Special event for Administrators

Summary Report

L’Association canadienne des professeurs d’immersion
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The Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers (CAIT) was very pleased to welcome administrators of French Immersion (FI) programs from across Canada to its Toronto Symposium held on November 9th 2001. A total of 64 administrators attended the opening sessions, workshops and the group sessions held throughout the day. The day was hosted and convened by Mel Shea, former coordinator of FSL of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. The keynote speaker was none other than Avril Benoît of CBC Toronto, current host of the afternoon talk show, Here and Now.

Workshops on different aspects of FI were led by Claire Desrochers of the Faculté Saint-Jean of the University of Alberta, Miles Turnbull and Sharon Lapkin from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, Joan Netten from Memorial University in Newfoundland and President of Canadian Parents for French. It was also with great pleasure that CAIT was associated with French for the Future, an organization which promotes French and learning FSL in an immersion context across the country, whose honorary chair is His Excellency John Ralston Saul. CAIT was honoured to welcome amongst its presenters, Christopher Paw, national director of French for the Future.

The Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers is a national organization, which sees to the promotion and maintaining of FI programs across Canada. In its 25 years of existence, it has hosted an annual conference or symposium in different parts of the country, answering to the needs of mostly FI teachers, parents and students. The Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers has also published a series of articles in its Journal de l’Immersion Journal on various aspects of FI.

It has been a long-term project of this association to become a reference point, a source of information, a forum for exchange on questions in the area of French Immersion, not only for teachers, students and parents, but for administrators of FI programs as well.
CAIT Goals

CAIT is a professional non-profit association, which aims at promoting and improving immersion programmes in Canada.

The aims of the association:

- To promote second language teaching in an immersion setting
- To represent the interests of immersion programmes to interested stakeholders
- To provide a forum to exchange ideas on immersion programmes and teaching methods
- To identify and develop:
  - teaching strategies to further the acquisition of a second language
  - teaching strategies to promote students' learning in all subjects taught in the second language
- To initiate studies and research projects
- To disseminate studies and research findings in the field of immersion
- To provide a forum for discussion on the implementation and administration of immersion programmes
- To encourage teachers to heighten students' awareness of other cultures, especially the cultures of French-speaking countries.
CAIT Mandate

During the many conferences and symposiums organized by CAIT, pre-conferences were meant to give researchers in FI a chance to make attending members aware of their different papers and projects in this area. Many professors from renowned universities from across Canada and foreign nations such as France and Australia, have presented over the decades papers at our conferences as well as published articles in our journal. Pre-conference workshops were also meant to attract administrators of FI programs and serve as a source in information as well as a forum for discussion of current issues in FI. However, workshops were not specifically oriented to administrators. In the past, it was found that most administrators attending pre-conference workshops were former FI teachers or FI coordinators at the ministry or board level. It therefore became a goal of the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers to present a forum whereby administrators could gather information about FI and voice their concerns about FI programs in the hope of finding solutions to problems in the administration of these programs.

The Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers has looked for a formula that would better deliver its message and serve its members, especially the administrators. It is with great interest that CAIT witnessed the Alberta experience as it unfolded. Over the past three years, Alberta Learning, in collaboration with school boards, local chapters of Canadian Parents for French and la Faculté Saint-Jean of the University of Alberta have put together a series of conferences on issues in FI, specifically for administrators, stakeholders and decision makers (please see Appendix I). Invited administrators have included trustees, board directors, superintendents, principals and vice-principals, department heads and language coordinators at board and ministry levels. This forum allowed administrators to become better informed on FI as a learning process and exchange on the particularities of running FI programs. The results of the first and second conferences are a telling tale. Concerns, doubts and possible solutions were skilfully transformed into recommendations published on the spot and given to administrators as a working document for further decision-making and further discussion.

The widespread success of this endeavour by Professor Lucille Mandin from the Faculté Saint-Jean and the organizing committee quickly attracted the attention of CAIT Board Members. The goals and aims set out by the organizers were parallel to those set in the mandate of the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers. It was decided that the same kind of experiment should be tried at a national level, keeping in mind that education is a provincial jurisdiction.
Board Members quickly came to the conclusion that FI program administrators from across the country could benefit from this type of forum given the fact that concerns about student performance, teacher training, degree of bilingualism, availability and funding of programs were common problems which transgress all boarders, with common and rational solutions, whether they originate from East or West, North or South. Based on the Alberta experience, the *Special event for Administrators* at the CAIT Toronto Symposium began to take shape.

The following subjects were addressed.

- **How does French Immersion work?** Many administrators do come for a FSL background, but not all. On the other hand, most administrators have had to administer some kind of immersion program. Since it cannot be taken for granted that every administrator is knowledgeable of the immersion process, a workshop was prepared to further understanding of what students go through when starting an immersion program. A session led by Claire Desrochers of the Faculté Saint-Jean helped administrators reflect on the subject. Please see article on this subject, published in the current edition of the *Journal de l’Immersion Journal*.

- **Performance of FI students** is also a considerable concern for administrators. Will students learning Math or Science in French perform as well on standardized tests as their counterparts in the regular program? How will the late or early introduction of English influence student performance? Will their first language skills be affected in any way? This decade old debate is still at the forefront of administrators' minds as they consider the implementation or the expansion of an FI program. The workshop led by Miles Turnbull and Sharon Lapkin of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto dealt with this matter. Even though it involved results based on students enrolled in Ontarian institutions, conclusions in this study are significant and applicable to students registered in FI across the country. Please consult Appendix III for their Executive Summary of this study.

- **Level of bilingualism and use or FSL skills** in the workplace and in daily life were at the heart of the presentation led by Christopher Paw, National Director of *French for the Future/Le français pour l’avenir*. This national organization based in Toronto is in full expansion across Canada. Its primary goal is to promote the use of French and the study of French in a FI context by hosting a series of student conferences. Christopher Paw and his guests gave vibrant testimonies on their personal experience in living through the FI process and how it has changed or affected their lives. Please log-on to their website for more information concerning this dynamic organization: [www.french-future.org](http://www.french-future.org).
• Teacher training and evaluation in FI as well as the evaluation of the overall FI programs was also a subject on administrators' minds. To answer their questions and give administrators the necessary information, we relied on one of our long time allies, Canadian Parents for French. CAIT was pleased to welcome Joan Netten, President of CPF and a professor from Memorial University in Newfoundland. Administrators received valuable information on teacher and program evaluation. Please consult the handout included with this report or consult the CPF website at: www.cpf.ca. (Appendix IV)

The final session allowed administrators to regroup, come together and let their particular concerns be heard. Mostly, this exchange gave administrators the opportunity to find solutions to common problems. Time did not permit the interested groups to formulate formal recommendations, nor was it a goal set out by CAIT. This first national forum for FI administrators was meant as one step in a process that only those involve would shape and help evolve.

Concerns and possible solutions have been prepared in a table format for quick consultation and access. It is hoped that our next meeting in Charlottetown will make way for the preparation of recommendations leading to permanent solutions to issues faced by administrators, teachers and parents alike in French Immersion.

René Chiasson
President of the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers
## Identification of Issues and Recommendations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Resources and lack of time</td>
<td>- sharing with other teachers and time given to do so</td>
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<td>- contacting publishers and other boards</td>
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<td>Lack of funding</td>
<td>- encouraging administration to support programs</td>
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<td>- lobbying of parents, CPF chapter</td>
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<td>General lack of remedial help and lack of assessment tools</td>
<td>- bilingual resource teachers</td>
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<td>- access to different assessment tools</td>
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<td>Staffing</td>
<td>- devise strategies for retention, attrition, recruitment and leadership in FL programs</td>
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<td>Student retention in program</td>
<td>- better variety of course offerings in schools</td>
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<td>- special education : bilingual support</td>
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<td>Program support : special education, PD, financial, administration (issues and concerns), beliefs and philosophy of program</td>
<td>- networking and communication</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- networking : local, teaching levels, exchange of materials, participation in discussions and participation at conferences</td>
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<td>- identification of bilingual staff to be included in the hiring process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issues</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
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| **External Structure and Support** : attrition, recruitment, security of program (elimination of programs), funding | • provincial curriculum policy in FI  
• lobby the Ministry : CPF and subject associations to call for and financially support FI resources across the subject areas  
• establish effective networks to exchange, develop and share locally initiated resources amount the professionals in the field |
| **Internal Classroom and Pedagogical Concerns** : content, accounting for L2 needs, speaking French | • share teaching strategies  
• on-going PD |
| **Staffing** : finding and keeping excellent trained staff | • put in place a **good support system**  
• explore qualification equivalency  
• on-line learning  
• more creative ways of offering interest courses |
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<th>Consultants</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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|             | Lack of resources | • work with neighbouring boards to produce joint developed material  
|             |        | • funding for resources purchase and development  
|             |        | • national curriculum  
|             |        | • national and regional clearinghouse  
|             |        | • Alberta Learning ideas  
|             |        | • electronic sharing and selling |
|             | Time for PD Days | • « twilight meetings »  
|             |        | • division meetings for FL teachers from several schools, to allow teacher dialogue  
|             |        | • common problem in finding supply or substitute teachers, particularly with French skills  
|             |        | • importance of teaching teachers on how to use materials  
|             |        | • materials need to link to the curriculum and provincial testing  
|             |        | • finding moneys to release teachers during the day  
<p>|             | Support from Administration | • administration must support program, philosophically and financially |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Declining enrolment</td>
<td>• promotion or marketing or programs</td>
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<td>• support from « English » side in promoting French language</td>
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<td>Meeting the needs of children</td>
<td>• resource room teacher in French</td>
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<td>• assessment strategies : English = French</td>
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<td>Special Education : learning disabilities : what happens to students enrolled in FI? Should students stay in FI or move to the regular program?</td>
<td>• modify program and retain students in program</td>
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<td>• math help for parents via English materials or English version of textbook</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• use of English in resource situation only</td>
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<td>Testing Tools : when? what? to what end?</td>
<td>• common testing tools in English and French</td>
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<td>Sharing common curriculum</td>
<td>• sharing of resources in English with teachers from regular program</td>
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<td>• establish similar outcomes to allow facility of movement and parental assistance</td>
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<td>Resources</td>
<td>• find qualified teachers and substitutes</td>
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<td>Maintaining interest in program at Senior H.S. Level</td>
<td>• make subject offerings relevant</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Issues</strong></td>
<td><strong>Recommendations</strong></td>
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| **Vice-Principals’ needs** | • 100% administration time, not 50% to perform all duties  
• allocate time in proportion to duties given to vice-principals |
| **Staffing**: qualified teachers in French positions, lack of qualified teachers | • market programs for teacher training  
• bursary programs for university students entering Education, particularly in FSL |
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

French immersion student’s performance on Grade 3 and Grade 6 provincial tests: Potential impacts on program design

Miles Turnbull, Doug Hart, Sharon Lapkin

Introduction

The recently introduced EQAO testing program at Grades 3 and 6 in Ontario creates a unique opportunity to investigate French immersion students’ performance on literacy and mathematics tests about 20 years after many of the large-scale evaluations of French were conducted. Those evaluations involved administrations of standardized tests such as the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills. The EQAO tests differ in nature from those used in earlier evaluations in that they are curriculum-based and include a greater variety of test types.

While there are no mandated consequences of EQAO test results, in the current climate the tests are seen as high-stakes for parents, individual boards and schools, and possibly, individual teachers and students. All parties are strongly encouraged to take the results seriously. Stakeholders may be inclined to question immersion programs if test results reveal weaker performance than expected.

The language of testing most appropriate to assess the academic achievement of immersion students in subjects such as mathematics is also a concern for parents, students, teachers and school board officials. Although the research literature suggests that knowledge acquired in French (in math, in this case) transfers and can be tested in English, there has been a continuing concern that students may not learn ‘as much’ content when they are schooled in a second language.

We examined these same questions in the current Ontario context. We compared immersion students' results to those of regular English program students on the Grade 3 and Grade 6 tests, according to the option they chose for the testing. Currently, school boards can choose one of three options at Grade 3:

Option 1: all students participate in the Grade 3 assessment in English in all three components;
Option 2: students do the language components of the Grade 3 assessment in English and a French translation of the mathematics component;
Option 3: French Immersion students do the mathematics component only in French.

At the Grade 6 level, it is mandatory for all Grade 6 students to complete all components of the assessment in English.

In addition, this study allowed us to explore the impact of different approaches to English literacy instruction within French immersion. Currently across the province, boards introduce formal instruction in English at different grades within their early immersion programs.

Thus the EQAO testing created a natural laboratory for exploring the impact of program organization on student achievement. We examined whether the EQAO testing program was creating pressure to change the design of immersion programs and whether boards were opting for provincial testing in French and/or English in grade 3.
This study was guided by the following research questions:

1) How do French Immersion students perform on the provincial Grade 3 tests of reading, writing and mathematics, compared to regular English program students? Are there differences among immersion students depending on the language in which they do these tests (option 1, 2 or 3)? Do all French immersion programs choose the same testing option? Is this choice related to program design?

2) Do French Immersion student performances on the provincial tests differ depending on the grade at which English language arts is introduced?

3) How have the provincial tests affected policy and/or program design, enrolment patterns, and attrition rates in early French immersion?

4) Are French Immersion students’ results on the EQAO tests publicized, disseminated and compared to regular English program students’ results? If so, how?

This summary is organized under the following main headings: Introduction, Methodology and sample, Grade 3 test results, Grade 6 test results, Summarizing test results across Grades 3 and 6, Questionnaire findings, and Summary and implications.

Methodology and sample

Secondary analysis of EQAO test data

We analyzed data held by EQAO to ascertain the comparative performance of immersion students on Grade 3 and Grade 6 reading, writing and mathematics overall achievement results. Using information from the questionnaire component of the study (see below) and board identifiers in the test data sets (provided by EQAO), we also compared students’ performance according to the grade at which English language arts was introduced and relative intensity of French and English instruction in the early grades.

School district survey

We conducted a short survey of all school districts in Ontario currently offering early immersion programs to obtain the following information: 1) immersion programs (if any) currently/recently offered; 2) detailed information on program format; 3) active policy issues (if any) concerning immersion education; 4) latest enrolment figures and documentation or informed opinions about trends in enrolment at the elementary level (including intake and attrition); 5) formats for publishing EQAO results; 6) formats for circulating results internally; 7) published comparisons (if any) of EQAO test results for immersion versus regular program students; 8) unpublished comparisons used for administrative and planning purposes.

Sample

The questionnaire survey was sent to a total of 62 school districts. We received responses from 36 districts; three districts reported that they did not have immersion programs and thus did not complete the survey. The districts in our sample cover 70-75 percent of immersion students participating in the EQAO testing program in 1998/99 at both grades 3 and 6.

Grade 3 test results

Immersion students at grade 3 encountered the EQAO testing with different degrees of instruction in English. A small minority of students was in programs where they did not experience English instruction until grade 4. A larger number began classes in English only at grade 3. At the other extreme, students in partial (50/50) programs had instruction in English on a half time basis throughout grades 1 to 3. In the middle were students in programs offering lesser amounts of class time in English over the three grades.

A typology of immersion programs at Grade 3
We developed a categorization of immersion programs by start grade and accumulated hours of instruction in English from grades 1 to 3, based on information from our questionnaire data. The program typology is based initially on starting grade, and then differentiates programs with an early start to instruction in English in terms of number of accumulated hours from grades 1 to 3.

**Choices about testing at Grade 3**
Program design appears to have had little systematic influence on district choices about whether immersion students were administered the EQAO reading and writing tests at grade 3. Boards with full immersion through to the end of grade 3 avoided testing. However, those in most other categories participated. In the case of mathematics testing, boards with relatively little instruction in English again showed a reluctance prior to 1998-1999 to participate in the testing program and an overwhelming preference for translated tests when they did.

**Comparisons of immersion and non-immersion test results at Grade 3**
EQAO has established four levels of achievement. The levels profile of immersion students in the same districts was broadly similar to non-immersion students in all three skill areas: reading, writing, and mathematics. Results from districts where immersion students wrote the EQAO tests indicate that in the case of reading and writing, immersion students were somewhat more likely to be rated at levels 3 or 4. Distributions for immersion and regular program students were virtually identical in mathematics.

The general similarity of immersion and regular program results was highlighted by the contrast with the more selected group of English program students taking enrichment. Over 70 percent of these English program enrichment students achieved levels 3 or 4 in each skill area.

**Grade 3 results by type of program**
In the case of overall reading scores, the proportion of regular program students at levels 3 and 4 (combined) was similar across program categories. Reading test results for total immersion students at grade 3 were well below the range for those in the regular program. However, in all other cases, immersion students equalled or outperformed regular program students in the same district grouping.

The proportion of regular program students achieving level 3 or 4 in the writing tests also showed relatively little variation. Again, with the exception of the total immersion students, test outcomes for immersion students equalled or exceeded regular program students' results in the same district grouping.

While districts had the option of not administering the EQAO literacy tests to immersion students, the mathematics test was compulsory. As a result, mathematics results for immersion students at grade 3 are based on a larger base population. Mathematics test results show a narrower range of outcomes for regular program students over our district groupings than for immersion students. However, in contrast to literacy and particularly reading test results, students in total immersion at grade 3 do not appear at a disadvantage. Test results for mathematics do not show a systematic relationship to starting grade or accumulated hours of instruction in English.

**A note on language of testing in mathematics**
In examining mathematics test results by language of testing, it is important to control for prior accumulated hours of instruction in English. Accumulated hours may be independently related both to test scores themselves and to the impact of language of testing (which we might expect to be greater, the less prior exposure to instruction in English). The available data provides a limited basis for conducting this analysis at grade 3. The results offer virtually no support to the argument that testing in English disadvantages immersion students, at least in comparison to testing in French translation, even though instruction in mathematics up to grade 3 has been in French.
**Grade 6 test results**

As at grade 3, immersion students approached the grade 6 EQAO tests in 1998/99 with an array of program backgrounds. By grade 6, in most programs, students were receiving 30-50 percent of instruction in English, but had accumulated differing amounts of instruction in English. This range was further expanded by the inclusion of middle immersion students, instructed wholly in English (with the exception of core French) prior to starting immersion in grades 4 or 5. In summary the number of accumulated hours of instruction in English ranged from under 1000 to 2800 among early immersion programs. The more intensive middle immersion programs had totals approximately equivalent to the partial early immersion programs. However, students in partial early WRONG IN REPORT programs had much higher totals exceeding 4000 hours.

* A typology of immersion programs at Grade 6

Our typology of programs at grade 6 was based on accumulated hours of instruction in English where all students in a district were in early immersion programs. Districts with both early and middle immersion programs formed a separate category, as did districts with middle immersion alone.

* Choices about testing at Grade 6

At grade 6, the main policy choice regarding immersion students was whether to administer the English version or the French translation of the mathematics tests. Few districts chose to test mathematics in French. Those that did tended to have lower totals of accumulated hours of instruction in English.

* Comparisons of immersion and non-immersion test results at Grade 6

As indicated above, at grade 3, we found that the performance of immersion and non-immersion students on EQAO tests was broadly similar. Immersion students did somewhat better on literacy tests, but differences were small. Results for mathematics were virtually identical for immersion and non-immersion students. At grade 6 we found a different pattern. Immersion students outperformed those in the regular program in all skill areas. Differences were notable, even when we compared these with the differences in performance between regular program students as a whole and those in enrichment.

Differences in test performance were greatest for **reading**. Just over half of non-immersion students achieved level 3 or 4, compared to slightly more than 70 percent of immersion students. The performance of immersion students was, in fact, closer to that of English program students in enrichment, although a higher proportion of the latter group reached level 4. On the **writing** test half of regular program students obtained level 3 or 4; two-thirds of immersion students reached this level. However the writing performance of immersion students was less similar to that of English program students in enrichment than is the case for reading. Results for **mathematics** paralleled those for writing. Just under half of regular program students reached level 3 or 4 compared to 62 percent of immersion students and almost 75 percent of English program students in enrichment.

* Summarizing test results across Grades 3 and 6

In summary, at grade 6 in contrast to grade 3, students in immersion clearly outperformed those in the regular program on EQAO tests in both literacy and mathematics. Differences were notable even in comparison to the performance of the highly selected English program enrichment group. What had changed since grade 3? One hypothesis is that test results at grade 3 did not really reflect the greater academic strengths of immersion students. There was an extended lag in development that was remedied sometime after grade 3 with further accumulated hours of instruction in English. We have termed this the **extended lag hypothesis**. A second hypothesis is that immersion students become more self-selected on academic strength
as weaker students leave early immersion programs, and students of above average academic ability undertake middle immersion. We have called this the *self-selection hypothesis*.

We derived predictions from these two hypotheses regarding differences in performance among program groupings. In testing these, we found no support for the extended lag hypothesis and weak and inconsistent support for the self-selection hypothesis. This suggests that there may be no simple, single-factor explanation for differences in patterns of immersion/non-immersion differences at grades 3 and 6.

**Questionnaire findings**

The school district questionnaire we developed for this study targeted possible changes in school or board policies since the 1996-97 academic year as well as perceptions of the effects of the testing program.

Twenty-one of 35 (60 percent) of school districts had implemented or were contemplating policy changes relating to the teaching of English language arts in immersion since the beginning of EQAO testing. The EQAO testing did not appear, however, to initiate or contribute to discussions about whether to continue French immersion programs or about the appropriate starting grade for immersion. Moreover, responses to questions about enrolment and attrition trends indicated considerable stability.

School districts used multiple methods to disseminate information about the EQAO test results. Over the three years since testing began, an increasing number of districts provided comparisons of results for French immersion and regular program students for various stakeholders.

**Summary and implications**

In this section we return systematically to each of the research questions that guided this study to summarize our findings and to draw implications from them.

**Question 1: How do French immersion students perform on the provincial Grade 3 tests of reading, writing and mathematics, compared to regular English program students? Do all French immersion programs choose the same testing option? Is this choice consistent within the same school board?**

Overall, at Grade 3, immersion students did somewhat better than English program students on literacy tests, but differences were small. At Grade 3, French immersion students who had little exposure to English language arts instruction lagged somewhat behind their English program counterparts. Results for mathematics were virtually identical for immersion and non-immersion students at Grade 3. By Grade 6, French immersion students achieved better overall results on the EQAO reading, writing and mathematics tests.

Testing policy decisions were made at the school board level and all schools in the board were bound by these decisions. At the Grade 3 level, some school boards opted out of literacy testing at Grade 3. In the case of mathematics, at Grade 3, a notable number of boards tested math via French, and this number increased from 1996-1999. At Grade 6, mathematics testing occurred in English.

**Question 2: Do French immersion student performances on the provincial tests differ depending on the grade at which English language arts is introduced?**

Scores were virtually identical when comparisons were made across program types, according to the grade at which English language arts was introduced. Total French immersion program students (i.e., those who start English in Grade 4) were the exception: fewer of these
students achieved results in the 3 or 4 range as compared to the regular English program students. However, based on a cross-sectional comparison, we can predict that these students will catch up and surpass their English counterparts by grade 6.

Question 3: How have the provincial tests affected policy and/or program design, enrolment patterns, and attrition rates in early French immersion?

The EQAO testing program has generally not sparked discussion of the continuation of immersion. The existence of French immersion programs was not in question. However, since the beginning of the EQAO testing program, policy discussions have occurred about the grade at which English language instruction is optimally introduced, and about the instructional time that should be devoted to it.

Most participating school boards indicated that enrolment in French immersion has either remained stable or increased since the EQAO testing program began. Most school boards reported similarly stable attrition patterns since the beginning of the EQAO testing program.

Question 4: Are French immersion students' results on the EQAO tests publicized, disseminated and compared to those of students in the regular English program? If so, how?

Most participating school districts reported that they use a variety of methods to disseminate information about the results of the EQAO testing, including school reports sent to parents, presentations at school council and parent meetings, local news media articles and district newsletters. There appears to be an increasing tendency for school districts to provide comparisons of results for French immersion and regular program students.
## CPF School Self-Assessment Tool

**For French-Second-Language Education Programs**

### Assessment Results Summary

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<tr>
<td><strong>Enrolment</strong></td>
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<td>Availability</td>
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<td><strong>Quality</strong></td>
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<td>Program Review</td>
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CPF SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL
FOR FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

USING THIS TOOL FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION

This tool has been developed by Canadian Parents for French (CPF), the national network of volunteers which promotes and creates opportunities for young Canadians to learn and use French as a second language.

The self-assessment tool is intended to help schools assess themselves how their French-second-language (FSL) programs are faring. It is not CPF’s intent to collect and compare these assessments, but rather to encourage a conversation among all stakeholders about the importance and performance of FSL programs in the local community. Programs and the needs of communities will vary across the country, but dialogue among all those involved in and affected by these programs can only lead to improvements in both the FSL programs themselves and the levels of support for them within the school system.

Eighteen indicators are outlined below with brief explanations. School performance in each area can be assessed using a five-point scale. The indicators are based on research done on FSL programs in Canada over the last 30 years. (Please note that for the purposes of this self-assessment tool, FSL programs refer to both immersion and Core French programs.)

The self-assessment tool can be used to assess both French immersion and Core French programs (also known as basic French in some provinces). In order to use it effectively, evaluate only one of these program types at a time. (For example, if you decide to evaluate your Core French program, answer all the questions with only Core French in mind.) You can go back and use the tool to evaluate the other program option(s) at another time and we recommend that you do so in another, separate session.

CPF Canadian Parents for French
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The suggested way to use this tool is to engage in a large group discussion on the indicators. With all participants gathered (teachers, students, parents, administrators):

1) READ the indicators one at a time;
2) DISCUSS the level of implementation of each indicator in your school;
3) COME TO A CONSSENSUS on where your program fits on the implementation scale;
4) NOTE THE RESULTS on the assessment results grid.

Once you have considered all the indicators, you will have a picture of your FSL program’s strengths and areas for improvement. This tool and the discussion it will involve provide an excellent opportunity to raise issues important for FSL programs and to celebrate program successes. Be proud of your school’s strengths and work now to build an action plan in those areas where you feel you need improvement. The discussion itself will be valuable, but you may also want to follow up on certain areas to ensure that next year’s assessment is even better!

If you find that a question does not apply to your situation, you may skip it. Be careful however about skipping a question too quickly just because it is easier than trying to answer it. (If your school doesn’t rate well on a question, this is no reason to skip it!) There may be areas where you feel that responsibility for the issue does not rest with the school alone (e.g., involvement of the school board). In this case, your school may need to ask where to find support for improvement of this indicator, but the indicator is still important to a quality FSL program.

CPF is committed to supporting you as you undertake this self-assessment process. At our website, www.cpf.ca, you will find dedicated resources to assist you, including information on how to gather together a group of stakeholders and how to decide if you need a facilitator, fast facts and current research to help you in your deliberations on each indicator, a list of contacts for your local CPF Branch, an action plan format to help you take the next steps in improving your FSL programs—and much more!

HOW TO ASSESS PERFORMANCE

To assess your school’s performance in each area (i.e., for each indicator), establish a rating using the following five-point scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING</th>
<th>PERFORMANCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>VERY STRONG</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>STRONG</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>MODERATE</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>FAIR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>NEEDS GREAT IMPROVEMENT</td>
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</tbody>
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A. VERY STRONG: This means that your school’s performance in this area is excellent. The indicator has been fully implemented or is being regularly applied and is reviewed regularly for possible corrections or improvements when needed.

B. STRONG: School performance in this area is good. The indicator has been largely implemented but no review process is in place to allow for possible corrections and improvements when needed.

C. MODERATE: The indicator has been partially implemented or some definite progress is being made towards its implementation. The school may be further ahead in some areas than in others.

D. FAIR: A rating of fair would apply when the issue has been explored and there is some acknowledgement of its importance but little or no action has been taken. Issues and/or obstacles preventing full implementation of this indicator may have been identified.

E. NEEDS GREAT IMPROVEMENT: School activity in this area is non-existent (e.g., no formal discussion has occurred and no action has been taken).

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR SCHOOL’S SELF-ASSESSMENT, AND CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR COMMITMENT TO QUALITY FRENCH SECOND-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS FOR CANADIAN CHILDREN!
UNDERSTANDING THE INDICATORS

The 11 indicators are grouped under three main themes: enrollment, program quality and accountability. A short text describes each indicator and related issues.

ENROLMENT

This set of indicators focuses on enrollment issues (i.e., ensuring maximum access to FSL programs).

1. AVAILABILITY. All FSL programs are available to all students, including gifted students and those with special needs.

    Enrollment in FSL programs is encouraged by policies and practices that provide for the participation of interested students. FSL programs that are available to all students provide free transportation for both urban and rural students and have no program enrollment limits or admission criteria. Programming for gifted and special needs students is also provided within FSL programs to ensure that the programs are available to all students.

2. COMMUNICATION. All FSL options are clearly communicated and promoted.

    Enrollment in FSL programs is enhanced when parents and students receive relevant information. Effective communication and promotion of FSL programs can be accomplished by holding annual information sessions for prospective parents and by ensuring that informational materials encourage enrollment. Information about FSL options and entry points should be distributed regularly so that informed choices may be made as the student progresses through the educational system.

3. REMEDIAL ASSISTANCE. All FSL programs provide remedial assistance to students who need it.

    Students experiencing academic difficulties are retained in FSL programs when they are given extra help. FSL programs should encourage these students to continue their FSL studies by ensuring that adequate remedial services and resources are available to all students who need them.

PROGRAM QUALITY

The second set of indicators encompasses a variety of program quality issues.

4. FSL POLICIES. FSL policies concerning staffing, resources and funding exist and are evaluated regularly.

    FSL policies provide an opportunity for the school to state its commitment to providing quality FSL programs, to clearly define the conditions that must be met to achieve quality programs, and to provide a model for evaluating progress toward these goals.

5. FSL RESOURCES. Sufficient French classroom and library resources and learning materials are available.

    FSL programs require quality resources and classroom materials. There should be enough French textbooks for all students and a varied collection of resource centre and classroom materials that have been specifically designed for French-second-language learners.

6. SCHOOL COMMUNITY. The entire school community supports and encourages FSL programs.

    Quality French-second-language programs thrive when the entire school supports and encourages the use of French. This may mean that the French language and culture are visible in the school outside the classroom in the form of posters or hallway conversations, and in the use of French at recess or during announcements and assemblies.

7. EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY. Extra-curricular activities in French are available to all FSL students.

    The use of French for non-school communication has been shown to enhance language mastery for FSL learners. To encourage the use of French outside of the classroom, the school should promote both in-school activities (e.g., clubs, Internet pendants) and out-of-school activities (e.g., field trips, student exchanges). Parents and students should be informed of the importance and availability of these activities.

8. QUALIFIED TEACHERS. Qualified teachers, including substitute teachers, are available for all FSL assignments.

    In order to ensure effective second-language instruction, it is necessary for FSL programs to ensure that all teachers assigned to FSL classes are fluent in French and have received training designed specifically for second-language instructors. The school may want to discuss with the school district the need for a strategy to recruit and retain qualified FSL teachers, and to ensure that qualified substitute teachers are available when needed.

9. COMPETENCE PROFILE. New teachers are hired on the basis of French-language competence, teaching ability, and subject-matter knowledge.

    In order to provide quality FSL programs, school administrators must ensure that FSL teachers have the necessary skills to be effective second-language teachers. A competence profile that evaluates French-language competence and teaching ability should be used when selecting new teachers. Teachers hired for subject areas such as math and science in high school immersion classes should also be subject-matter specialists.
10. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. Professional development for FSL teachers is supported and encouraged. Teachers should be encouraged to attend workshops, conferences, and other professional development activities that enhance their skills as FSL educators.

11. CORE FRENCH INTEGRATED. Core French is treated as an integral part of the main curriculum. French is an option as a non-FSL program in some schools.

12. HIGH SCHOOL COURSES. High school programs offer high quality FSL courses that are accessible to all interested students. Teachers should be encouraged to provide high quality FSL programs.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The following indicators are used to measure accountability:

13. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT. Parents are involved in decision making about FSL programs. Parents should be consulted when FSL programs are included in FSL teaching plans.

14. CLASS SIZE RESPECTED. The amount of class time dedicated to instruction in French is specified and respected. Teachers should be encouraged to develop lesson plans that respect the amount of class time allocated to French instruction.

15. lkX STOP. The types of FSL programs and the grades at which students enter programs vary from year to year. Teachers should be encouraged to develop lesson plans that respect the amount of class time allocated to French instruction.

16. PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES. Provincial guidelines for FSL programs are communicated directly to parents, teachers, and administrators.

17. Detailed guidelines for the implementation of FSL programs should be established and communicated to all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and administrators.

18. PROGRAMME FUNDING. All government funding designated for FSL programs is used specifically for those programs. Teachers should be encouraged to develop lesson plans that respect the amount of class time allocated to French instruction.

19. PROGRAM REVIEW. The quality and effectiveness of FSL programs are assessed regularly and adjustments are made when necessary. Teachers should be encouraged to develop lesson plans that respect the amount of class time allocated to French instruction.