FSL

IN THIS ISSUE

The focus is on highlighting strategies that support the participation and engagement of English language learners and students with special education needs in FSL.

A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12 embraces the concept that all students can learn French as a second language. *Learning For All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12* reminds us that with timely and tiered supports, all students can learn. What is essential to remember regarding English language learners (ELLs) and students with special education needs is that they have many strengths. These students have learned strategies that assist them in developing knowledge and skills across the curriculum. By drawing on these, teachers can program appropriately.

Strategies for Supporting All Students in FSL

Learning for All highlights the fact that there are educational approaches that can benefit all students. In any given classroom, students may demonstrate a wide range of strengths and needs. Teachers create programs that respond to this diversity, often through the use of authentic tasks, technology, and individual student learning goals. Furthermore, there is a shift towards transforming practice to think beyond rote-based, repetitious tasks. In this way, students' level of interest and engagement increases, as does their commitment to learning and communicating in French.

English Language Learners

The elementary and secondary curriculum documents for FSL articulate that “English language learners ... bring a rich diversity of background knowledge and experience to the classroom” (p. 38, elementary curriculum document; p. 41, secondary). At the beginning, some ELLs may require additional support, as they often arrive in an Ontario school after the FSL entry point. For those students, there are many strategies to consider in order to make appropriate accommodations and/or modifications to instruction and assessment.



For ELLs who are beginning to learn another language, promoting the students' use of their first language has been shown to increase their confidence and assist them with their communication skills. Since most ELLs have an age-appropriate proficiency in their first language, the transfer of one language system to another builds on skills already learned. ELLs often do very well in FSL classes, in fact “Research confirms that a prior language learning experience can facilitate and accelerate further language learning” (*Ontario Curriculum, Gr. 9 to 12: French as a Second Language, 2014, p. 42*).

As with all second language learners, ELLs benefit from strategies such as:

- Accessing appropriate technology helps students become more autonomous and self-directed as they acquire the new language
- Creating a print-rich FSL classroom environment (e.g., such as by labelling the classroom: *la porte, le tableau, l'ordinateur*)
- Having a variety of print resources at students' reading level, both independent and instructional (e.g., comic books, picture books, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries)
- Providing visual cues and aids (e.g., gestures, drawings) to associate images with words and useful expressions

There is ample reason to encourage English language learners to participate in FSL programs. In addition to facilitating English proficiency, trilingualism has many other benefits.

A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools Kindergarten to Grade 12, p. 35

The success of students included in regular classrooms relies heavily on the attitudes of administration and teachers. The principal is the primary leader in the school community and his or her attitudes and actions set the tone for the entire school community.

Kimberly Showalter-Barnes (2008), *The Attitudes of Regular Education Teachers Regarding Inclusion for Students with Autism*, p. 60

WHAT'S MY ROLE?

Students with Special Education Needs

Story, dialogue, drama, movement, and music help most students to access and apply new language structures and communication skills with greater effectiveness. Students with special education needs may benefit from the addition of modelling, memory aids, longer wait time, graphic organizers, or additional processing and practising time, in order to apply their language knowledge in meaningful oral and written communication.

By considering a variety of instructional and assessment strategies, FSL teachers differentiate through teaching modalities, resources, and assistive strategies and technologies as key contributors to the success of FSL learning.

The Role of Principals and Vice-Principals

“The school administrative team works in partnership with all staff, parents, and appropriate community partners to ensure that every student has access to the best possible educational experience” (*Supporting English Language Learners: A practical guide*, p. 18). Principals and vice-principals build collaborative teams for students who are struggling or who may require additional assessment, programming, or supports, such as an Individual Education Plan (IEP). When planning takes place during the development of an IEP, all relevant staff members need to be present in order to validate the entire team’s input and to ensure that the IEP is well understood and implemented. If, for example, a student requires accommodations to successfully meet the expectations in French class, the French teacher should have an active role in providing input to the IEP.

Regular visits to the classroom by the principal and vice-principal, together with ongoing, supportive dialogue with the teaching team, communicate the message that “We will do this together.” It is important that principals and vice-principals continue to provide professional learning opportunities for all teachers, as together, everyone plays an important role in the success of all students.



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

1. **Identifying and Helping English-Speaking Immersion Students Who Are At Risk for Reading Difficulties**
by Caroline Erdos and Fred Genesee, in *Journal de l'immersion/Immersion Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 3, pp. 18–20, Autumn/Automne 2011. http://www.acpi.ca/documents/Journaux/Vol.33No.3_comp.pdf
This article provides information and tools to identify French immersion students at risk for reading difficulties as early as Kindergarten, and suggests ways to help them.
2. **“At-risk students can become bilingual and attain levels of first-language and academic ability commensurate with their learning challenges. The challenge is not usually for the children, but rather is for the adults around them.”**
Proceedings of the Canadian Parents for French Roundtable on Academically Challenged Students in French Second Language Programs (2012), p. 16.
<http://cpf.ca/en/files/NEW-CPF-Roundtable-Proceedings-jh-2-3.pdf>
3. **From Awareness to Action: Video Segment 4 — FSL Programs are For All Students**
<http://www.curriculum.org/fsl/projects/from-awareness-to-action-resources-for-principals-and-vice-principals/dash/play/28405>

Q: I worry about my son learning French at the same time as he is learning English. Shouldn't he be concentrating on only one language?

A: You might think that he would get confused if he learns French at the same time as he is learning English, but, in fact, the opposite is true. Many of the items taught in French may parallel what students are learning in English, so learning French can help to reinforce the English that they are learning... Students are able to transfer knowledge about how language works and this may contribute to their overall academic success.

Ontario Ministry of Education (2008), *Supporting English Language Learners: A practical guide for Ontario educators Grades 1 to 8*, p. 31