



ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

CORE FRENCH IN ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OPSBA SURVEY OF SCHOOL BOARDS

BACKGROUND

OPSBA's Education Program Work Team, over the course of several meetings, has considered the delivery of Core French in Ontario classrooms, drawing information from a range of sources including:

- A. Canadian Parents for French
- B. Curriculum Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Education
- C. National Survey of Second Language Teachers

Although more than 85% of Ontario students are eligible to be enrolled in core French, there is a strong perception that the current core French program has not provided the foundation upon which a competence in French can be established. A key concern is the dramatic drop-off in participation rates in Core French after Grade 9. This raises the question of whether there are more effective approaches to supporting the acquisition of French in Ontario schools, particularly in light of the federal government's goal of having 50% of all high school graduates bilingual by 2013.

Reports Considered by Education Program Work Team

A. The Education Program Work Team received a presentation from Canadian Parents for French on an alternative program designed to provide students with a stronger proficiency and interest in French than is currently evidenced through traditional Core French models. Joan Netten, an educational researcher, reported that *Intensive French* is showing better results in communication in both writing and speaking of French. In the Core French model, students usually study French as a subject for 40 minutes per day from grades 4 – 8 and 76 minutes in grade 9, after which it becomes an optional program. The results are disappointing. 85% of students across Canada are enrolled in Core French but only 10% of students are retained. It is estimated that only 2% of students leave school with proficiency in French. It was stated that methodology of teaching has changed in all subjects other than French.

In the Intensive French program, students from grades 5 or 6 are taught entirely in French during the first half of the year in all subjects except for Math, physical education and/or music. Participation in these programs during the intensive semester is not eliminated. During the second half of the year, the remaining curriculum is compacted with English being introduced and students continue an enriched core French program. The *Intensive French* program is optional; however, the success rates draw parents to the program.

Funding from provincial and federal governments is in place to support pilots of *Intensive French* in Ontario. Canadian Parents for French has held positive discussions with educational stakeholders including teachers' federations. OPSBA has recently learned that, through its Renewal of French Language Initiatives, the Ministry of Education has provided funding to four Catholic school boards to initiate pilots of *Intensive French*. No public board applied for funding for this particular purpose.

B. Sue Durst, Director, and Louise Pharand, Education Officer, from the Ministry's Curriculum and Assessment Policy Branch met with the Education Program Work Team to discuss a range of concerns including: the amount of time allocated to Core French in schools, students' attitudes, cultural bias, the written language versus oral language approach to French, proficiency levels attained and the difficulty of recruiting qualified French teachers..

Ministry staff clarified that the time allocations for French are specified for the school year and that the Ministry does not mandate a set amount of time on a daily basis. There was agreement that short time periods of 20 minutes allotted in some cases for Core French are inadequate. One possibility mentioned was scheduling blocked time for Core French for an hour every second day rather than 20 minute blocks.

Momentum for funding, which has been inadequate over the years, is building. Funds have been received from the Federal Government for specific programs aimed at increasing teacher capacity and student enrolment. Through the Ministry's Renewal of French Language Initiatives \$8.6 million will be distributed to school boards on a formula basis over 3 years in response to applications by boards for funding for special projects. Money will also be provided by Heritage Canada for resources that support learning French as well as French books and magazines for school libraries.

C. A national web-based survey, conducted jointly by the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers. The Canadian Teachers' Federation and the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, includes the response of 1305 French as a Second Language Teachers representing all provinces and territories in Canada. Teachers of Core French, French Immersion, Extended French and Intensive French responded to the survey. Questions covered five key areas: teaching resources, other resources, support from stakeholders, teaching conditions and professional development. A summary of the report is attached as Appendix B

The report's findings included such concerns as:

- Poor or inadequate educational resource materials
- Lack of practical supports such as scheduling of French and classrooms dedicated to FSL
- Lack of consultant support and French-speaking non-teaching staff
- French as a school subject was not generally supported by parents and the community
- Challenges presented by the broad diversity of students in the classroom
- Need for more relevant PD including PD available during school hours
- Low levels of student interest and attitude that French is not important
- Lack of moral support and respect

SURVEY OF SCHOOL BOARDS

As a result of the overview of issues articulated, the Work Team felt it would be critical to get direct input from school boards on the teaching of Core French. This input would help determine how best to work towards solutions in the provincial context.

OPSBA's Board of Directors, at its meeting of February 23-24, 2007, endorsed the recommendation of the Work Team to canvas Member Boards to determine what concerns they may have related to a long term strategy around the delivery of French in Ontario schools.

School boards were asked to provide input on the following questions:

- 1. Does your board have concerns about the outcomes achieved in the Core French program in either or both elementary and secondary programs?**
- 2. If you do have concerns, what changes, if any, have you implemented to address these concerns?**
- 3. Have you reviewed this issue in depth over the last 5 years?**
- 4. Would your board be interested in having OPSBA lobby the Ministry of Education to convene a group of education stakeholders to review issues affecting Core French programming in Ontario schools to determine the best delivery model to meet learning objectives and achieve improved outcomes?**

Feedback from School Boards

Responses were received from 18 school boards and 3 school authorities (See Appendix A). All respondents who provided specific comments indicated concerns with Core French either in terms of challenges in program delivery or with regards to the outcomes. Where applicable, respondents provided information about reviews

undertaken and measures put in place to address their issues of concern. One Board provided a full report on their recent internal review of elementary French as a Second Language programs – both Core and Immersion French. This review has resulted in the establishment of two sub-committees to identify ways to improve the delivery of French programs. Twenty of the twenty-one respondents expressed support for a review of Core French at a provincial level and agreed that OPSBA should lobby for a review that would involve a range of education stakeholders in the process. One respondent was not in favour of a lobbying effort that would require the allocation of staff time and resources at this time. More detail on the response to the specific questions is provided below.

1. School Board Concerns about Core French

There was a high level of consistency on the types of concerns expressed by school boards and these have been organized by topic. A theme permeating a majority of the responses was that French is not sufficiently valued. This was described in a teacher comment by one responding board:

“French is still not a “real” subject in many elementary schools as the French teacher is “just a relief” for the “real” teacher. The French à la carte is an all too common situation in many schools. Students who have “difficulties” are taken out of French. If they need time to finish other “real” subjects they are taken away from their French class. The result is that students and parents don’t think that French is that important and that they need not do the work. This attitude is often carried over into high school(If) French is important then let’s give it its due!”

Time Allocated to Core French

Boards spoke of the problems of the allocation of 40 minutes a day and indicated it is insufficient to allow for effective individual interventions. Achieving the full 40 minutes is compromised by the time lost through the rotary nature of the program, timetabling problems and the requirements of preparation time. It was suggested that scheduled blocked time in the elementary grades would be beneficial. The segregated nature of the program gives little opportunity to incorporate French across other subject areas. As noted earlier there is also a tendency to withdraw students from French when they are having difficulties in other subjects.

Insufficient Emphasis on Oral Communication

Some respondents felt that students acquired only a very limited fluency. The Ontario Curriculum focuses on a grammar-based rather than a communicative approach; this is particularly true at the Grade 7 level. Cultural and interactive or “fun” activities get short shrift and the opportunity for discovery and enjoyment of the language and culture through practical life experiences is lost. Although students learn the grammar and can achieve high marks in the subject, there is little development of oral proficiency and ease of communication in authentic situations. The result is that they cannot speak French or are insecure about speaking French. One respondent expressed concern about the amount of time students must spend on reading and writing at the expense of the development of good oral language skills. This imbalance is exacerbated by the loss of primary FSL in many boards.

Lack of Classrooms Dedicated to Core French

A majority of Core French teachers do not have their own classroom and are required to move from room to room in the school transporting their resource materials, including A/V equipment, reading resources, dictionaries and posters, on a cart. As noted above this cuts into class time but it also places limits on teaching strategies since there is no place to post the visual aids, such as word walls or anchor charts, that help reinforce the language, or permanent space to display resources that highlight French culture.

Lack of French Resources

Respondents indicated that there is a need for a broader range of up-to-date reading resources geared to the level of proficiency of students in Core French; many texts are too difficult and do not introduce themes in a sequential manner. Local school purchasing can create a great deal of variance in what resources are available from site to site. It was noted as well that there is a lack of opportunities for students to experience French culture and communicate with francophones through work/study travel in French communities and through programs that bring French authors, musicians and performers into schools, particularly in rural areas. One board noted that, as a result of FSL Renewal Funds they had been able to purchase resources for primary and intermediate programs.

Reference was also made to the need for consultant support, particularly in terms of achieving strong coordination in the continuum of learning French from the elementary to the secondary levels.

Retention of Students in Core French beyond Grade 9

There was a strongly voiced concern about the rate at which students drop French after completing the mandatory credit in Grade 9 and the negative attitude they have towards the subject. It was stated that students do not see the importance of learning the French language and its relevance to their future goals. It was suggested that there needs to be more promotion of the benefits of having a second language, e.g. its positive relation to cognitive development, future job opportunities, long-term financial gain, contribution to the global community, the foundation it offers for learning additional languages. The view was expressed that the number of mandatory credits (6 out of 8 in grade 10) make it increasingly difficult for students to continue in FSL. This, in combination with the perceived necessity to finish high school in four years, leaves students feeling they have no space in their timetable to take French. Another issue raised was the challenge in small secondary schools of being able to offer French in Grades 10 through 12 when students want to pursue the subject. Suggested solutions included using technology to link a number of high schools to offer the courses, organizing multiple grade groupings or funding that would allow boards to offer French to classes with low enrolment.

Professional Development

Responses noted the lack of professional development offerings specifically geared to Core French teachers as subject specialists. Because they represent a small group in their area or their board, often the only professional development sessions available to them are in subjects they do not teach or have limited opportunity to incorporate in their lessons, e.g., mathematics. The isolation of French teachers was highlighted and the attendant difficulties of networking and forming Professional Learning Teams; to do this adequately requires extra time and money for travel to central locations.

One respondent referred to reductions in French consultant staff and how this has removed an important level of support and facilitation for networking among teachers.

Recruiting/Retaining Qualified French Teachers

Most respondents cited difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified and language proficient French teachers and spoke of the need to extend their search beyond Ontario into Quebec and New Brunswick. This is a considerable recruiting expense that is beyond the resources of many boards. It was suggested that since this is a province-wide problem, the solution may be to establish a provincial recruiting team that would promote teaching FSL in Ontario and provide support to all boards.

Related issues focus on the pressure on French teachers to stay with their subject rather than transfer to other school assignments: "*Many teachers feel "stuck" teaching French which develops a negative impact on the morale of the school.*" Also mentioned was the loss to the program on days when the French teacher is absent since frequently it is not possible to find supply teachers with a competence in the language.

Changes Implemented to Address Concerns

Time Allocation

Within the existing delivery model of 40 minutes a day, strategies to ensure delivery of a full 40 minutes are difficult to apply. Some respondents have reviewed their Core French program at the elementary level and established consistent time allotments for all grade levels. They indicated that this is monitored by senior program staff. One board indicated they have implemented standardized daily instructional blocks in all classes (JK-8) which exceed the Ministry requirements. Another board noted that principals were advised to create schedules that would allow French teachers to move more systematically through the school thereby reducing the time spent travelling between classrooms and from classroom to portable. Another respondent referred to their Core French Independent Procedure which included the issue of timetabling for French and said it was due for revision given that the concerns continue.

Oral Communication

Several respondents cited the AIM (Accelerative Integrated Method) program as an effective approach to oral language development in French, increasing both oral facility and a positive attitude to the language. This program helps develop oral mastery through the use of gestures, drama and music and has yielded positive results. A number of boards have piloted this and at least one is hoping to extend its use through to Grade 9. The following anecdotal comment was provided by an FSL teacher: "AIM is having a very positive effect on the attitudes of core French teachers as well as the students. The students, even after only a few months of their first year of French, are able to begin to converse with the teacher and with each other, as well as read and write in French. In all of my 27 years of teaching Core French, I have never had such incredible success with my students. They speak exclusively in French all of the time." One board indicated that their AIM program is combined with an explicit teaching of French phonics and language conventions, stressing a strong oral foundation upon which skills in reading and writing are developed. This board also referred to supplementary resources to ensure that students can apply what they have learned in a variety of situations. French culture in Canada and elsewhere in the world is emphasized and there are student and class exchanges with France. Another board is implementing "Communi-Quête" for its Grade 7-9 students. This is an FSL program that integrates literacy strategies as well as social and study skills.

One respondent cited the initiative of having curriculum staff match the teaching strategies of second language learning with those used in first language learning, e.g. literacy blocks, guided reading, shared reading, modelled reading and writing, etc.

Core French Classroom

In many if not most cases, Core French teachers do not have their own classrooms. As a compromise, one respondent spoke of providing special storage spaces for French teachers to allow them easier access to their materials, reducing the amount of resources loaded on to their carts. Another respondent indicated that in new construction plans they have sought, unsuccessfully, approval to allocate space for a Core French classroom.

Retention of Students in Core French beyond Grade 9

Respondents provided information on a range of initiatives undertaken to encourage students to continue their studies in French beyond Grade 9. These include:

- Implementing a new motivating program with resources aimed at Grades 7, 8 and 9 to help improve retention rates
- Surveying students in grades 9 to 11 to allow teaching and curriculum staff to look at the issues from a student perspective and initiate improvements in teaching/learning strategies.
- Awarding a Certificate of Achievement to students completing grade 12 Core French
- Creating course outlines for Grade 10 Applied Core French and Grade 11 Open Core French

- Implementing new resources for Grade 9 Applied Core French and using common assessments to adjust the program to reflect student needs
- Piloting a program at the secondary level that allows students to progress at their own rate by assessing student proficiency through a pre-test that is based on the Common European Language Framework. Students can then develop all areas of language proficiency without the stress of making errors in front of their peers. The state-of-the-art voice recognition component of the program provides an analysis of oral proficiency.
- Increased use of computers for projects at the Grade 9 level have been successful. They appeal to students since they allow for individual progress, immediate feedback, real life language situations and a fun delivery mode. The technology allows grouping of smaller classes including multiple grades.
- Providing opportunities for secondary French teachers to come together for inservice and sharing of resources/materials.

Lack of French Resources

One respondent noted that workshops with elementary and secondary teachers have been held to examine the existing curriculum and support materials to determine what best supports the needs of students.

Some boards have begun to implement AIM's *Histoires en action* in 18 schools. This is followed up by monthly inservice and support. Teachers, students and parents have been positive in their response to the pilot.

Professional Development

A number of respondents indicated that they are providing opportunities for French teachers to come together for inservice and sharing of resources and materials, including organizing a French Teachers' Professional Learning Community. Voluntary after-school workshops, in-school one-on-one support and access to a DVD of best practices in Core French are among the resources provided to teachers. One Board indicated that teachers of FSL are incorporated into the Board's literacy plan so that they receive the same training as first language teachers. Another Board has implemented careful pairing of new Core French teachers with experienced ones through the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP). Yet another Board has used FSL Renewal funds to support a three year project to in-service teachers and train "coaches" to reinforce the support and develop networks among teachers.

Recruiting/Retaining Qualified French Teachers

Boards have moved to earlier recruitment of teachers and/or have pool hired French teachers, though not exclusively for Core French. Other plans involve holding job fairs in Québec and using bilingual application forms.

Other Initiatives

Relying on research findings, one board indicated that they dropped primary French to focus on the grades 4-8 programs. Specific research within the board is planned to determine the effectiveness of the AIM program.

Other boards have continued to support Core French in the primary division and indicate that language groups across the province have asked the Ministry to reinstate full funding for Primary FSL.

One board indicated that they had set up a French Website for teachers, students and parents.

One of the School Authority respondents spoke of appealing to the nearest University to offer FSL Part 1 for teachers in isolate areas.

Recent Review Activity by Boards

Respondents indicated a variety of steps taken to review and assess Core French issues at their boards and, as previously noted, one board has recently undertaken a comprehensive review of all elementary FSL programs. Specific areas boards have reviewed include:

- Delivery of Core French across the board in light of accommodation issues and renewal of FSL funding initiatives
- Strategies for program and site consolidation to ensure delivery of French programming
- Research plans to assess the impact of AIM on student achievement. In this board secondary teachers have indicated that AIM students are better prepared for Grade 9 and more enthusiastic about Core French. Another board decided to extend the AIM program board-wide based on successful pilots.
- Review of allotment of instruction time for elementary core French
- Consideration of development and implementation of a standard second language proficiency test and tracking the effectiveness of various FSL programs upon graduation
- Discussion within the board of survey results (surveys conducted by CASLT and ETFO) with language consultants and FSL teachers
- Interviewing students, teachers and administrators regarding experience of French programs.
- Conducting teacher and student satisfaction/attitudinal surveys to better determine attitudes and interests towards Core French programming
- Tracking retention rates in both Immersion and Core French programs
- Student proficiency in French has been examined at all grade levels; implementation and assessment of Core French programs is ongoing.

Interest in a Provincial Review of Core French Programming in Ontario Schools

Nineteen of the twenty respondents supported the suggestion that OPSBA lobby the Ministry of Education to convene a group of education stakeholders to review the full range of issues affecting Core French programming in Ontario. One respondent was not in favour of a lobbying effort that would require the allocation of staff time and resources at this time. Many boards had recommendations about some specific areas for consideration:

- Starting Core French in Grade 1 as is the case with all other subject areas. It would not then be seen as a “new” subject at the junior level and this could alleviate some of the prevailing misconceptions and biases about learning French
- Examine solutions to the systemic shortcomings at the elementary level (à la carte, timetable difficulties, devaluing of FSL) so that students get as much language practice at a time when learning the second language is easiest for them
- Flexibility towards enhancing Core French to allow for other subjects to be taught in French, e.g., math and drama. This could be more cost effective than having an immersion stream and a core stream, would create a “bilingual” approach in the education system and improve overall appreciation of languages and cultures
- Consider allowing students in grade 10 to have more electives; the concentration of mandatory courses works against pursuing French and it is difficult to pick it up again if it is dropped in grade 10 – alternatively, make French a mandatory grade 10 subject
- Consider French as a substitute for the fifth English/third language under the additional required credits like Spanish or other international languages
- Consider an interdisciplinary course at the secondary level that would combine elements of French with culture and travel – this would motivate students and could be used as a French substitution credit for those who have been withdrawn from French at elementary school
- Include researchers in the review group to assist with decision-making on program effectiveness
- Consider independent research on the effectiveness of the AIM program
- In terms of recruitment and retention of Core French teachers consideration could be given to building more linkages between boards and Faculties of Education that , among other things, would allow input into appropriate preparation of candidates in terms of delivery of French in schools
- Consider practical (including financial) support for additional training at the secondary level on exemplary teaching techniques for teachers teaching credits in French and in other subjects that are taught in the French language
- Building expanded opportunities for Core French teachers to participate in professional development and learning in the most effective teaching strategies – because of the unique situation with French teachers, e.g., only teacher in the school, organization of these opportunities requires more resources
- Consider an approach to facility space calculations that better supports the delivery of Core French. There is strong feedback that the lack of a Core French classroom has an impact on effective learning of French and reflects negatively on the value assigned to French in schools.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that school boards have concerns about the delivery and effectiveness of Core French in Ontario schools. They want to deal with the challenges that are a barrier to students acquiring functional fluency in Canada's other official language. While much is being done at the local level to improve the learning experience of students and to nurture their interest in the language, there are systemic issues that need to be addressed at a provincial level.

There is consensus that the current Ontario Curriculum for Core French is too highly weighted in favour of grammar and written language and this is seen as a barrier to engaging students in the vibrancy of the living oral language. There are structural issues around the allocation of time to French in the elementary school timetable and serious concerns about the barriers school boards face in ensuring that schools can allocate a dedicated classroom for French instruction. At the secondary level, a high proportion of students arrive in Grade 9 without having developed oral skills in French or a propensity to enjoy the language for the reasons already mentioned; in addition to this, the credit system weighted as it is towards compulsory credits, combined with a devaluing of French as an important credit to have for a future career, serves to drive down the numbers of students interested in or prepared to continue French past Grade 9.

The time seems opportune to propose a comprehensive review of Core French. The Ministry of Education is due to begin a review of the French curriculum in the 2008. With input from an appropriate stakeholder group, it would be possible to link the need for changes in the curriculum to the bigger environment within which French is taught and explore innovations that will inspire students to learn and benefit from both of Canada's official languages.

October, 2007

APPENDIX A

ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

RESPONSE TO SURVEY RE CORE FRENCH IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS

Responses were received from 18 District School Boards and 3 District School Authorities.

BOARD	INDICATED CONCERNS ABOUT CORE FRENCH	SUPPORT OPSBA IN LOBBYING FOR PROVINCIAL REVIEW
Algoma	Yes	Yes
Bluewater	Yes	Yes
Connell and Ponsford	Yes	Yes
Greater Essex County	Yes	Yes
Kawartha Pine Ridge	Yes	Yes
Halton		No*
Lakehead	Yes	Yes
Limestone	Yes	Yes
Missarenda	Yes	Yes
Ontario North East	Yes	Yes
Ottawa Carleton	Yes	Yes
Rainbow	Yes	Yes
Rainy River	Yes	Yes
Renfrew County	Yes	Yes
Simcoe County	Yes	Yes
Thames Valley	Yes	Yes
Trillium Lakelands	Yes	Yes
Toronto	Yes	Yes
Upper Grand	Yes	Yes
Upsala	Yes	Yes
Waterloo	Yes	Yes

*Response was not in favour of a lobbying effort that would require the allocation of staff time and resources at this time.

APPENDIX B

RESULTS OF NATIONAL SURVEY OF FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHERS – OCTOBER 2006

(Survey jointly undertaken by the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT), the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) and the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers (CAIT), funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage.)

The web-based survey includes the response of 1305 French as a Second Language Teachers representing all provinces and territories in Canada. Teachers of Core French, French Immersion, Extended French and Intensive French responded to the survey. Questions covered five key areas: teaching resources, other resources, support from stakeholders, teaching conditions and professional development.

FINDINGS

Educational Resource Materials

- A majority of respondents considered commercial materials to be either “poor” or “adequate.”
- Satisfaction was lower for French Immersion (FI) teachers than Core French (CF) teachers – there were few materials representing Francophone culture.
- The quantity and quality of library resources, computer software and community resources were considered “poor” by a majority of respondents.

Other Resources

- More than 40% of teachers said they did not have a classroom dedicated to FSL nor was an FSL consultant available to them.
- There were also concerns about funding for activities, lack of French-speaking supply teachers, consultants for students with special needs, and French-speaking non-teaching staff.
- A majority of teachers reported easy access to computers, the Internet, space for lesson preparation and storage space.

Community Support

- Most teachers considered the community in which they teach to be the least supportive of their work (over 80%)
- The school administration was perceived as very supportive.
- Core French teachers also reported less support from parents and students.

Teaching Conditions (e.g. class size, special needs students, administrative duties)

- The majority of FSL teachers reported that teaching conditions were slightly or somewhat manageable.

- Teachers, however, found it difficult to interpret the differences between conditions that were “slightly”, “somewhat”, or “very” manageable since “class diversity” was the challenge most often mentioned in response to the open-ended questions.

Professional Development

- Most FSL teachers report participation in PD through discussions with colleagues, reading professional literature and attendance at one workshop each year.
- Some provinces have moved into electronic delivery of PD.
- Teachers suggest that funding, relevant topics, PD during school hours and French-speaking supply teachers will make PD more accessible to them.

CHALLENGES IN TEACHING FSL – TEACHER COMMENTS

Diversity of Students in the Classroom

The challenge most often cited (13.8%) by teachers concerned the diversity of students in their FSL classroom; both CF and FI teachers cite this challenge equally often. It appears that the range of students in one class (different FSL abilities, ESL students, special education students), without adequate support, represents the greatest overall challenge for the FSL teacher. The nature of this challenge is captured in the following teacher quotes:

- *Meeting the needs of all students including learning disabled, physically challenged (non-verbal) and gifted all in one classroom (CF)*
- *Dealing with Francophone students in an immersion class (FI)*

Lack of Resources

Lack of resources is the next greatest challenge cited (13.5%), FI teachers (15.5%) citing this more often than CF teachers (12.4%). This challenge includes lack of materials and resources in general, inadequate grammar exercises, as well as lack of funding for materials such as workbooks and notebooks. The following quotes capture some of these challenges:

- *Lack of funds to purchase materials like books, CDs, posters, teacher resources...I have to buy all supplies myself (CF)*
- *Resources are not available in French; there's always translation(FI)*

Student Interest and Motivation

Student motivation, the next greatest challenge (13.4%), is cited almost twice as often by CF teachers (16.1%) than FI teachers (8.6%). This category encompasses the apathy and disinterest that is associated with the attitude that French is unimportant. It manifests itself in a failure to participate and communicate in class and, ultimately, in students dropping French as soon as possible. The following quotes capture the spirit of this challenge:

- *The general attitude that FSL is a course to be tolerated only until the end of grade 9(FI)*

- *It is difficult to change students' belief that French (Core French) is not really part of the overall curriculum and does not have to be taken seriously (CF)*

Availability of Relevant Resources

Resources that do not match the students' needs, interests and abilities is the next most cited challenge (11.8%), with CF teachers (13.8%) citing this more often than FI teachers (10.8%). When resources do not meet the needs of their students, teachers feel compelled to create new materials, adapt materials or search for new materials, all of which takes more time than they have. This challenge is captured in the following quotes:

- *Outdated texts (CF)*
- *Very few resources for late immersion students (FI)*

Lack of Moral Support

The next most cited challenge involves perceived lack of moral support and respect for French by school administration and non-FSL colleagues. FI teachers (13.7%) cite this challenge more often than CF teachers (9.0%). This result is somewhat surprising since it is generally believed that FI programs have more institutional support than CF programs. Lack of moral support and respect is illustrated in the following quotes:

- *Little value placed on FSL programs (extended French in particular) by one of the two administrators in our school and by a lot of other teachers, especially department heads (CF)*
- *Total lack of comprehension on the part of "support staff" (FI)*

Lack of Practical Supports

School support is the next most cited challenge (9.6%). It involves issues such as scheduling of French, availability of classrooms, class sizes and supply teachers. CF teachers (12.2%) cite this challenge more than twice as often as their FI counterparts (5.2%). The following quotes capture some of the representative issues:

- *Lack of supports such as a librarian, a teacher's aide (FI)*
- *Not having my own space (classroom) to create an atmosphere conducive to second language learning, even if it's only hanging up French materials (instead of posters in English about things related to other subjects) (CF)*
- *How to do an oral program with 30 kids and me!! (CF)*

Lack of Parental/Community Support

Community support is the next most cited challenge (5.9%); it is cited about twice as often by CF teachers (7.1%) as by FI teachers (3.9%). It involves issues such as general lack of parental support and community interest in French. It can also involve high parental expectations in the case of French Immersion programs. The spirit of this challenge is captured in the following quotes:

- *French is not generally supported in our areasome (parents) don't care because "it's just French" (CF)*
- *Very high or very low expectations on the part of parents (FI)*

CONCLUSION

Generally, there is remarkable consistency between the findings reported here and those emerging from literature reviews with regard to the challenges facing FSL teachers.

Of strong concern is the high number of teachers who have considered leaving FSL teaching (close to 40%) – there is a clear need to discover more about their reasons and how to address this systemic problem, thereby reducing the number of disaffected teachers. Another issue is the significant number of FSL teachers who do not hold FSL specialist certificates (31.6%). It is unclear to what extent FSL teachers without this qualification are equipped to meet expectations in terms of a high level of proficiency in French, excellence in teaching, and knowledge of experiential, interactive second language teaching approaches.

Many findings (such as the need for PD) have not changed from earlier surveys. Others, such as the need to access newer technologies for teaching and PD are in keeping with new developments in the 21st century. Given that half the respondents reported not using computer software, there is clearly a need for inservice in technology related to language teaching.

Negative attitudes towards French are documented in the literature. Groups that need more information about the importance of French in Canadian society include guidance counsellors, superintendents and trustees.

A strong theme emerging from the Survey is the time given to Core French. Setting up and closing each period results in the loss of a lot of instructional time from already short daily periods. Studies suggest that longer blocks of teaching time can lead to better outcomes for core French, as can newer program models (intensive French); but often administrators/trustees are not open to timetable and other changes that can allow for innovation.

Extracts from National Survey compiled by:
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