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KINDERGARTEN IN FRENCH IMMERSION IN CANADA

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This document presents the findings of an independent research project conducted in the spring of 2025. The analyses, observations, and conclusions expressed are those of the author and do not represent an official position of ACPI or its Board of Directors. In a pan-Canadian context where practices and realities vary considerably, certain nuances specific to individual regions or contexts may not be fully reflected.

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Introduction

Kindergarten is a critical time in a child's education, as it marks their first formal experiences in a school environment. For many children, kindergarten also provides the first opportunities to interact with peers, initiate friendships and develop essential social skills. In Canada, kindergarten can also provide an important opportunity for language development, particularly for those enrolled in French immersion programs.

French immersion kindergarten is offered in 11 of the 13 provinces and territories across Canada. It is not offered in New Brunswick, where French immersion begins in grade one, or Nunavut, where French immersion is not offered at any grade level. French immersion offers a unique educational experience because, in this program, children learn in a second language, rather than their first language. This context supports not only cognitive, social and emotional development (Lazaruk, 2007; Nicolay & Poncelet, 2013; 2015), but also the development of French oral, reading and writing skills. Furthermore, children in French immersion begin to develop their identities as language learners, laying an important foundation for their academic and personal development. Given these crucial learning opportunities, it is important for teachers to have curricula and other resources to support their teaching and their students' learning.

While French immersion kindergarten is offered across the country, the program models and curricula vary considerably. Furthermore, in Ontario and Quebec, there is no kindergarten curriculum specific to the French immersion context. As a result, teachers are often left to review and interpret ministry documents on their own to establish learning objectives for their students and the best way of meeting them.

The first aim of this project is to document the current situation of French immersion kindergarten across Canada and the resources available to support teachers in each part of the country. Following this initial review, the second objective is to highlight what works for French immersion kindergarten teachers within existing programs and to identify possible gaps that can be addressed.

French immersion kindergarten in Canada: An initial examination

As indicated above, French immersion kindergarten is offered in every province and territory in Canada except for Nunavut and New Brunswick. That said, there is considerable variability in terms of when students begin attending (age four or five), the percentage of time spent in French (from 50% to 100%) and the program model (full- or half-day). Equally relevant is the fact that kindergarten is optional everywhere except for New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island (Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development, 2025).

Beyond these logistical discrepancies, there are differences in terms of the learning outcomes identified in kindergarten curricula and how they are presented. An examination of the curricular documents available online reveals that the curriculum and learning objectives for French immersion kindergarten can generally be grouped into three categories:

1. Stand-alone kindergarten curriculum available in English and in French: Apart from the language in which they are written, the two documents are the same and do not make any reference to French immersion. In these cases, teachers use either the English or French curriculum as a guide but must adapt it themselves to ensure it reflects the French immersion context.
Provinces/territories with this model: Ontario, Quebec
2. Stand-alone French immersion kindergarten curriculum identifying specific learning outcomes for students in the French immersion context. This curriculum is different from the one used in English and French first language kindergarten programs.
Provinces/territories with this model: Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories
3. No stand-alone kindergarten curriculum document: Instead, kindergarten is addressed in the curriculum for each subject area. The curriculum for French as a Second Language (FSL) in the context of immersion is unique to French immersion—it differs from the curriculum for both English and French first language programs.
Provinces/territories with this model: Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon

The following is a more detailed description of the French immersion kindergarten program in each province or territory in which it is offered, along with a list of provincial/territorial support resources. This research was conducted in 2024-2025 and reflects the situation at that time.

Newfoundland and Labrador

In Newfoundland and Labrador, French immersion kindergarten is offered as a full-day program for five-year-olds, with French being the sole language of instruction (Ministry of Education of Newfoundland and Labrador, n.d.). There is no stand-alone curriculum for French immersion kindergarten; rather, each subject area has its own curriculum document, including French as a Second Language for French immersion contexts. The French immersion curriculum begins in kindergarten and focuses on three main areas of language development:

- speaking and listening
- reading and viewing
- writing and representing

Specific results and indicators for each of these areas are outlined in the curriculum document.

🔗 https://www.enlightened.gov.nl.ca/ords/r/clcc/public/curriculum-view?p50_id=922&p50_doc_section=HOME

While the kindergarten learning objectives are integrated into the curriculum for each subject area, there is a document developed specifically for kindergarten teachers to support them in planning and implementing play-based learning in a full-day kindergarten program. This resource, available in English and in French, describes different types of play and the associated areas of learning/development, as well as methods of documenting student learning. The document also makes suggestions for connecting play activities to literacy and numeracy and describes how these competencies can be developed through play. Although this resource is available in both English and French, the French version is intended for French first language classes and does not refer to the French immersion context.

Full-Day Kindergarten – Play-Based Learning: Promoting a Common Understanding (2016)

🔗 https://www.gov.nl.ca/education/files/pdf_fdk_common_understandings_-document_eng_2016.pdf

Finally, although not intended for teachers, the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has developed a French immersion guide for administrators. By examining French immersion from kindergarten through grade six, it provides important information about the program and offers suggestions on teaching strategies, curriculum implementation and assessment. In addition, it explicitly describes the skills expected of students at each grade level, including kindergarten.

Français - Immersion Kindergarten to Grade 6: A Support Document for Administrators (2011)

🔗 https://www.gov.nl.ca/education/files/k12_french_immersion autres_documents_francais_k6_support_document_administrators.pdf

Prince Edward Island

On Prince Edward Island, French immersion kindergarten is offered as a full-day program for five-year-olds, with French as the language of instruction 90% of the time (Public Schools Branch, n.d.). There is a stand-alone curriculum for French immersion kindergarten (distinct from both the English version and the French version used in French first language schools), with direct references to the immersion context. This document outlines French language expectations and outcomes for oral communication, reading and writing in French. Furthermore, it emphasizes the development of students' identity as language learners – particularly French language learners – and outlines the long-term impact and advantages associated with language learning. Beyond learning outcomes, the curriculum describes effective pedagogical approaches that can be used in kindergarten, such as play-based learning, learning centres and learning through inquiry. It also outlines the importance of the classroom environment, assessment and evaluation, and communication with parents. However, these areas are described more generally, without specific consideration for the French immersion context.

Curriculum pour la maternelle en immersion (2016)

🔗 https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/eelc_kindergarten_f_i.pdf

Nova Scotia

In Nova Scotia, French immersion kindergarten is offered as a full-day program for five-year-olds, with French as the language of instruction 85% to 100% of the time (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, n.d.). In general, all subjects are taught in French except for music and physical education. There is no stand-alone curriculum for French immersion kindergarten; rather, each subject area has its own curriculum document including French as a Second Language for French immersion contexts. However, the French Language Arts curriculum does include a document exclusively focused on kindergarten. This document outlines the targeted French learning objectives in kindergarten, as well as outcomes, indicators of learning, suggestions of pedagogical approaches and a progression of learning. It also contains information regarding the essential literacy competencies for kindergarten. The curriculum is divided into three sections:

- foundations of language
- comprehension
- composition

Français arts langagiers – maternelle. Programme d'études (2024)

🔗 <https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/curriculum-files/Français%20arts%20langagiers%20maternelle%20Programme%20d%27études%20%282024%29.pdf>

Beyond its curriculum, the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has developed several supporting documents to clarify and describe the literacy skills expected of kindergarten students in immersion programs and how these skills can be developed. In addition, resources outlining the progression of learning from kindergarten to grade two are useful tools for understanding the context of kindergarten in relation to the broader elementary school experience.

Français arts langagiers maternelle : Document en un coup d'œil (2024)

An overview of the curriculum, describing the rationale, indicators and instructional scope for each competency:

🔗 <https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/outcomes-indicators-files/Français%20arts%20langagiers%20maternelle%20En%20un%20coup%20d%27oeil%20%282024%29.pdf>

Résultats et indicateurs à jour : Français arts langagiers M-2 (2024)

This document supports the French Language Arts curriculum for French immersion kindergarten by providing examples and indicators for each of the three sections:

🔗 [https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resource-files/M-2%20Français%20arts%20langagiers%20Résultats%20et%20indicateurs%20\(2024\).pdf](https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resource-files/M-2%20Français%20arts%20langagiers%20Résultats%20et%20indicateurs%20(2024).pdf)

Progression des compétences essentielles en lecture de la maternelle à la 2e année (2024)

This document supports the curriculum by delving more deeply into the essential skills for literacy. It describes the development (including specific indicators) of the following skills from kindergarten to grade two: oral language, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

🔗 https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resource-files/Progression%20of%20Essential%20Reading%20Skills%20from%20Primary%20to%20Grade%20Two_FR.pdf

Instructional Guidelines to Support the Six Pillars of Effective Reading Instruction (2024)

This document provides examples of an effective literacy program from kindergarten to grade two. There is no particular focus on kindergarten or French immersion:

🔗 <https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resource-files/Six%20Pillars%20Instructional%20Guidelines%20%282024%29.pdf>

Une boîte à outils pédagogique pour la littératie M-2 en immersion française (2024)

This one-page document contains suggestions and links to resources (both theoretical and practical) to support literacy instruction in French immersion from kindergarten to grade two:

🔗 <https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resource-files/Literacy%20Toolkit%20FR.pdf>

FAQ : Littératie de la maternelle à la 2e année (2024)

This document is intended to support teachers from kindergarten through grade two. It provides information on teaching emerging readers, types of books to select for the classroom and to send home and various strategies for teaching reading and writing. Apart from a brief paragraph at the end of the document, this information is not specific to the immersion context:

🔗 [https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resource-files/FAQ%20for%20P-2%20Language%20Arts%20FR%20\(2024\).pdf](https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resource-files/FAQ%20for%20P-2%20Language%20Arts%20FR%20(2024).pdf)

Quebec

In Quebec, kindergarten is a full-day program for four- and five-year-olds (Quebec Ministry of Education, 2025). The French immersion kindergarten model varies from one school board to another, as well as within school boards. Depending on the school board, the French immersion program begins in either K4 (four-year-olds) or K5 (five-year-olds), with the percentage of French language instruction varying from 50% to 100%. As indicated at the beginning of the report, Quebec is one of two provinces that offer French immersion at the kindergarten level without a specific curriculum. Although the curriculum document for kindergarten (referred to in Quebec as preschool) exists in both English and French, neither document addresses the French immersion context. The preschool curriculum is competency-based and none of the competencies addresses French immersion or French as a Second Language. One of the competencies outlined in the curriculum is oral and written communication; however, the specific aspects to assess are not identified. Two of the “observable behaviours” listed as evidence of communication competency are “use mother tongue to communicate” and “become aware of the similarities and differences between the language of instruction and other languages” (Quebec Ministry of Education, 2023, p. 42). The English version of the curriculum is a direct translation of the original French version, with the French as a Second Language (including French immersion) curriculum officially beginning in grade one.

Preschool cycle program (2021)

🔗 <https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/education/pfeg/prescolaire/Programme-cycle-prescolaire-AN.pdf>

Despite the absence of a specific curriculum for French immersion kindergarten, there are many resources available to support the teaching of French as a Second Language. Although these documents are primarily aimed at teaching French to non-French speakers in the French-language school system (rather than French immersion in the English-language system), the information on teaching and learning additional languages can also be applied to immersion contexts. These documents are intended for elementary school (starting in grade one), but some are also useful for kindergarten.

Intervenir auprès de jeunes élèves en début d'apprentissage d'une langue seconde (2018)

🔗 https://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/education/jeunes/pfeg/intervenir_eleves_debut-apprentissage.pdf

Formules pédagogiques favorisant l'interaction et la production orale (2019)

🔗 https://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/education/jeunes/pfeg/Formules-pedagogiques-primaire.pdf

Le vocabulaire, une des pierres angulaires de la réussite scolaire en langue seconde (2017)

🔗 <https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/education/pfeg/ressources-pedagogiques/Vocabulaire-langue-seconde.pdf>

Enseigner pour favoriser le transfert des apprentissages (2019)

This document provides suggestions for leveraging the connections between English language skills and the ELA (English Language Arts) program and the development of French, but not until grade one.

🔗 <https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/education/pfeg/ressources-pedagogiques/Transfert-apprentissages-langue-seconde.pdf>

Ontario

As in Quebec, the French immersion kindergarten model in Ontario varies from one school board to another. In Ontario, kindergarten is a full-day program for four- and five-year-olds (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Depending on the school board, the French immersion program begins in either junior kindergarten (four-year-olds) or senior kindergarten (five-year-olds), with the percentage of French language instruction varying from 50% to 100%. In many school boards, physical education and music are taught in English and in most Catholic schools, religion is also taught in English. It is important to note that, while Ontario does offer French immersion at the kindergarten level, many school boards do not offer it until grade one or two. Again, like Quebec, Ontario does not have a specific curriculum for French immersion kindergarten. The kindergarten curriculum is based on four “frames” or broad areas of learning: belonging and contributing, self-regulation and well-being, demonstrating literacy and mathematics behaviours, and problem solving and innovating (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). This curriculum considers English language learners and students with special needs. The French version of the curriculum also includes considerations for Ontario's Francophone context. Although it refers to language and literacy development and the role of children's first language in learning English, it makes no mention of the French immersion context. The French as a Second Language curriculum begins in grade one.

The Kindergarten Program (2016)

🔗 https://files.ontario.ca/books/edu_the_kindergarten_program_english_aoda_web_oct7.pdf

A document describing the context of French immersion was created to accompany the 2010 version of the Ontario kindergarten curriculum. Although this document was not updated when the new version of the curriculum was published, it nevertheless contains useful information on ways to create enriching and meaningful learning experiences in French immersion kindergarten classrooms.

Kindergarten in a French Immersion Setting (2015)

🔗 <https://transformingfsl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Prologue-March2015English.pdf>

For additional information, the Ministry of Education published a reference document for teaching French as a Second Language in Ontario. This document provides information and context for teaching French as a Second Language in various programs (i.e., French immersion, extended French and core French). It includes a summary of research, the context for learning French in Ontario and information for parents and the community. It does not provide specific information on teaching or learning French in kindergarten.

A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools: Kindergarten to Grade 12 (2013)

🔗 https://files.ontario.ca/edu-1_3/edu-framework-french-second-language-en-2021-11-18.pdf

Manitoba

In Manitoba, the French immersion kindergarten model varies from one school board to another. Kindergarten is offered as either a full- or a half-day program and, depending on the school, French immersion begins in either the four-year-old or five-year-old program, with French being the sole language of instruction (Government of Manitoba, n.d.). There is no stand-alone curriculum; rather, there is a curriculum for each subject area from kindergarten to grade 12. Certain subject areas (mathematics, science, social studies) have curricula specific to French immersion; however, apart from a few sentences referring to the immersion context, they are identical to the curricula for the English and French first language programs. The French Language Arts curriculum for French immersion includes sections describing effective pedagogy in French immersion as well as the role French plays in the specific context of Manitoba.

Cadre curriculaire - Français - Maternelle à la 8e année - Programme d'immersion française (2021)

🔗 https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/m12/frpub/ped/fl2/cadre_m-8/docs/document_complet.pdf

Schéma des apprentissages pour maternelle et 1ère année (2021)

🔗 https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/m12/frpub/ped/fl2/cadre_m-8/docs/stade/eveil.pdf

Beyond its curriculum, the Manitoba government also provides supporting documents to contextualize and describe the French immersion program in the province.

Français arts langagiers - immersion Kindergarten to Grade 12: Language Arts Practices Orientation Guide (2020)

This document describes approaches to teaching language arts (dialogue and reflexivity) in French and English for immersion students from kindergarten to grade 12, as well as best teaching practices. The practices described are general to all levels and are not specific to the kindergarten context.

🔗 https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/french_imm/document_orientation/full_doc.pdf

La langue au cœur du programme d'immersion française (2021)

This document describes the context of French immersion in the province of Manitoba, pedagogical strategies for teaching and learning an additional language using an integrated approach and the challenges faced by French immersion students. Although the content is not specifically focused on kindergarten, the information (particularly the pedagogical practices) is useful and applicable to kindergarten contexts.

🔗 https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/m12/frpub/me/langue_coeur/docs/document_complet.pdf

The French Immersion Policy in Manitoba (2023)

This document presents the context of French immersion in Manitoba, foundations of the immersion program and essential aspects for ensuring the program's success. Although it is not specifically focused on kindergarten, some of the information (e.g., creating an environment that motivates students to learn the language) can help teachers by providing useful considerations and suggestions.

🔗 https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/frenchimm/docs/Document_The_French_Immersion_Policy_in_Manitoba.pdf

The French Immersion Program in Manitoba: A Renewed Vision (2017)

This document, produced by Manitoba Education and Training, outlines the vision for French immersion in the province, student pathways in the program and the pedagogical practices that support the program vision. Although kindergarten is included in Manitoba's French immersion program, it is not specifically referred to in this document.

🔗 https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/french_imm/vision/docs/renewed_vision.pdf

Reading in the French Immersion Program (K-2) (2017)

Information for parents on how children learn to read in both French and English in French immersion programs:

🔗 https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/m12/frpub/ped/fi2/depliant_parent/docs/depliant.pdf

Saskatchewan

In Saskatchewan, French immersion kindergarten is offered for five-year-olds in either full- or half-day programs, depending on the school board, with French as the language of instruction 90% to 100% of the time. There is a stand-alone curriculum for French immersion kindergarten, with references to language outcomes and learning skills specific to the French immersion context. The curriculum is interdisciplinary and identifies four cross-curricular competencies: developing

thinking, developing identity and interdependence, developing literacies and developing social responsibility. In addition, three competencies specific to students in French immersion are outlined: Identifying oneself as a French immersion learner, expressing oneself to meet one's needs and intentions and interpreting the meaning of ideas and information (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). The curriculum presents specific objectives and outcomes for French language learning and describes aspects related to learning in kindergarten (e.g., play and environment); however, it does not consider how these aspects can be adapted or leveraged in a French immersion setting.

Immersion française : Maternelle (2015)

🔗 <https://progetudes.gov.sk.ca/CurriculumDocument?id=407>

Alberta

In Alberta, the French immersion kindergarten model varies from one school board to another. Kindergarten is offered as a half- or full-day program and, depending on the school, can begin when children are either four or five years old. In French immersion kindergarten programs, French is the language of instruction 90% to 100% of the time. In most Catholic schools, all subjects apart from religion are taught in French. There is no stand-alone curriculum for kindergarten; rather, each subject area has a curriculum for kindergarten to grade 12.

The curriculum for French as a Second Language in kindergarten differs from both the English Language Arts curriculum for kindergarten and the French first language curriculum, making it unique to French immersion contexts. The French immersion curriculum is structured around organizing ideas, guiding questions and learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills and procedures (Government of Alberta, 2024). The organizing ideas for kindergarten through grade six are related to the following themes:

- oral communication
- vocabulary
- phonological awareness
- phonics
- text organization
- text comprehension
- reading fluency
- text production
- grammar

French Immersion Language Arts and Literature: Kindergarten (2024)

🔗 <https://curriculum.learnalberta.ca/curriculum/en/gfc/OLAFLA/OLAFLAK>

The Alberta government has also prepared resources for parents whose children are starting immersion in kindergarten and who may have questions about what to expect and what support is available.

French Immersion Kindergarten in Alberta: A Handbook for Parents (2012)

This document serves as a resource for parents who are considering French immersion for their child, as well as those who already have children enrolled in the program. It describes the kindergarten program in general and the aspects that make the French immersion context unique. It also provides examples of how parents can support their children in the program.

🔗 <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/a29feab6-fd20-4229-a597-284507890748/resource/6eff8ed4-2647-4376-a88e-3e6f03c7da96/download/5917848-2012-handbookfrimmkindergarten.pdf>

Kindergarten at a Glance: French Immersion (2025)

This document provides a brief overview of what children and their parents can expect in kindergarten. Although one paragraph is specifically devoted to the French immersion context (under Language Arts), the rest of the information is identical to the document for kindergarten programs in English and French as a first language.

🔗 <https://curriculum.learnalberta.ca/cdn/parent-space/prints/at-a-glance-ki-en.pdf>

British Columbia

In British Columbia, French immersion kindergarten is offered as a full-day program for five-year-olds, with French being the sole language of instruction (Government of British Columbia, 2022). There is no stand-alone curriculum for kindergarten; rather each subject area has a curriculum document for kindergarten through grade 12. The curriculum for French as a Second Language in kindergarten differs from both the English Language Arts curriculum for kindergarten and the French first language curriculum, making it unique to French immersion contexts. The curriculum is structured in terms of big ideas, curricular competencies and content (Government of British Columbia, 2016). In addition to the complete curriculum, the Ministry of Education has also published documents detailing each of these three aspects.

Area of Learning: French Immersion Language Arts (2016)

This document outlines the learning objectives and expected outcomes for students in French immersion programs from kindergarten through ninth grade. Learning is divided into “big ideas,” “curricular competencies,” and “content.”

- 🔗 https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/curriculum/fral/en_fral_k-9.pdf

Français langue seconde K-10 – Big Ideas (2019)

This document provides an overview of the “big ideas” that form the foundation of the French immersion language arts curriculum from kindergarten through grade 10.

- 🔗 https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/curriculum/continuous-views/en_FRAL_k-10_big_ideas.pdf

Français langue seconde K-10 – Curricular Competencies (2019)

This document provides an overview of the curricular competencies targeted by the French immersion curriculum from kindergarten to grade 10.

- 🔗 https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/curriculum/continuous-views/en_FRAL_k-10_curricular_competencies.pdf

Français langue seconde K-10 – Content (2019)

This document provides an overview of the content covered in the French immersion language arts curriculum from kindergarten to grade 10.

- 🔗 https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/curriculum/continuous-views/en_FRAL_k-10_content.pdf

Finally, the British Columbia government has prepared a program guide on full-day kindergarten. This document contains useful information for administrators implementing full-day kindergarten in their schools, teachers new to kindergarten teaching who are looking for support in planning their program and parents wanting to know what their child will experience in kindergarten. However, there is no reference to the French immersion context. The document exists in French but is a direct translation of the English version.

Full Day Kindergarten Program Guide (2010)

- 🔗 https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/early-learning/teach/fulldaykindergarten/fdk_program_guide.pdf

Yukon

In the Yukon, French immersion kindergarten is offered as a full-day program for five-year-olds, with French being the sole language of instruction. Yukon schools follow the British Columbia curriculum, while incorporating content specific to the knowledge and learning of Yukon First Nations. The French immersion kindergarten curriculum is thus identical to the one described above for British Columbia.

Northwest Territories

In the Northwest Territories, French immersion kindergarten is offered for four- and five-year-olds (depending on the school board), with French being the sole language of instruction (Yellowknife Education District No.1, 2024.). There is a stand-alone curriculum for kindergarten in French, with differences in the learning objectives and outcomes for French first language and French immersion contexts. The kindergarten curriculum is competency-based and focuses on the following: living in the world, ways of working, ways of thinking and tools for working. For each of these competencies, objectives related to “being,” “belonging,” and “becoming” are outlined (Government of Northwest Territories, 2017). Within these competencies, there are two sections that describe specific outcomes for students in French immersion settings:

- conversation and communication
- literacy

Programme d'études de la prématernelle et de la maternelle des TNO (2017)

🔗 https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/ece/files/resources/jk_-kindergarten_curriculum_french_0.pdf

At the time this study is being conducted, the Northwest Territories is in the process of adapting the British Columbia curriculum to reflect the context of its families, communities and culture. The French immersion curriculum is part of this adaptation process.

General reflections

The variety of French immersion kindergarten programs across and even within Canadian provinces and territories gives us a unique opportunity to leverage the strengths of these different models. Beyond the curriculum documents, it is important to understand what French immersion kindergarten teachers do in their classrooms to create environments that provide our youngest learners with meaningful and rewarding experiences with the French language.



Methodology

To this end, the present study consisted of two parts. The first was an eight-question survey of French immersion kindergarten teachers aiming to better understand their learning priorities, the resources they use to support their teaching and the additional resources that would be useful to them. A copy of the survey questions can be found in Appendix A. Apart from the first two questions, which were designed to obtain demographic information about the participants, the survey questions were open-ended to ensure that all information could be captured and that teachers could, as much as possible, share their experiences. The survey was distributed by ACPI and remained open for 10 days. A total of 48 teachers responded, representing nine of the 11 provinces and territories where French immersion is offered in kindergarten (additional demographic data about participants are presented in the Results section). Although the total

number of respondents represents only a small percentage of French immersion kindergarten teachers across the country, the results nevertheless highlight some clear themes that shed light on the current situation in French immersion kindergarten classrooms in Canada. As noted above, apart from demographic questions, the survey questions were open-ended. This means that all responses came solely from teachers (i.e., they were not presented as options that could simply be checked off). Therefore, although 48 teachers may seem like a small number, the clear emergence of so many themes allows us to present them with confidence.

The second part of the project consisted of interviews with pairs of kindergarten teachers and French immersion pedagogical consultants, with the aim of triangulating the survey data and deepening our understanding of the results. This part of the study sought to explore French immersion kindergarten in greater depth to better understand the experiences of those most closely involved in the program. The objective was not to collect more thematic data, but rather to have rich and in-depth conversations to gain a better understanding of the survey data. To this end, four interviews were conducted. Considering the different categories of French immersion kindergarten models described in the previous section, pairs of teachers and pedagogical consultants were selected to represent each of the curricular contexts. Representatives from both Ontario and Quebec were selected to participate in the interview because these two provinces have no curriculum to support French immersion kindergarten. Therefore, individuals working in these programs must identify for themselves which aspects of the French language should be prioritized. A pair from Saskatchewan was selected to represent provinces and territories where there is a specific curriculum for French immersion kindergarten. Finally, to represent contexts where there is no stand-alone kindergarten curriculum but where learning objectives are stated in the curriculum for each subject (including French as a Second Language), a pair of participants from Alberta was selected. The interview questions can be found in Appendix B.



Results

Survey

The first two survey questions focused on demographic data. Teachers were asked in which province or territory they work and how many years they have been teaching French immersion kindergarten. As shown in Figure 1, the largest percentage of respondents came from Quebec (40%) and Alberta (21%). The Atlantic provinces and Saskatchewan had fewer than three participants each and, unfortunately, the Yukon and Northwest Territories were not represented. It should be noted that Nunavut and New Brunswick do not offer a kindergarten immersion program and were therefore not represented either.

As shown in Figure 2, most participants were either relatively new or relatively experienced in their French immersion teaching careers: 46% of respondents reported having taught French immersion kindergarten for 1 to 5 years, and 31% for more than 20 years.

Figure 1. Participants by province/territory

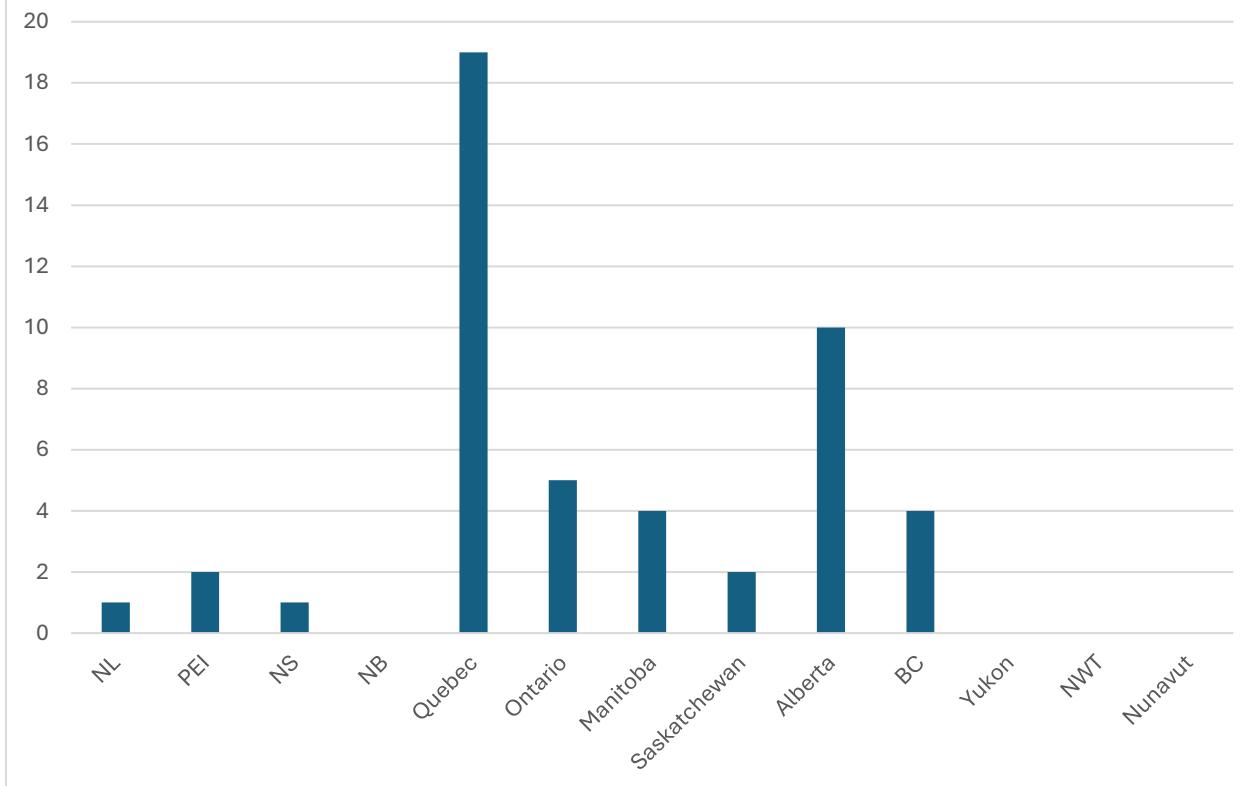
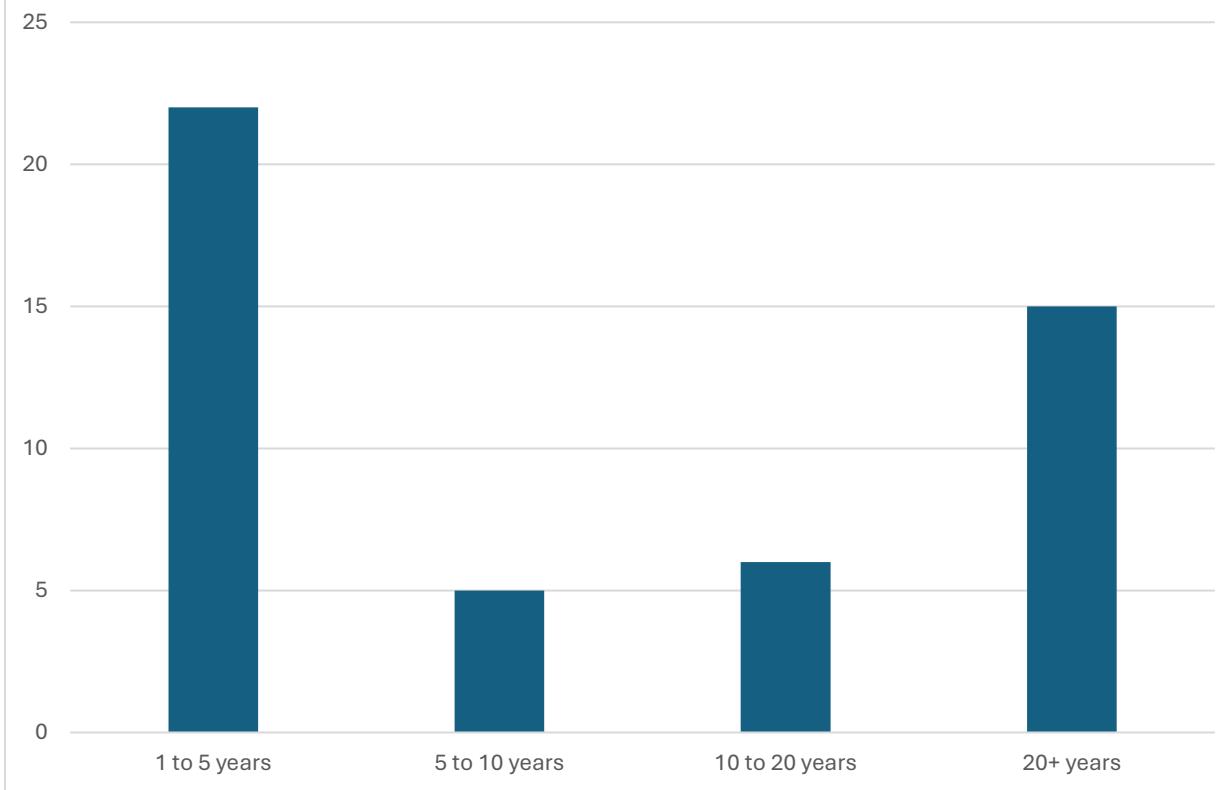
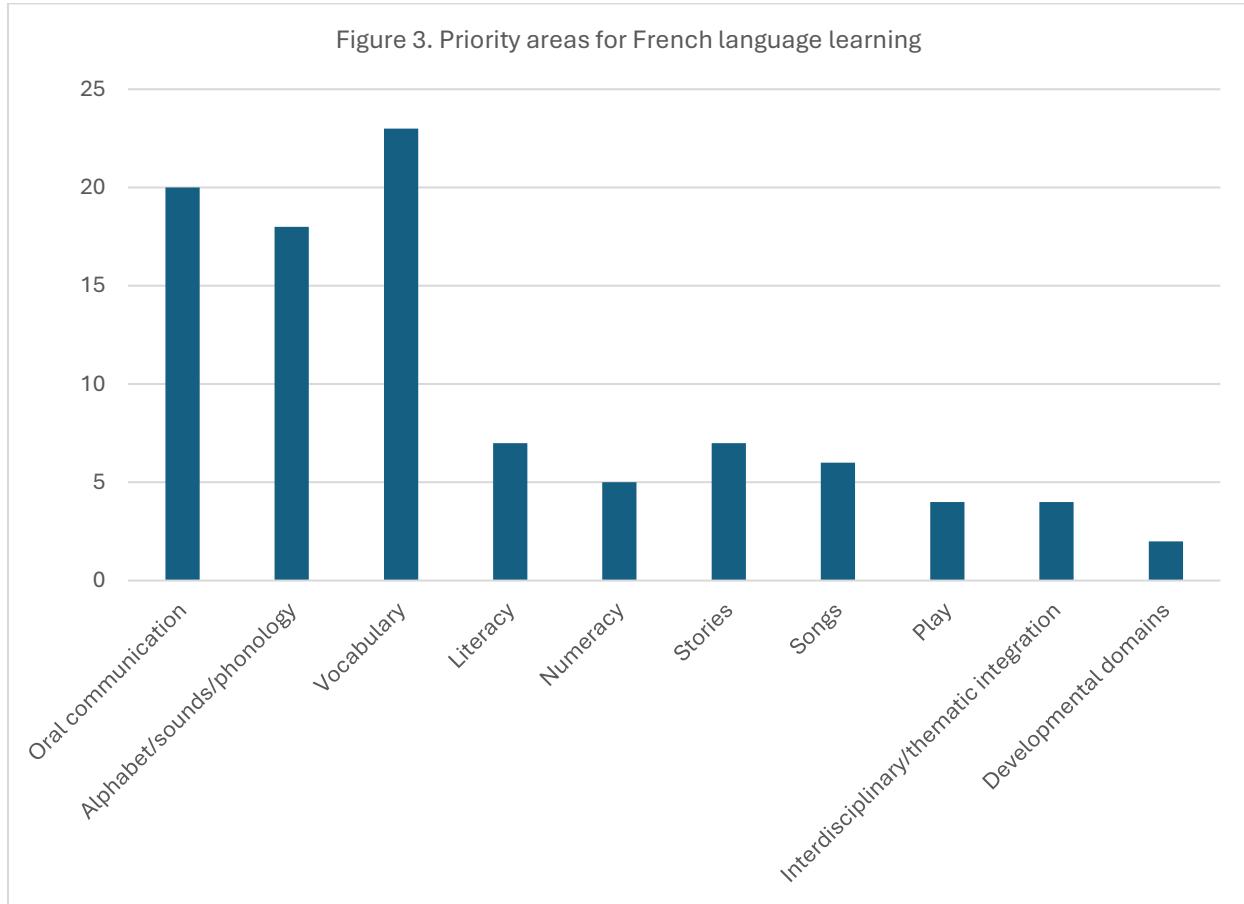


Figure 2. Years of teaching experience in French immersion kindergarten



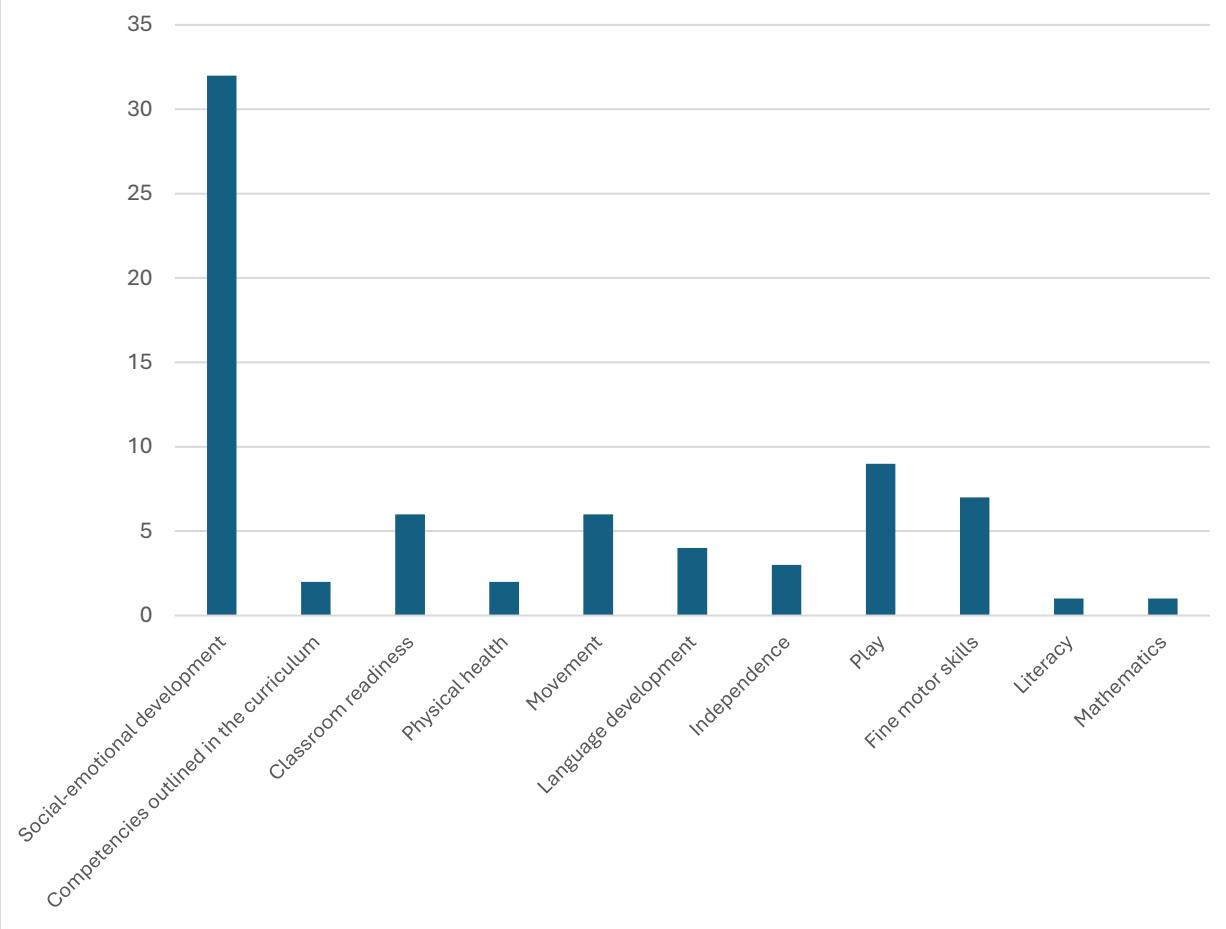
The third survey question asked teachers to identify the aspects of the French language they emphasize in their classrooms. Given the diversity of models across the country and the absence of a curriculum in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, the teachers had some freedom to decide what to focus on. The responses to the questions were reviewed and coded according to the following categories: oral communication, alphabet/sounds/phonology, vocabulary, literacy, numeracy, stories, songs, play, interdisciplinary/thematic integration and developmental domains. The results for this question are presented in Figure 3. As the table shows, the aspects most frequently emphasized by teachers were vocabulary (48%), oral communication (42%) and alphabet knowledge (38%). Of the 48 respondents, 29 indicated aspects belonging to two or more categories.

Figure 3. Priority areas for French language learning



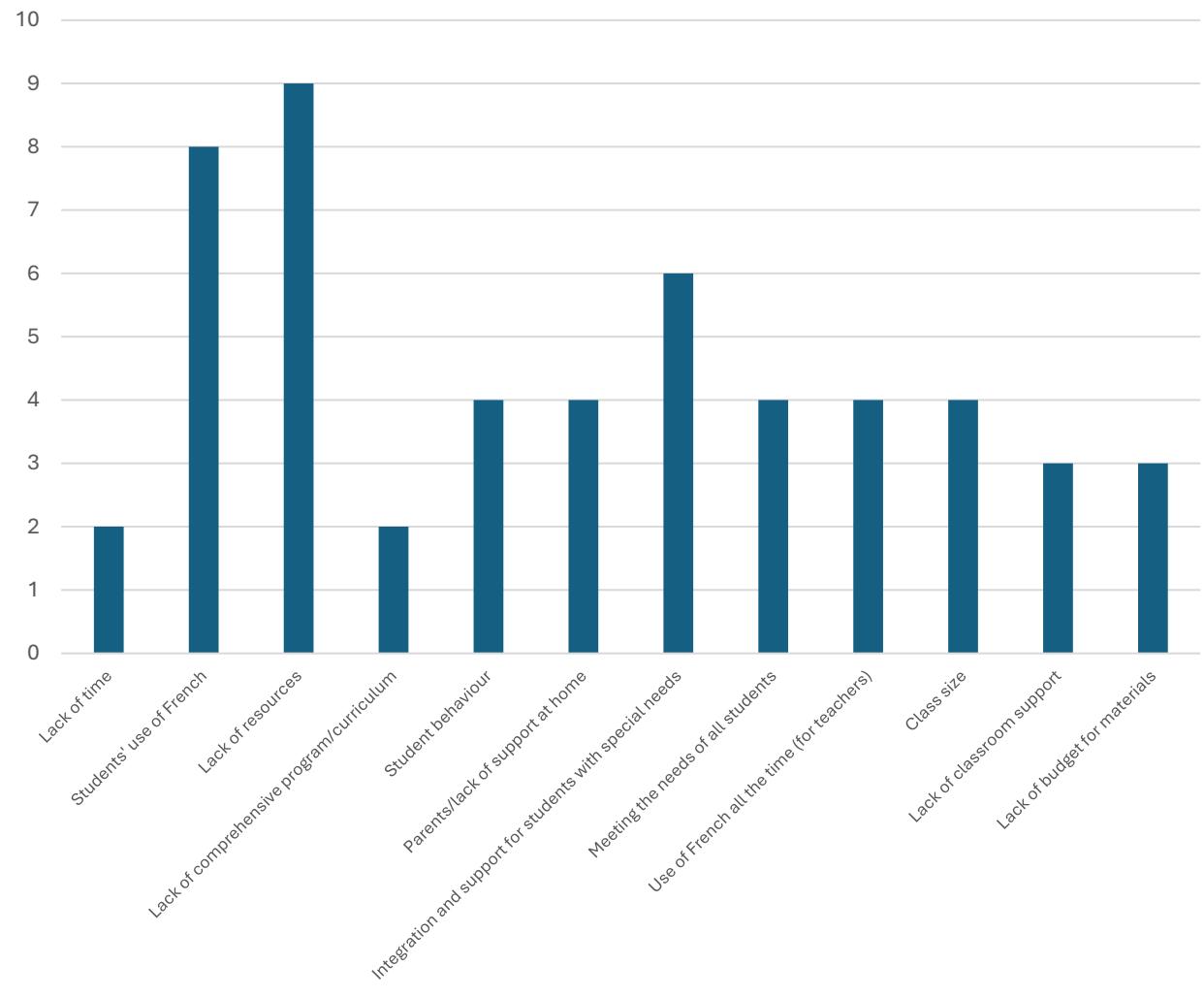
The fourth question asked teachers to indicate their priorities beyond French language learning, in terms of overall development. Once again, given the diversity of French immersion kindergarten models across the country, it is important to understand which areas teachers prioritize. This will allow us to better identify resources that may be useful and will in turn help early elementary teachers become familiar with their students' prior learning and experiences. Responses to the questions were reviewed and coded according to the following categories: social-emotional development, competencies outlined in the curriculum, classroom readiness, physical health, movement, language development, independence, play, fine motor skills, literacy and mathematics. The responses to this question are presented in Figure 4. As the table shows, social-emotional development was by far the most common area reported as a priority by teachers (67%). Some teachers referred directly to this term, while others referred to specific aspects of social-emotional development, such as autonomy, socialization, self-regulation, emotion management and self-confidence. Again, many respondents (16 out of 48) identified more than one priority area.

Figure 4. Priority areas for overall development



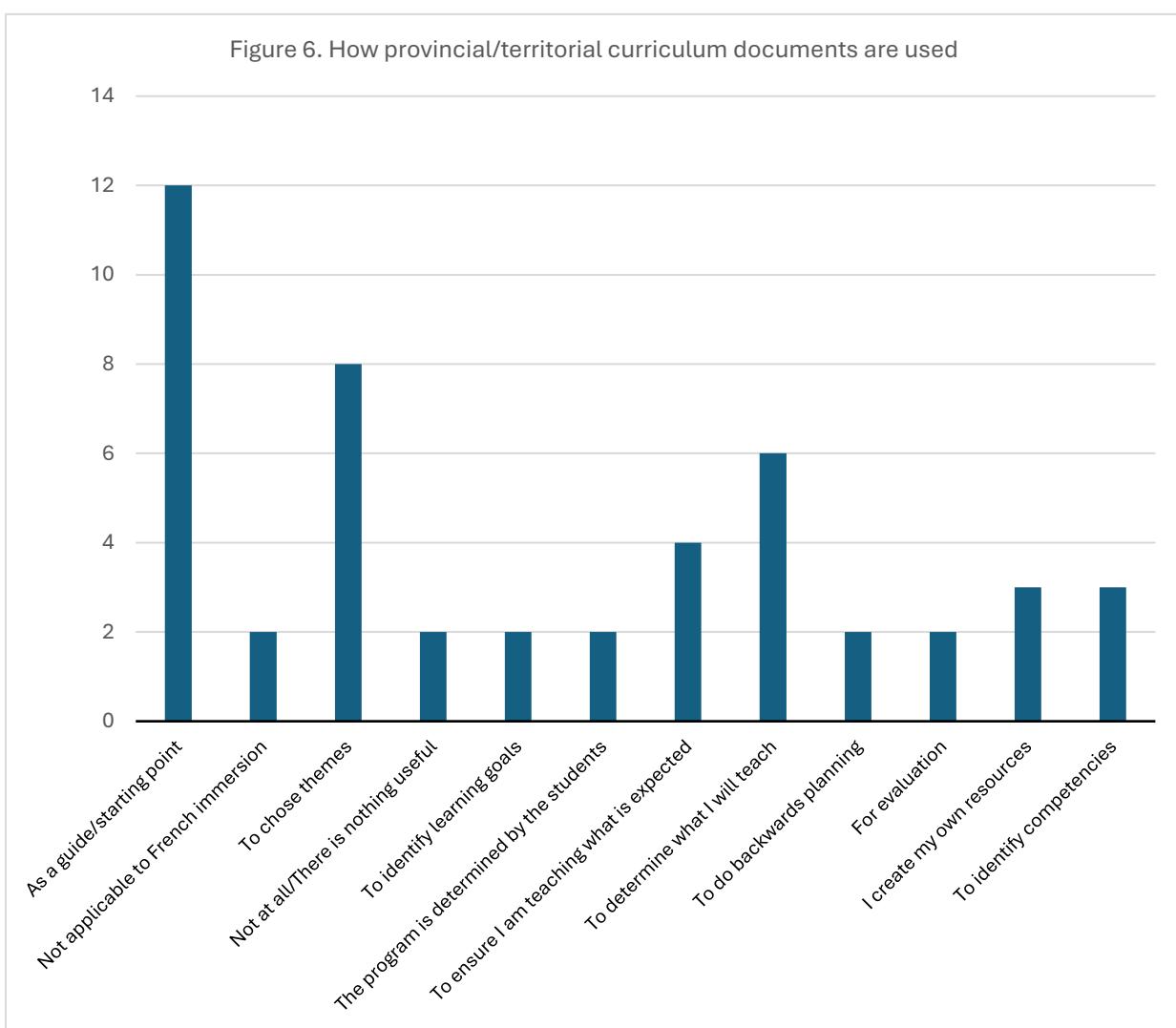
The fifth question focused on the greatest challenges faced by teachers in French immersion kindergarten programs. The objective of this question was to identify and target areas where support could be provided. Responses to the questions were reviewed and coded according to the following categories: lack of time, students' use of French, lack of resources, lack of a comprehensive program/curriculum, student behaviour, parents/lack of support at home, integration and support for students with special needs, meeting the needs of all students, use of French 100% of the time (for teachers), class size, lack of classroom support and lack of budget for materials. Although the responses were distributed more evenly across the categories, two issues were identified most often: students' use of French and lack of resources. Teachers noted that students had difficulty speaking French because they lacked the vocabulary to communicate with each other or with teachers, lacked confidence in using the vocabulary they did have and were unmotivated to speak French because everything else in the school functioned in English.

Figure 5. Challenges associated with teaching French immersion kindergarten



The sixth question focused on teachers' use of existing curriculum documents to understand program planning and implementation. As shown in Figure 6, responses ranged from "use as a guide/starting point" to "not at all." This is important because it shows that just because a curriculum exists does not mean that it is used effectively or that it provides the support teachers are seeking.

Figure 6. How provincial/territorial curriculum documents are used



The seventh question asked teachers to list the resources they use to support their teaching besides curriculum documents. This question aimed to understand what teachers already find useful, so that we can leverage these types of resources. Given that the resources listed were very diverse and that we wanted to present an accurate and comprehensive overview of the responses provided, all resources mentioned by respondents are listed in Table 1. Resources were grouped into the following categories: general resources, online resources, board/ministry resources, published resources, human resources and teaching strategies.

Table 1. Resources used to support teaching

Resource category	Resource (Number of times mentioned if more than one)	
General resources	Books	Songs
	Decodable books (2)	Communication games
	Albums	Resources from France for literacy
	Posters	Oral games
	Videos	Outdoor classroom
Online resources	YouTube (3)	Websites (5)
	Teachers Pay Teachers (12)	Pinterest (5)
	Social media (2)	Instagram
School board/ministry resources	CBE phonemic progression lessons	Workshops offered by the school board
	School-based PLC	
	Curriculum	Supporting document added to the report card which explains the developmental domains and what is evaluated
	Resources shared by the school board and pedagogical consultant (2)	
Published resources	Alphagraphe (2)	Heggerty
	Jolly Phonics (2)	Je sais lire
	D'Eclipsons	Coast metro
	DREF Manitoba (2)	I Can Read
	Acadience	UFLI
	Son-au-graphe (2)	Alec
	Math Up (2)	Boukili

	ELECT	Twinkl
	Character Strong	Idéollo
	AIM	Graphone
	Récit (3)	La forêt de l'alphabet
	Mieux enseigner (2)	Jardin de Vicky
	Boom cards	Seesaw (in English)
	Application Mauril	Padlet
	Raconte-moi l'alphabet	Growing in Faith, Growing in Wisdom
Human resources	My colleagues (4)	Resources shared by colleagues (3)
	Facebook groups	Teachers from other schools
Teaching strategies	Gestures	Phonemic practice
	Observation and documentation	Learning centres
	Neurolinguistic approach	Attachment theory and the socio-emotional well-being of children
	Interactive journals	Themes and subjects that are relevant to the students
	Robotics	

The last question asked teachers to list resources that do not currently exist but would be useful to support French immersion teaching and learning in kindergarten. Together with the responses to the rest of the survey, the answers to this question can help identify areas where there may be gaps in support, so that steps can be taken to fill them. For this question, only responses specific to French immersion kindergarten were coded and are reported here. Responses related to budget constraints or other policy-related comments (i.e., having smaller classes, a longer school day or a larger classroom budget) are not reported, as they are beyond the scope of this project. The resources mentioned by more than one participant were as follows: more resources to support literacy in French immersion, simple games in French that reinforce math and literacy, a list/collection of French songs, a list/collection of books in French, exchanges with other teachers and resources to help children manage their emotions. However, some teachers noted that the issue is not simply a lack of resources, but rather that they are not always free to use the resources

they want and there is no coordination between their school and the school board regarding access to certain resources.

Interviews

As described in the methodology, four interviews were conducted with pairs of teachers and French immersion pedagogical consultants, each representing a different curricular context in Canada. The interviews consisted of six questions and were conducted on Zoom, lasting between 20 and 40 minutes. The interviews were recorded for transcription and careful review. This section presents key information that helps to better understand the context of French immersion kindergarten, its strengths and opportunities for program development.

Question 1: General information

To begin, participants were asked to describe the French immersion program offered by their school or school board. Since participants were selected to represent different contexts across the country, different models were described. Two of the pairs of participants came from provinces offering full-day kindergarten, while the other two offered half-day kindergarten. Only one of the teams came from a school board where French immersion was offered starting in kindergarten for four-year-olds, with the other three starting with five-year-olds. All teams described their program as being exclusively in French; however, one pedagogical consultant explained that this varied within her school board, with French being the language of instruction between 50% and 100% of the time. The factor that varied the most among the respondents was the number of adults present in the classroom. In Ontario, kindergarten classes with more than 15 students have a teacher and an educator in the classroom. In Quebec, the teacher interviewed also had an educator in her classroom, though this was not always the case. In the other contexts represented, there was only one teacher in the classroom. In some cases, additional adults were present depending on the needs of the students, this was not guaranteed, and often, the teacher was alone with the students. Perhaps most relevant is that in many contexts, the additional adults in the classroom did not speak French. In the Ontario school board represented in this interview, it was mentioned that the board was fortunate to have many Francophone educators. In addition, these educators specialized in second language learning and could provide strong language support to their students. However, it was noted that this was not the case throughout the province and that educators often had limited French language skills. This would sometimes lead students to turn to adults other than the teacher because they knew they would be able to speak English, thus reducing their opportunities to practise communicating in French. It also limits the opportunities for students to hear the adults around them speaking French to each other, which underscores the importance of learning French and provides additional learning opportunities.

Question 2: In general, what is the clientele of the students who are enrolled in French immersion in your region (i.e., Anglophone, allophone, basic French language skills, etc.)?

The interview continued by asking participants to talk about the clientele in French immersion kindergarten in their respective regions. One theme that emerged from their responses was the changing demographics of the program. All the interview participants had at least 10 years of experience in a French immersion setting (and many had more than that), and all spoke about the fact that, in the past, immersion kindergarten classes were mainly composed of children from English-speaking families and that this was no longer the case. In many contexts, students entering French immersion speak a language other than French or English at home and have already begun learning English as a second language. French therefore becomes a third language, and the context of learning an additional language is more familiar to children than it was in the past. Beyond linguistic diversity, participants also commented on the cultural and socioeconomic diversity that is now more common in French immersion programs. In the context of the Quebec school board represented, kindergarten is offered only in immersion; there are no options for an exclusively English program. This means that children from all linguistic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds are enrolled in French immersion, as are children with special learning needs. This represents a demographic shift. The diverse backgrounds and experiences of children can be leveraged to maximize learning opportunities. As one participant from Ontario described,

“At one time, there was a certain profile of students in immersion programs, but that has changed a lot. I am working to ensure that it is not just a program for certain students, but for all students and families who want to participate. We have a lot of diversity in terms of first languages. There is also socioeconomic diversity, diversity in parental education, and even students with special needs. It's great to see how this has changed over the years.”

Question 3: To what extent does your school/school board/ministry provide guidelines on specific learning outcomes for French immersion kindergarten? Are there learning objectives that you establish yourself?

The answers to this question varied considerably from one interview to another, reflecting the different curricular realities of each of the regions represented. In Ontario and Quebec, where there is no curriculum for French immersion kindergarten, participants discussed the fact that French language learning objectives differ from one school to another, and even from one class to another. While the English kindergarten curriculum is used to target skills and areas for development, the lack of reference to French language learning outcomes leaves teachers to determine their own objectives for their students. In Ontario, programs such as Son-o-graphe and the Acadience test, as well as the “Right to Read” report, have provided a little more support and guidance for teaching and assessing letters and sounds; however, when it comes to vocabulary and oral language development, teachers are still left to identify their own learning objectives.

Another teacher spoke about the importance of school leadership and how it can determine the school climate for French language learning. In contexts where there are no guidelines for French language outcomes, having common goals for the school can help teachers identify the vocabulary to be taught at each grade level. This participant emphasized the importance of communication within the school so that teachers at each grade level are aware of what has been taught in previous years. In this way, teachers can build on what has been taught each year and enrich students' vocabulary. Another effective practice described is to determine certain vocabulary used within the school (for example, "se mettre en rang" rather than "se mettre en ligne"), as well as to use uniform pictograms throughout the school.

In provinces where there is a curriculum for French immersion kindergarten, the answer to this question was clearer, as it is the ministry that determines the language objectives for students. However, in both provinces represented, kindergarten is an optional half-day program and teachers highlighted the difficulties this creates. In provinces where there is no stand-alone kindergarten curriculum (in English or French) and where learning outcomes are described in the curriculum for each subject area, teachers must sort through, synthesize and teach considerable content when students are only in the classroom for half the day. In these cases, the teacher highlighted the critical work of the French immersion pedagogical consultant, who worked with teams of teachers to create documents to organize their program in a way that makes sense to them and brings together the content from the different subject area curricula.

"...the pedagogical consultants helped us create documents that help us organize our program, what we're going to do at each point in the year, what we're going to evaluate, and where the links are with science, math, etc. And because we created them together, everyone is on board. We had the opportunity to pilot the new curriculum three years ago, and we were able to give our ideas to the government. They took many of our ideas and we revised our documents. We continued to meet in our group, and we have all these documents."

This statement from a French immersion kindergarten teacher once again highlights the importance of teamwork and communication within schools, so that teachers feel supported and students get the most out of the curriculum.

Question 4: In your opinion, what are the learning objectives in French immersion kindergarten?

The next interview question mirrored a question from the survey regarding teachers' learning objectives for their students. As in the survey, participants emphasized oral communication and vocabulary development in terms of French language objectives, and adapting to the school environment as a more general objective. Several participants discussed the fact that to feel comfortable speaking and taking risks in a second language, students need to feel safe, which is facilitated by a play-based or inquiry-based approach. One aspect that was discussed was the importance of not allowing students' limited vocabulary to prevent the teaching of more complex

concepts that would likely be addressed in first language contexts. For example, one teacher stated:

“A student does not need to know what a ‘mouton’ is to understand that if we take away the ‘m’ and add a ‘b’ it will become ‘bouton’.”

Two themes emerged during the interviews that were not brought up in the survey. The first was the importance of developing a relationship with students' families to ensure that they also feel supported in the French immersion context. One participant noted that parents may sometimes feel anxious about enrolling their child in a program where they are unable to help them with language development. The participant emphasized the importance of working with parents and reinforcing the fact that, as parents, they know their children best and are therefore in a position to support their children's learning. The participant explained:

“They need to feel confident that they are the experts on their children and that it's important to work in their first language with them. And this will help them. And on my side, I will teach them in French and I will support them in that area, but they are the experts.”

The second aspect that was raised regarding learning objectives that was not reported in the survey was the importance of exposing students to Francophone cultures and introducing them to their journey as French language learners. As mentioned in the first section of this report, identity development for French language learners is part of some existing French immersion curricula, so it was interesting to hear teachers elaborate on this concept. One teacher from a predominantly English-speaking community also discussed the importance of introducing students to a variety of French speakers through songs and videos, since often the only place students hear French is in the classroom. She also talked about discussing and celebrating Francophone cultural traditions, such as carnival and “cabanes à sucre,” to help students develop a sense of belonging to the French-Canadian community.

Question 5: What are the greatest challenges associated with teaching French immersion kindergarten?

Next, another survey question was addressed: the challenges associated with teaching French immersion kindergarten. While the most common survey response was a lack of resources, this issue was hardly mentioned during the interviews. The main discussions in response to this question focused on the ability to meet the diverse learning needs of all students, often with limited support, and on the motivation to speak French, on the part of both teachers and students. Regarding teachers' motivation to speak French, one teacher explained that since French was not her first language, it was difficult for her to speak French consistently to students and colleagues. However, hearing teachers communicate with each other in French gives students the opportunity to become familiar with the language, and the participant admitted that these opportunities were not always fully exploited. Another teacher commented that students would be able to express themselves more clearly if they communicated with them in their first

language, and that conversations would thus be more fluid. The teacher explained that it is complicated when:

“...there are difficult situations and vocabulary is missing. Or when we’re reading a story, you try as much as possible not to translate, but they haven’t understood. In English, conversations would be more fluid. In the morning circle, they are shy to express themselves. If they were speaking in their first language, we could go further. They can’t express themselves the way they want.”

Another teacher described the difficulty of explaining how learning takes place in French immersion kindergarten to parents, especially when they compare their children to those who are enrolled in an English program.

“Often, parents are insecure and want to see results very quickly. They withdraw their child from the program because they don’t see progress. They compare their child to a child in an English program. I think this idea begins in kindergarten. Parents will start to question themselves. As French immersion teachers from kindergarten to twelfth grade, the message needs to be reiterated each year.”

A final challenge raised by a participant was the fact that, often due to lack of time, teachers are looking for “ready-made” ideas for their teaching, which can lead them to seek out what is easiest and takes the least time. This is reflected in the survey results, where many teachers identified websites such as Teachers Pay Teachers as resources they often use to support their teaching (in fact, Teachers Pay Teachers was the resource most frequently cited by teachers in the survey). However, these types of resources are not always high quality and have the drawback of not fostering discussions among colleagues, where ideas can be exchanged in a meaningful way and where the person sharing the information often gains as much as the person receiving it.

“I don’t think that things like Teachers Pay Teachers (TPT) help us. Sometimes, yes, there are good things. But before, instead of doing this, I would go to the classroom next door to chat, ask how they do things. This doesn’t happen as much anymore. We are looking for magic solutions to answer our questions and we don’t communicate and share ideas. Without conversation, TPT is just STUFF.”

After the predetermined interview questions, participants were asked if they had anything to add to the discussion on French immersion kindergarten that had not yet been addressed. Although most did not have much to add, as many topics had already been covered, all participants expressed the feeling that, despite the challenges mentioned, French immersion kindergarten is a special place and that we must ensure that it continues to be so. As such, this section of the report concludes with two significant comments from participants:

“It’s a magical place. You can see what the children are capable of. At 4 years old, what they can understand, do, and communicate in another

language. It's magic. And I think we need to continue to encourage French immersion kindergarten."

"I think families are very lucky to have the chance to learn two languages. They will come out ahead. It's a great model we have. In the past, we were stuck in the idea that 'the teacher doesn't understand English'. But that's changed now, it's no longer that the teacher doesn't understand English, but that I am bilingual just like you. French immersion in preschool is a wonderful experience."



Key findings and related recommendations

While many ideas and perspectives were shared throughout this research, six main conclusions can be drawn.

The importance of oral communication and vocabulary

Oral communication and vocabulary in French are aspects that are clearly emphasized by immersion kindergarten teachers, regardless of the curriculum they follow. It is important to concentrate on these aspects of learning when considering how best to support teachers and students. Whether developing resources for teachers, students or families, these are priority areas on which to focus.

The role of socio-emotional development

Beyond the French language learning objectives, social-emotional development is most often identified as a priority by teachers. Although many (but not all) kindergarten curricula refer to social-emotional development and its importance at this age, it should be acknowledged that French immersion offers a unique context for social-emotional learning, particularly regarding self-regulation and autonomy. It is therefore important for teachers to have resources to support social-emotional development in second language contexts, and that the resources used in the classroom are available and accessible in French.

Changes in the context and demographics of French immersion kindergarten

According to participants in this study, French immersion kindergarten has become much more diverse in terms of culture, language, socioeconomic status and student learning profiles. As a result, teachers face situations they may not have encountered before, and they lack support and resources. Another challenge in the French immersion context is that when resources are available, they are not always available in French, so English versions are used. Consequently, students are not exposed to a fully “immersive” environment.

Optimizing existing resources

While some teachers highlight the lack of resources available for French immersion kindergarten, others point to the lack of support for using certain resources or the lack of consistency in the resources used within a school or school board. Thus, rather than devoting time and effort to creating new resources, initiatives should instead focus on better training and mobilization of existing resources.

Communication and coordination

The importance of communication within schools and school boards emerged during the interviews, with teachers emphasizing that they feel more supported in their work when all members of the school are involved. Knowing the expectations not only of their own students but also of students at all levels of the school helps validate what is being done in kindergarten. If principals and pedagogical consultants can establish and support this type of coordination and mobilize French immersion teachers, students will benefit in many ways.

The importance of a curriculum

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, the absence of a curriculum in some provinces means that teachers spend valuable time identifying what should be included in a French immersion kindergarten curriculum, rather than supporting students in their learning. The existence of French immersion kindergarten programs suggests the need for a supporting curriculum. Furthermore, in provinces and territories where the kindergarten curriculum is divided by subject, teachers and pedagogical consultants spend time trying to bring all the content together, because interdisciplinary learning is so important in kindergarten. Having a stand-alone document where this content is already organized by theme or skill would allow teachers to devote more time to planning educational activities.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made to ensure that French immersion kindergarten teachers feel supported in their work and that students benefit fully from the program. The following recommendations should be considered when planning and implementing French immersion in kindergarten. Although program models differ across the country, these suggestions can be implemented regardless of the provincial/territorial curriculum in place.

Recommendations

- 1- Identify the vocabulary, phrases and expressions that should be taught in kindergarten. This is useful not only for kindergarten teachers, but also for teachers in the early years of elementary school, so that they have an idea of the language skills developed in kindergarten. While it would be useful initially to identify key vocabulary for kindergarten at the beginning of the year, it is also important to continue this process throughout the year, especially since play-based and inquiry-based learning often gives rise to unplanned topics and units of study. In this case, it is important for teachers to explicitly consider opportunities for vocabulary development and identify target words.
- 2- Evidently, students in French immersion classes will have more difficulty understanding and communicating in French than in their first language. However, this should not prevent teachers from delving into complex topics, especially if they align with the students' interests. It is not necessary to know all the vocabulary *before* embarking on the exploration of a more complex topic—on the contrary, these explorations offer authentic and meaningful opportunities for vocabulary development and language use. This is evident in Paula Fortier's (2014) work when she explored the northern lights with her French immersion kindergarten class. When students are interested in a topic, they are motivated to learn the vocabulary necessary to understand and discuss it.
- 3- While social-emotional development is part of the kindergarten curriculum in several provinces and territories, this is not the case across the country. Whether or not this topic is explicitly addressed in the curriculum, it is of great importance and must be taken into consideration. Teachers should reflect on how the development of self-regulation, autonomy, understanding of emotions and social interactions is fostered in their students, both implicitly and explicitly.
 - a. *Implicitly* by considering how classroom policies (seating arrangements, classroom layout, mandatory vs. optional activities) are established and applied.
 - b. *Explicitly* by teaching vocabulary related to emotions and metacognition (thoughts, feelings, insights) and talking about ways to interact with other students, how to ask for help, how to manage conflicts, etc., and by modelling these behaviours.

Although the emphasis on social-emotional development is not unique to the French immersion context, it offers important opportunities to develop vocabulary related to emotions, forming friendships, classroom routines, etc. in French.

- 4- While many kindergarten curricula emphasize the importance of play and its application in the classroom, few make connections between play and opportunities for French language learning. French immersion kindergarten curricula could highlight opportunities for language development through play, for example by providing materials that allow students to practise learned vocabulary and expose them to new vocabulary based on their interests. Descriptions of play and French language learning should not be separated in a French immersion kindergarten curriculum but rather integrated to maximize all language learning opportunities.
- 5- The importance for students to hear French as often as possible to expand their vocabulary cannot be underestimated. Because students have limited French communication skills in kindergarten, especially at the beginning of the year, they may hear only their teacher speak to them in French. However, in other language learning contexts (for example, English as a second language in English-speaking school systems), students can listen to conversations between several speakers. This allows them to observe how different people communicate using the language and gives them multiple examples to follow. Therefore, while it may not always be possible for all adults in the classroom to speak French, efforts should be made to accomplish this. Hearing adults speak French among themselves reinforces the value of French in the students' eyes and provides them with important learning opportunities, even if those adults do not necessarily play an educational role in the classroom.

These conclusions and the associated recommendations are by no means the only ways to support French immersion kindergarten programs, and they certainly do not diminish the valuable experiences that students have every day in classrooms across the country. It is important to note that these recommendations are intended to complement existing programs. For example, the absence of a finding or recommendation regarding literacy in this report does not diminish its importance in kindergarten. On the contrary, its absence from this section reveals that literacy is already included in the curricula and is a prevalent topic in the current dialogue on kindergarten.

Final reflections

This research highlights the range of French immersion kindergarten programs offered across the country, the variability in curricula and learning outcomes and the work that French immersion kindergarten teachers do daily to interpret curriculum documents to best support their students' French language learning and development in other areas. Although each of the curriculum models described in this report has advantages and limitations, the researcher's experience in conducting this study has allowed her to make some important observations and draw conclusions.

First, each component of this project (the review of existing programs and curricula, surveys and interviews) revealed the importance of having resources that are easy to use and clearly relate to the reality of the French immersion kindergarten classroom. When curriculum documents are fragmented and not clearly linked to each other, teachers spend valuable time trying to do this work themselves, when they could be planning their lessons and activities. The French immersion kindergarten curricula of Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories are excellent examples of how to combine the key elements of a French immersion kindergarten curriculum:

- learning objectives
- effective teaching methods in kindergarten
- considerations for French immersion
- the context of French language learning in the respective province or territory
- the development of students' identities as French language learners

Each of these elements is essential for students' initial steps in French and will prepare them for success in their learning journey. Having all these elements described in a single document shows teachers how they can be integrated within a classroom setting.

In provinces and territories that do not have a stand-alone kindergarten curriculum and whose kindergarten curricula are divided by subject area, it is important to note that French immersion encompasses more than language components and literacy. As this research shows, French immersion kindergarten involves much more than language objectives and program documents should reflect this.

Although French immersion kindergarten programs vary across Canada, this project highlights the important work that teachers nationwide are doing every day to support our youngest learners of French.

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Appendix A: Survey

We want to hear from you! Calling all French immersion kindergarten teachers (ACPI)

- 1- In which province or territory are you currently teaching?
- 2- How many years have you been teaching in French immersion kindergarten?
- 3- What do you emphasize in terms of French language development in your kindergarten classes?
- 4- What do you emphasize in terms of overall child development in your kindergarten classes?
- 5- What are the biggest challenges associated with teaching French immersion kindergarten?
- 6- How do you use the curriculum and other provincial/territorial curricular documents to plan your teaching?
- 7- What other resources do you use to plan your teaching?
- 8- Are there resources that don't exist but that would be helpful? If yes, please elaborate.

Appendix B: Interview

1. General information:
 - a. Half- or full-day kindergarten
 - b. Percentage of the program taught in French
 - c. Adults involved in the program (teachers, educators, assistants) and the training required (in French and in early childhood)
 - d. Four- or five-year-old kindergarten
2. In general, what is the clientele of the students who are enrolled in French immersion in your region (i.e., Anglophone, allophone, some French language skills, etc.)?
3. To what extent does your school/school board/ministry provide guidelines on specific learning outcomes for French immersion kindergarten? Are there learning objectives that you establish yourself?
4. In your opinion, what are the learning objectives in French immersion kindergarten?
5. What are the greatest challenges associated with teaching French immersion kindergarten?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share about French immersion kindergarten in your region?