



Systemic Change in French Immersion Begins in the Early Years Laying the Foundation

Ron Cadez
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About me and LRSD

Ron Cadez

Assistant Superintendent (LRSD)

ron.cadez@lrsd.net



Land Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I am privileged to live and work on Treaty One Territory, the traditional land of the Anishinaabek, Ininewak, Dakota, and the national homeland of the Red River Métis.

Today, I am honoured to be a guest on Treaty 7 Territory—sacred lands and gathering place for diverse Indigenous Peoples, including Nations from the Blackfoot Confederacy, the Îyârhe Nakoda, as well as the Goodstoney and Tsuut’ina First Nations, and the Métis Nation of Alberta. Their histories, languages, and cultures continue to shape and enrich this region.



At this conference, language is at the heart of our work. I am committed to advancing equity in language, literacy, and education as a vital step toward reconciliation. By ensuring equitable access to quality education for all learners, we are also ensuring that we provide all Indigenous students with opportunities and supports to fully engage in their learning and achieve graduation.

This important work is a small reflection on the words of the late Honourable Murray Sinclair:

“If it is education that created this mess, it will be education that will get us out of it.”



Agenda – Laying the Foundation

- Inspire visionary thinking based on big ideas
- Early years' programming as the foundation for school experience:
 - Structures and Values
 - Literacy and Numeracy
 - Language and Culture
 - Family Supports
- Leaders bring ideas to life
- Initiate a commitment to action:
 - Identify a way you will “Make Life Better”
 - Identify your “Moon Challenge”



Visionary Thinking

The Big Ideas



Envisioning the Ideal

- What's your vision of the ideal French Immersion elementary school?
- Environment
- People
 - Attitudes & Dispositions
 - Interactions
 - Relationships
- Pedagogy
- Feeling





Expanding Your Vision

- How can you expand on what you know?
- Who needs to be at your side – who are the leaders you are developing?
- How can you aim to build something you don't fully know or understand?





Your Leadership Is Essential

Every leader should strive to model the essential qualities that made the best presidents.

1. Curiosity

- Great leaders seek to understand and evolve in context.

2. Humility

- The ability to admit mistakes and learn from them. The ability to admit to what you don't know and commit to learning and doing better.

3. Empathy

- Leaders must put themselves in others' shoes to act with decency and foresight.

(Summarized from Jon Meacham's keynote address to the Investment Company Institute, May 23, 2018)



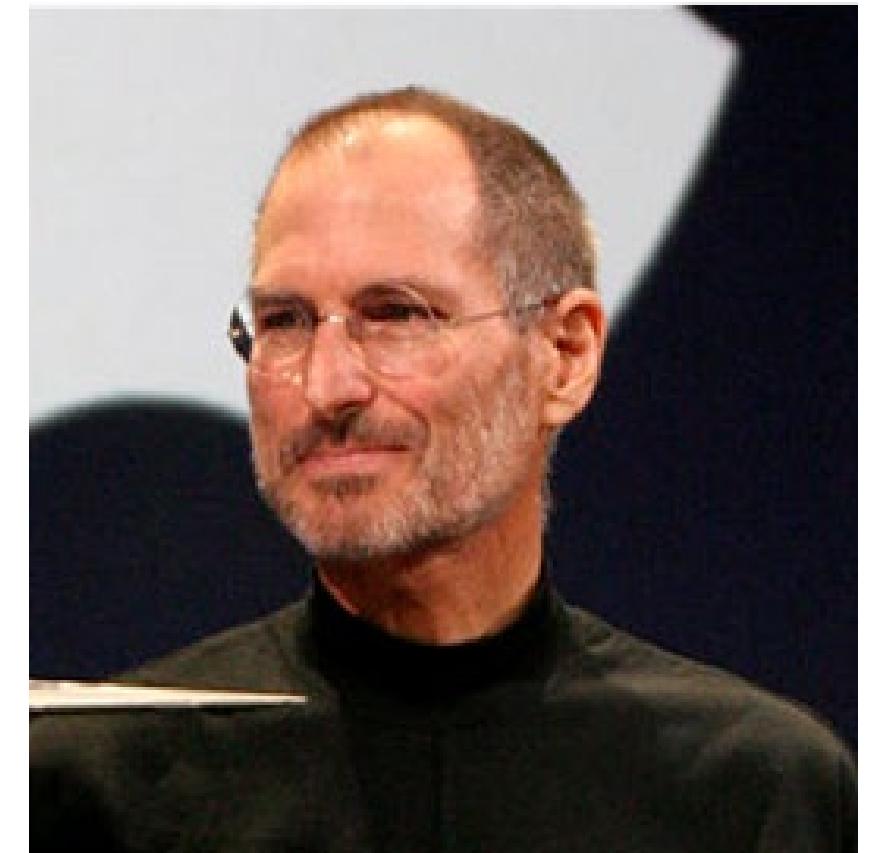
Taking Action

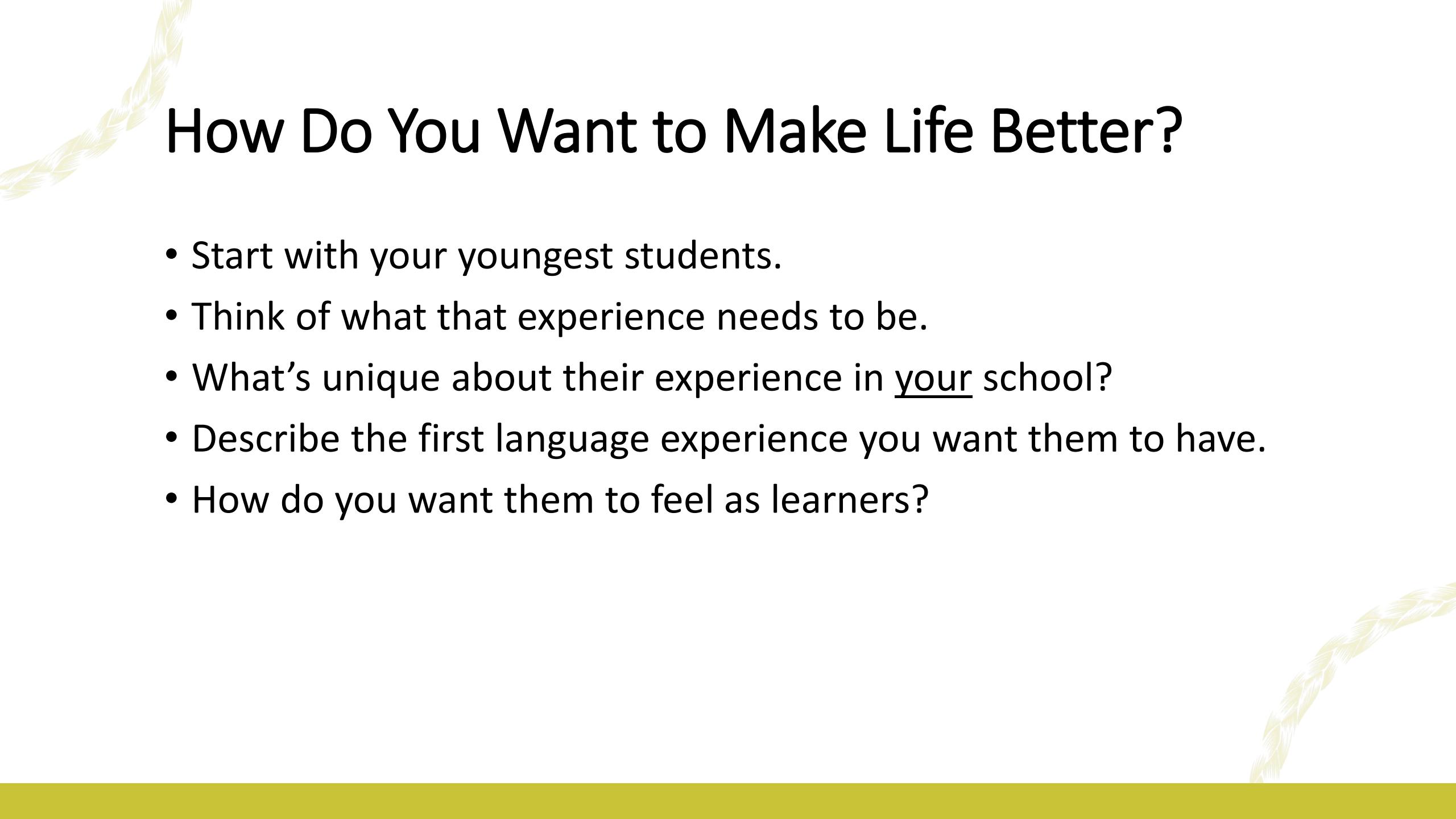
“Make Life Better”

Make Life Better

“Life can be much broader once you discover one simple fact: everything around you that you call life was made up by people that were no smarter than you. And you can change it, you can influence it, you can build your own things that other people can use. . . the most important thing is to shake off this erroneous notion that life is there and you're just gonna live in it versus embrace it change it improve it make your mark upon it. I think that's very important and however you learn that, once you learn it, you'll want to change life and make it better.”

(Steve Jobs, Santa Clara Historical Association Interview, 1994)





How Do You Want to Make Life Better?

- Start with your youngest students.
- Think of what that experience needs to be.
- What's unique about their experience in your school?
- Describe the first language experience you want them to have.
- How do you want them to feel as learners?



Think Outside the Box

- What if you didn't limit yourself to what you know?
- What if there were no barriers?
- What would that look like?
- Are you comfortable leading towards something that may not totally work?





Now, How Are You Going to Do It?

- Break it down into manageable pieces.
- Bring internal and external experts to the table.
- Be curious and a good listener.



What is Your Moon Challenge?

“We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too.”

(John F. Kennedy, September 12, 1962, Rice University)





The Moon Challenge of French Immersion

- 13 French Immersion schools
- 2 high schools
- All single-track dedicated FI buildings
- Fully bilingual staff
- Four of five superintendents are bilingual with significant FI experience



Literacy and Numeracy

Foundations of Learning



My Moon Challenge: Early Literacy and Numeracy

- Screening using evidence-based tools starting in the first two months of Kindergarten.
- Ongoing progress monitoring in both areas up to Grade 4 in numeracy and Grade 8 in literacy.
- Access to tools to use the data to influence practice and target instruction.
- Research-based and evidence-based pedagogy in Kindergarten for both.
- Targeted training for Kindergarten teachers. (NyKK-5 - <https://www.aimcollective.ca/aim-resources/nykk-5>)





Tools Unique to FI

- Challenges finding valid and reliable tools
- Potential of evidence-based English tools
- THaFoL (<https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/ml-lab/research/manitoba-project>)
- EMA français
- NyKK-5 ([Numeracy – Kindergarten](#))
- Divisional Scope and Sequence for FI (French and English – send Ron an [email](#) if you want samples)
- Supplementary assessment tools and instructional resources (refer to list in [this interactive document](#) in all three tiers of intervention.)





Enhancing Teacher Pedagogy

- Develop tools for teachers to use to guide decision-making.
- Put data at the centre of planning.
- Provide communication to parents to explain screening and programming in easy-to-use language to facilitate conversations with schools.
- Create a teacher learning model that embeds the learning into the work.

(Some of the teacher and parent tools we developed can be found here:

<https://www.lrsd.net/literacy-resources>





You Create the Culture That Makes This Happen

- Peter Drucker tells us, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.”
- What is the culture required to realize your vision?
- What do you already know?
- What do you need to learn?
- Who needs to go on this journey with you?
- How do your values align? (What counts the most in _____?)





Before You Go to Dinner Tonight . . .

- Write down the following:
 - 1 thing you will do tomorrow
 - 1 thing you will start next week to “make life better”
 - 1 goal for the future – what’s your “moon challenge”?

*“If everyone is moving forward together,
then success takes care of itself.”*

(Henry Ford, taken off the wall of a local Ford dealership)





Questions



MERCI!

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