

# INTRODUCTION

## VISION AND GOALS OF THE FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

All programs in the French as a second language curriculum at the elementary and secondary levels share a common vision, as follows:

### Vision and Goals for French as a Second Language – Core, Extended, and Immersion, Grades 1 to 12

#### Vision

Students will communicate and interact with growing confidence in French, one of Canada's official languages, while developing the knowledge, skills, and perspectives they need to participate fully as citizens in Canada and in the world.

#### Goals

In all French as a second language programs, students realize the vision of the FSL curriculum as they strive to:

- use French to communicate and interact effectively in a variety of social settings;
- learn about Canada, its two official languages, and other cultures;
- appreciate and acknowledge the interconnectedness and interdependence of the global community;
- be responsible for their own learning, as they work independently and in groups;
- use effective language learning strategies;
- become lifelong language learners for personal growth and for active participation as world citizens.

In order to achieve the goals of the elementary and secondary FSL curriculum, students need to:

- acquire a strong oral foundation in the French language and focus on communicating in French;
- understand the value of learning another language;
- develop the skills needed to strengthen traits of resilience and to secure a sense of self, through opportunities to learn adaptive, management, and coping skills, to practise communication skills, to build relationships and interact positively with others, and to use critical and creative thinking processes.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN THE CURRICULUM

The ability to speak and understand French allows students to communicate with French-speaking people in Canada and around the world, to understand and appreciate the history and evolution of their cultures, and to develop and benefit from a competitive advantage in the workforce.

While the knowledge of any language has value, French is not only a global language but the mother tongue of many Canadians and an integral part of the Canadian identity. Learning French equips students to communicate with French-speaking Canadians and millions of French speakers around the world.

In addition to strengthening students' ability to communicate, learning another language develops their awareness of how language and culture interconnect, helping them appreciate and respect the diversity of Canadian and global societies. When a student is exposed to another culture through its language, he or she begins to understand the role that language plays in making connections with others. Learning an additional language not only challenges a mind, it also teaches understanding, encourages patience, and fosters open-mindedness.

Knowledge of an additional language strengthens first-language skills. The ability to speak two or more languages generally enhances cognitive development, as well as reasoning and creative-thinking skills. It also enhances the student's confidence as a learner, facilitates the learning of additional languages, and contributes to academic achievement. As their strengths develop, French language learners become more flexible and adaptable in new and unforeseen situations. For example, second-language learners tend to be more divergent thinkers, with improved memory and attention span.

Positive outcomes for students in the FSL curriculum include:

- increased mental flexibility;
- improved problem-solving skills;
- a better understanding of aspects of a variety of cultures;
- a greater awareness of global issues, including those related to the environment and sustainability;
- expanded career opportunities.

The ability to speak both of Canada's official languages helps prepare students for their role as active and engaged citizens in today's bilingual and multicultural Canada. Moreover, the language learning strategies that students develop in the FSL program can contribute to an interest in learning languages throughout their lives and provide them with the skills to do so. Such abilities benefit the individual; but Canadian society – as well as the global community – also stands to gain from having plurilingual citizens.<sup>3</sup>

## **ENDURING IDEAS IN THE FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE CURRICULUM**

By studying a second language, students learn a great deal about interacting effectively with others, because they have to focus closely on what it is they are trying to communicate; what they need others to understand, and why; how their oral or written expression is received and interpreted; and what others are trying to communicate to them, and why. As they learn to exchange information and ideas in another language, they also learn about other ways of thinking, other ways of doing things, and other ways of living – in short, about other people and other cultures.

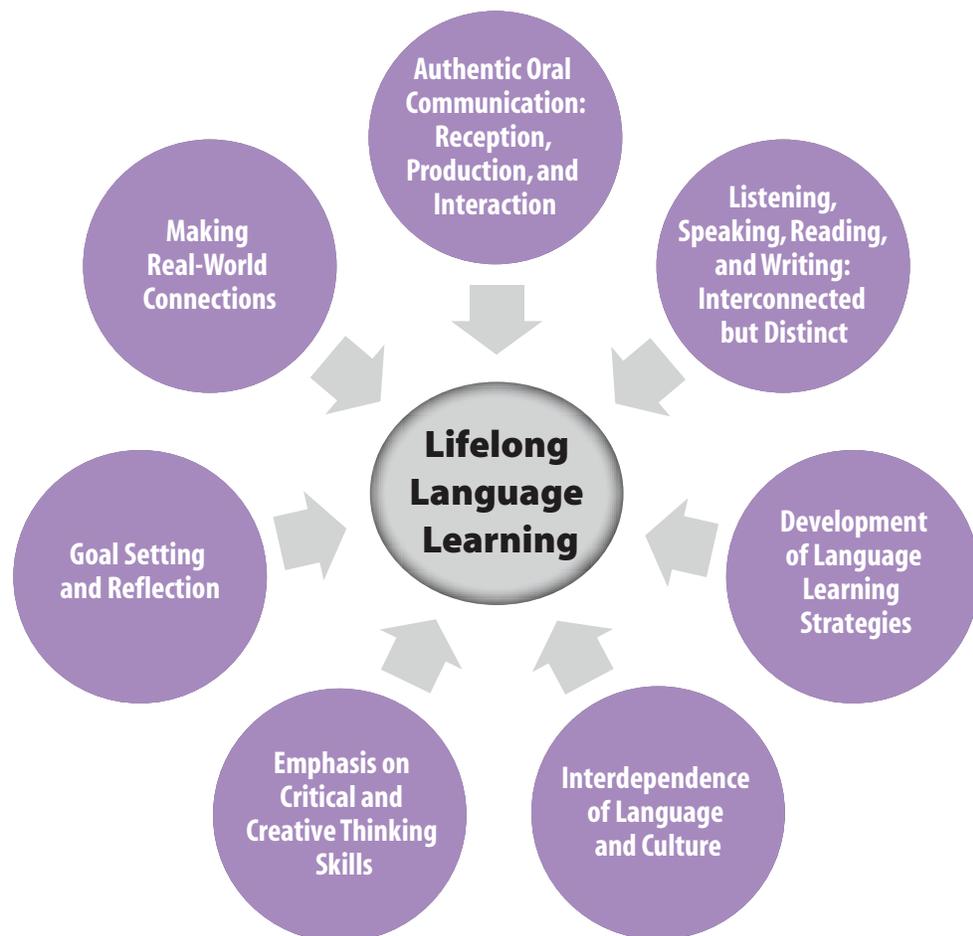
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3. For more information on plurilingualism, see Council of Europe, *Plurilingual Education in Europe: 50 Years of International Co-operation*, Strasbourg, February 2006; available at [www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/PlurilingualEducation\\_En.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/PlurilingualEducation_En.pdf).

The French as a second language curriculum emphasizes communicating a message by using knowledge of vocabulary, language conventions, and grammar while taking into consideration the purpose, the audience, and the situation or context. This focus on the sociolinguistic and cultural aspects of language allows students to apply their language knowledge in a variety of real-world situations and contexts.

Through the study of French, students experience multiple opportunities to communicate for authentic purposes in real-life situations. These opportunities enable students to build on and apply their knowledge of French in everyday academic and social situations, thus developing effective communication skills. Students can take control of their learning through observation, listening, and rehearsing with others; refining their use of language; and making thoughtful and meaningful connections to the world around them. If students see aspects of the FSL curriculum modelled and reinforced by educators, family members, and community members, their learning is reinforced and validated as more relevant to their lives.

The FSL curriculum strives, ultimately, to foster an interest in language learning that continues not only during a student's time in school but later in life. The FSL curriculum is therefore founded on seven fundamental concepts, or "enduring ideas", which focus, from Grade 1 to Grade 12, on the development of skills that are also necessary as a basis for lifelong language learning. These enduring ideas are discussed below.



## Authentic Oral Communication: Reception, Production, and Interaction

The main purpose of learning a language is communication. Communication is a social act. In order to learn French, therefore, students need to see themselves as social actors communicating for real purposes. Teaching language as a system of disconnected and isolated components gives learners some knowledge of the language, but does not allow them to use the language effectively. In contrast, communicative and action-oriented approaches to teaching French put meaningful and authentic communication at the centre of all learning activities.

To reach their potential, students need to hear, see, use, and reuse French in meaningful yet developmentally appropriate contexts. One of the key terms in second-language learning is “comprehensible input”. It is the teacher’s responsibility to provide comprehensible input, ensuring that the messages that students receive are understandable. Making the input *relevant* – to the learner, the context, the situation – is one way of doing this. Repetition and recycling are also integral to making input comprehensible. Effective comprehensible input must be slightly challenging in order to provide the scaffolding students need to be able to begin “producing” – that is, speaking and writing – French in an authentic way. In order to go beyond receptive skills, students need to use and negotiate the input they receive by conversing in authentic situations.

Interaction in French is pivotal in this curriculum. Research indicates that language instruction must provide significant levels of meaningful communication and interactive feedback in the target language in order for students to develop language and cultural proficiency. It is therefore recommended that teachers and students use French both inside the classroom and, when feasible, beyond it.

## Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing: Interconnected but Distinct

In order to develop the skills necessary to become lifelong language learners, students will be given multiple opportunities to:

- listen and respond to texts and to others;
- speak and interact with others;
- read, view, and respond to a variety of texts;
- write a variety of texts for many different purposes and audiences.

Listening and speaking skills are the springboards to reading and writing. While the curriculum strikes a balance between these four distinct but interconnected skills, oral communication – listening and speaking – is paramount for second-language acquisition. If students hear it, they can say it. If students can say it, they can read it. And if students can read it, they can write it.

## Development of Language Learning Strategies

Successful French language learners use a number of strategies to learn more effectively. These language learning strategies are often categorized as cognitive, metacognitive, and social/affective. Cognitive strategies involve the direct manipulation of the language itself, such as remembering information and understanding or producing messages in French. Metacognitive strategies involve planning, thinking about the learning process as it is taking place, and monitoring and evaluating one’s progress. Social and affective

strategies enhance cooperation and help students regulate their emotions, motivations, and attitudes as they learn French through interacting with others.

Most students will benefit from explicit classroom instruction regarding the use of French language learning strategies in authentic and relevant contexts. It is important to note that the language learning strategies are not grade or program specific and that they are used to help students communicate effectively and make meaning in their daily interactions and activities. Once students are consciously aware of strategies, have practised using them, can select the most effective ones for a particular task, and can see the link between their own actions and their learning, they will be able to monitor their use of the strategies, set goals for improvement, and become more motivated and more effective French language learners.

### **Interdependence of Language and Culture**

Language and culture are strongly intertwined. Language is not only a major aspect of culture, but also a means of accessing other cultural manifestations. Understanding the language is a major advantage when exploring other aspects of a culture. When studying a language, and the cultures in which it is spoken, students need to recognize that cultures are not homogeneous: diversity exists not only between but also within cultures. It is important for FSL educators to help students develop their understanding of, and appreciation and respect for, diverse cultures. Two essential elements of the FSL curriculum are intercultural awareness and intercultural competence. Educators encourage students to develop their intercultural awareness by exploring diverse cultures and expanding their ability to differentiate between personal, cultural, and universal behaviours, traditions, and beliefs. In addition, educators encourage students to develop the attitudes, knowledge, and skills, including their French-language skills, needed to interact with people in French-speaking cultures effectively and respectfully.

Throughout the FSL curriculum, expectations that deal with the development of intercultural understanding are included in each of the four interconnected strands (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing). These expectations help students make connections and relate to diverse French-speaking communities and other societies. Students will develop skills in accessing and understanding information about various French-speaking communities and cultures, and will apply that knowledge for the purposes of interaction. Intercultural awareness and understanding are key aspects of global citizenship, which encompasses citizenship at all levels, from the local school and community to Canada and the world beyond.

### **Emphasis on Critical and Creative Thinking Skills**

Learners of a second language are engaged in critical and creative thinking on a daily basis. In order to make sense of what they are hearing, reading, and viewing, and to communicate their messages clearly, students need to solve problems, for example. Problem-solving skills are thus an integral part of learning and interacting in a second language.

Initially, students will be exposed to a variety of texts with simplified language and will need support and guidance to understand and interpret their messages. As students become more proficient in French, they will use a range of strategies to comprehend and respond to texts. When students think critically about what they are hearing, reading, and viewing, they also begin to develop critical literacy skills.

## Goal Setting and Reflection

Students need to take responsibility for their learning by being aware of their abilities and monitoring their progress. Goal setting and reflection are thus important aspects of the FSL curriculum that will serve students both in the classroom and beyond.

When teachers communicate clear learning goals and criteria for successful achievement in a particular activity or task, students can understand the purpose for their learning. Descriptive feedback from teachers and peers helps students monitor their learning and use of French, set goals, and identify their own strengths and areas in need of improvement. As students reflect on their learning and the achievement of their goals, they will be able to determine what strategies contributed to their success and how they can apply, adapt, and/or modify these strategies as they pursue their goals for future learning.

## Making Real-World Connections

The learning across all strands of the FSL curriculum is highly connected and relevant to the lives of students, helping them see and articulate the immediate and long-term benefits of learning French. Through the exploration of themes and topics related to other subject areas, students will see that communicating in French is an important skill that is applicable beyond the FSL classroom. In addition, meaningful contact with French-speaking individuals in their community enables students to develop their language learning skills in real-life situations.

When students are unable to interact with French speakers in their community, teachers can use authentic materials, electronic communications, and multimedia resources to support language learning. Teachers can also facilitate student participation in exchanges, language camps or immersion experiences, and field trips or longer excursions. Schools or communities can be twinned, or visitors invited into the school.

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

## Students

Students' responsibilities with respect to their own learning develop gradually and increase over time as they progress through elementary and secondary school. With appropriate instruction and with experience, students come to see how applied effort can enhance learning and improve achievement. As they mature and develop their ability to persist, to manage their behaviour and impulses, to take responsible risks, and to listen with understanding, students become better able to take more responsibility for their learning and progress. There are some students, however, who are less able to take full responsibility for their learning because of special challenges they face. The attention, patience, and encouragement of teachers can be extremely important to the success of these students. Learning to take responsibility for their improvement and achievement is an important part of every student's education.

Mastering the skills and concepts connected with learning in the FSL curriculum requires ongoing practice, personal reflection, an effort to respond to feedback, and commitment from students. It also requires a willingness to try new activities, take risks in using French, and work respectfully with peers. Students will have ongoing practice in using French in contextualized, meaningful, and age-appropriate situations. Through reflection on their use of French, students will deepen their appreciation and understanding of the French language as well as of themselves and others.

In addition to their learning experiences in the classroom, students should be encouraged to:

- pursue opportunities outside the classroom to listen to and speak French;
- seek out recreational reading materials and multimedia works in French, as well as in their first language, to extend their knowledge of the world around them;
- discuss with their parents what they are reading, writing, and learning.

## Parents

Parents<sup>4</sup> play an important role in their children’s learning. Studies show that students perform better in school if their parents are involved in their education. By becoming familiar with the FSL curriculum, parents can better appreciate what is being taught in each grade and what their children are expected to learn. This awareness will enhance parents’ ability to discuss their children’s work with them, to communicate with teachers, and to ask relevant questions about their children’s progress. Knowledge of the expectations will also help parents understand how their children are progressing in school and will enhance their ability to work with teachers to improve their children’s learning.

Parents are the primary educators of their children with respect to learning about values, appropriate behaviour, and cultural, spiritual, and personal beliefs and traditions, and they are their children’s first role models. It is therefore important for parents to communicate to their children the value of learning French, and for schools and parents to work together to ensure that home and school provide a mutually supportive framework for young people’s education.

Effective ways in which parents can support their children’s learning include the following: attending parent-teacher interviews, participating in parent workshops and school council activities (including becoming a school council member), and encouraging their children to complete their assignments and to practise new skills or apply new learning at home. In connection with their children’s learning of French, parents can also:

- encourage their children to talk, read, and write at home in their first language to strengthen their first-language skills, which are the foundation for learning French;
- read aloud to their children either in their first language or in French;
- encourage their children to write in French (e.g., shopping lists, stories, a letter);
- go to the library with their children to borrow books, music, and DVDs in their first language and in French, and talk about them with their children;
- join a local group to meet other parents and to find out about French resources and cultural opportunities in the community.

## Teachers

Teaching is key to student success. Teachers are responsible for using appropriate and effective instructional strategies to help students achieve the FSL curriculum expectations, as well as appropriate methods for assessing and evaluating student learning. Teachers bring enthusiasm and varied teaching and assessment approaches to the classroom, addressing individual students’ needs and ensuring sound learning opportunities for

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4. The word *parent(s)* is used in this document to refer to parent(s) and guardian(s). It may also be taken to include caregivers or close family members who are responsible for raising the child.

every student. The attitude with which teachers approach FSL is critical, as teachers are important role models for students.

Using a variety of instructional, assessment, and evaluation strategies, teachers provide numerous opportunities for students to develop and refine their knowledge of and skills in communicating in French in authentic contexts. These learning experiences should enable students to make meaningful connections between what they already know and what they are learning. Teachers should reflect on the results of the learning opportunities they provide, and make adjustments to them as necessary to help every student achieve the curriculum expectations to the best of his or her ability.

Teachers have the important role of being a French-language model for their students and the disseminator of information about French-speaking cultures. Often FSL teachers are the students' first contact with the French language. It is essential that French be the language of communication in all classroom interactions so that students receive constant exposure to the language in a variety of situations. Teachers also need to expose students to the many social and geographical varieties of French through a range of authentic materials, as well as through speakers of different ages and geographic origins and from various sociocultural groups. This will help students develop an understanding and appreciation of the diversity within French-speaking cultures.

Active engagement in meaningful, age-appropriate, and cognitively stimulating tasks and projects is key to motivating FSL students. Students are more likely to engage in learning when they have a certain degree of choice and can express preferences for the themes and activities in lessons. Being involved in controlling the learning process puts students at the centre of their own learning and is critical in developing their engagement, motivation, and success.

As a part of good teaching practice, teachers should inform parents about what their children are learning and when various topics are to be addressed. Such communication enables parents to work in partnership with the school, promoting discussion, follow-up at home, and student learning in a family context. Strong connections between the home and the school support student learning and achievement.

Teachers provide students with frequent opportunities to communicate their understanding, practise their skills, apply new learning and, through regular and varied assessment, give them the specific, descriptive feedback they need in order to further develop and refine their learning. By assigning tasks that promote the development of critical and creative thinking skills, teachers also help students become thoughtful and effective communicators. Opportunities to relate knowledge and skills in FSL to wider contexts, both across the curriculum and in the world beyond the school, motivate students to learn and to become lifelong learners.

## Principals

The principal works in partnership with teachers and parents to ensure that each student has access to the best possible educational experience. The principal is a community builder who creates an environment that is welcoming to all, and who ensures that all members of the school community are kept well informed.

To support student learning, principals ensure that the Ontario curriculum is being properly implemented in all classrooms through the use of a variety of instructional approaches. They also ensure that appropriate resources are made available for teachers and students. To enhance teaching and learning in all subjects, including FSL, principals promote learning teams and work with teachers to facilitate their participation in professional development activities. Principals are also responsible for ensuring that every student who has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is receiving the modifications and/or accommodations described in his or her plan – in other words, for ensuring that the IEP is properly developed, implemented, and monitored.

Principals can support students' learning in FSL by promoting the value of learning French. They can foster an atmosphere of collegiality among all staff members, and include FSL teachers/educators in school improvement planning and in professional learning communities concerning student learning and the use of evidence-based strategies. Principals also can ensure that information about FSL programs and events is included in school newsletters, in yearbooks, on school bulletin boards, in awards assemblies, and in letters to parents. They can also encourage students to participate in such extracurricular activities as student clubs in which French is spoken.

### Community Partners

Community partners are an important resource for a school's FSL program. Relationships with universities and colleges, businesses, service groups, and other community organizations can provide valuable support and enrichment for student learning. These organizations can provide expertise, skills, materials, and programs that are not available through the school or that supplement those that are. Partnerships with such organizations can benefit not only the students but also the life of the community.

Schools and school boards can play a role by coordinating efforts with community partners. They can involve community volunteers in supporting instruction and in promoting a focus on French inside and outside the school. Community partners can be included in events held in the school, including presentations by guest speakers who are part of the local French-speaking community. School boards can collaborate with leaders of existing community-based programs for youth, such as camps, programs offered in public libraries or community centres, or events sponsored by French-language organizations. Many local, provincial, and national institutions can provide valuable resources and can serve as rich environments for field trips and for exploration of French-speaking communities.

In choosing community partners, schools should build on existing links with their local communities and create new partnerships in conjunction with ministry and school board policies. These links are especially beneficial when they have direct connections to the curriculum. Teachers may find opportunities for their students to participate in community events, especially events that support the students' learning in the classroom, are designed for educational purposes, and provide descriptive feedback to student participants.