

# 2013

## STATE OF FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN BC

### THERE ARE THREE MAIN PROGRAM DELIVERY MODELS FOR FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: **CORE FRENCH, INTENSIVE FRENCH, AND FRENCH IMMERSION.**

**Core French** is a French second language program delivery where students are taught basic French communication skills, language knowledge, and are exposed to French culture. Core French typically begins in grades four or five and is often limited to one or two classes per week. The language is the object of instruction.

**Intensive French** is an optional Core French program for grades 6 and 7. During the first half of the Grade 6 year, the main language of instruction is French and the focus is on learning to communicate. The second half of the year returns to the regular curriculum. By Grade 7, the regular curriculum is taught in English with 60 minutes of advanced French instruction per day.

**French Immersion** programs aim to make students bilingual, and the main language of instruction is French for all subjects. Early French Immersion begins in Kindergarten (or Grade 1) and English is not introduced into the curriculum until Grade 3, where it appears for English Language Arts. Late French Immersion begins in Grade 5 or 6, is taught almost solely in French and English re-enters the curriculum by no more than 20% in Grade 7. In Grade 8, both EFI and LFI may merge into the same classes for secondary school instruction. French is both the medium and the object of instruction.

There are two entry-points for French immersion: Early FI (Kindergarten / Grade 1) and Late FI (Grade 5 or 6). Canada's French immersion program has become an Internationally recognized second language delivery model. The United States, Finland, Sweden, Spain, Australia, Germany, Hong Kong and Singapore have created educational language programs based on our successful model.

In early French Immersion programs, Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2 should be taught totally in French. Beginning in Grade 3 or 4 and continuing to Grade 12, English Language Arts should be provided for all French Immersion students. Other courses may be offered in English. The following chart shows the recommended time allocations:

**Proportion of French to English Instruction in Early French Immersion**

| Grade      | % of French Instruction | % of English Instruction |
|------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| K-(2 or 3) | 100                     | 0                        |
| (3 or) 4-7 | 80                      | 20                       |
| 8-10       | 50 - 75                 | 25 - 50                  |
| 11-12      | no less than 25         | no more than 75          |

Source: BC Ministry of Education

There is also a Francophone program available to students with a parent who is a French native speaker, available through [\*le Conseil scolaire francophone\*](#).

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## Overall French immersion, the strongest vehicle for French second language education here in British Columbia, has been a great success.

French immersion enrolment has been increasing for **14 consecutive years**. An incredible achievement given overall student enrolment has declined during this same period.

As of the 2011/2012 school year **46,856 or 8.1%** of the entire student body was registered in a French immersion program, and **220,920** were registered in Core French.

Currently, there are 60 school districts in BC – of these **40 school districts offer a French immersion program** (Early French or Late French). Twenty school districts offer the Late French immersion program.

The success and strength of FSL education in British Columbia is attributable to a number of factors including the dedication of local parents who have advocated for quality and accessible FSL opportunities in communities across BC for over 35 years, leadership by Federal and Provincial government officials, and strong teacher training programs.

**Table 1 – French Immersion – Enrolment Statistics 2011-2012 – BC Public Schools only**

| YEAR    | Public School French Immersion Enrolment | % Change in FI enrolment from previous year | Total Public School Enrolment | % Change in total enrolment from previous year | FI as % of Total Public School Enrolment |
|---------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 2011-12 | 46,856                                   | 4.48                                        | 569,728                       | -1.62                                          | 8.1%                                     |
| 2010-11 | 44,848                                   | 2.01                                        | 579,094                       | -0.24                                          | 7.7%                                     |
| 2009-10 | 43,964                                   | 3.51                                        | 580,486                       | +0.17                                          | 7.6%                                     |
| 2008-09 | 42,474                                   | 3.59                                        | 579,492                       | -0.71                                          | 7.3%                                     |
| 2007-08 | 41,002                                   | 3.80                                        | 583,627                       | -0.71                                          | 7.0%                                     |
| 2006-07 | 39,500                                   | 3.95                                        | 587,820                       | -1.95                                          | 6.7%                                     |
| 2005-06 | 37,998                                   | 6.99                                        | 599,492                       | -1.14                                          | 6.3%                                     |
| 2004-05 | 35,515                                   | 6.32                                        | 606,383                       | -1.43                                          | 5.9%                                     |
| 2003-04 | 33,403                                   | 4.43                                        | 615,185                       | -0.97                                          | 5.4%                                     |
| 2002-03 | 31,987                                   | 2.74                                        | 621,202                       | -1.40                                          | 5.1%                                     |
| 2001-02 | 31,133                                   | 2.36                                        | 630,049                       | -0.39                                          | 4.9%                                     |
| 2000-01 | 30,414                                   |                                             | 632,503                       |                                                | 4.8%                                     |

Source: British Columbia Ministry of Education: [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reports/pdfs/student\\_stats/prov.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reports/pdfs/student_stats/prov.pdf)

### Research has demonstrated the following cognitive and developmental benefits for youth learning French as a second language:

- Develop their listening skills, focus and concentration;
- Learn organization, self-discipline and resourcefulness;
- Increase cognitive abilities to understand complex and abstract concepts;
- Enhance their ability to communicate in their first language;
- Acquire a third or fourth language much more easily;
- Strengthen their problem-solving skills;
- Learn tolerance, insight and understanding of other cultures.

**Sources:** Lazaruk, W. (2007). Linguistic, academic, and cognitive benefits of French immersion. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 63(5), p. 621 & Barik, H.C., and M. Swain (1978). Evaluation of a French immersion program: The Ottawa study through grade five. *Canadian Journal of Behaviour Science*, 10(3), p. 201.

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CPF BC & Yukon President Debra Pool recently had this to say about the strength and popularity of the French immersion program,

*“ We believe French programs are popular because they are widely recognized by parents as providing young students with the tools and experiences that will enrich their lives and help them prepare for the future. ”*

This belief is further supported by employment data made available in the 2011 Federal Census.

Official-language bilinguals all across Canada, regardless of mother tongue, have an employment rate higher than the national average, and an unemployment rate of 4%, which is well under the national average of 7.7%<sup>1</sup>.

Official-language bilinguals also earn, on average, 10% more than their monolingual counterparts<sup>2</sup>.

Students who participate in French second language education and acquire the necessary language skills are categorically better prepared for future social and economic opportunities.

Interestingly, according to the same 2011 Federal Census of the 4.4 million people living in BC **296,645** self-identified as having knowledge of both French and English<sup>3</sup>.

## This makes French one of the top most commonly spoken languages in BC after English.

Self-identified French language speakers in BC increased by 10% from 2001 when 269,360 indicated to be able to speak both Official Languages. Punjabi was the mother tongue of 182,915 British Columbians.

French is the mother tongue of 70,760 British Columbians<sup>4</sup>. Francophones in BC are represented by *la Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique (FFCB)* and its local members associations. CPF BC & Yukon is a non-voting member of *la Fédération*.

In addition to these native-French speakers are 34 years of graduates from very popular French second language programs like French immersion, and core French.

## Francophones in the world

**French is the 10th most commonly spoken language in the world**, and an official working language of a number of international bodies including: the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the United Nations, the European Union, the International Federation of Journalists, the World Trade Organization, Doctors Without Borders and many many more.

For comparison purposes, the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* defines a Francophone as anyone who can conduct a sustained conversation in French.

**220 million** The estimated number of Francophones worldwide in 2010.

**370 million to 770 million** The projected number of Francophones worldwide in 2060 (according to various predictions), mostly in Africa and in Haiti.

| Rank | Population of Francophones, 2010 | Nation                       |
|------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1    | 62,483,600                       | France                       |
| 2    | 30,990,000                       | Democratic Republic of Congo |
| 3    | 11,200,000                       | Algeria                      |
| 4    | 10,366,000                       | Morocco                      |
| 5    | 9,590,700                        | Canada                       |

**5th** – The rank of Canada, when it comes to the population of Francophones.

**2.1 million** The estimated number of French-speaking individuals in the United States.

**11 million** The estimated number of individuals in the United States who reported “French” or “French Canadian” as their ethnic origin in 2010.

**Sources:** *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, Le dénombrement des francophones; American Community Survey, 2010.*

Overall, French second language education has opened doors for tens of thousands of young students and helped develop the strength and vitality of French language and culture here in Canada’s most western province. With that said there are three areas we have identified which require further improvement to ensure all young students have equitable access to quality French second language opportunities.

[1] <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-651-x/89-651-x2012001-eng.pdf>

[2] <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/LessonsInLearning/Oct-16-08-The-advantages-of-bilingualism.pdf>

[3] <http://bit.ly/Rkq1F6>

[4] <http://bit.ly/TgJP3q>

# ROADMAP

## MOVING FORWARD IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

**The challenge** in the delivery of French second language (FSL) education is to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, what their socio-economic background or intellectual abilities, have equal opportunity to quality and accessible French educational opportunities.

CPF BC & Yukon has identified three key areas for continued improvement:

- 1) **Program access**
- 2) **Students with learning disabilities and**
- 3) **Shortage of qualified French second language teachers**

### Program Access

Demand for French immersion programs continues to outstrip capacity in many BC communities. School districts continue to mitigate FSL program capping in a variety of ways including: enrolment lotteries and early morning registration that has forced some parents to camp overnight. Access then becomes an unfair game of chance and/or available parental resources (time). This has and will continue to deny children the opportunity to learn both of Canada's two Official Languages. It also fuels resentment and negatively impacts the higher goal of the promotion of the value of Canada's linguistic duality. As of January 2013, parents are currently lobbying for the creation of new French immersion programs and/or classes: **Tofino, Nanaimo, Gibsons, Squamish, Whistler,**

**Vancouver, New Westminster, Chilliwack, Agassiz, Penticton, Vernon, Mackenzie and Fernie.**

**Jessica Becker, Chilliwack B.C.** parent of a four-year-old who will start kindergarten in September 2013, lobbying school trustees to create an Early French immersion program in her school community,

*"I would prefer my daughter go to school in Chilliwack, she's going to preschool right now, and has already formed friendships...but if she doesn't start early French immersion by Grade 1, she won't be able to get into it anywhere.*

*The big part for me is being able to have the choice, being on an even keel with the rest of Canadian kids. When much smaller school districts like Williams Lake and Fort St. John have early French immersion, why can't we?"*

Chilliwack currently offers a Late French Immersion program, and it's often full. Program capping, and or program unavailability, are a common theme across British Columbia.



Minister James Moore with *Concours* winner, SFU Surrey 2012.

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### Recommendation BC Ministry of Education:

**Additional Federal funding is required** to maintain French Second Language gains in British Columbia in the face of acute financial pressures at the school district level. We need to incentivize growth through funding formulas.

- When drafting the next OLEP (Official Languages Educational Protocol) Agreement & BC French Action Plan we strongly recommend **the Action Plan include a specific growth target for French Immersion enrolment.**

Currently, the 2012 – 2013 student participation performance target says, *“Percentage of French immersion students will remain at or above baseline in 2012-2013.”* French Federal funds should be allocated to achieve a specific target; in large part by ensuring school district funding formulas incentivize the creation of new French immersion programs.

### Recommendation BC Ministry of Education:

**Increase FSL online learning opportunities.** Assist French immersion students in remote areas, or who are unable to physically attend classes due to extenuating circumstances, register for online courses (Grade 6 - Grade 12) through LearnNow BC by increasing the courses available. This will help students complete courses as they pursue a Double Dogwood (the BC graduation certificate). Currently only grade 10 – 12 French immersion course are available online.

### Recommendation BC Provincial Government:

**Pass legislation that ensures guaranteed access to French Immersion programs.**

- This would bring access to French as a Second Language programs in line with the access to French as a Minority Language programs;
- Legislation would help guarantee access and the allocation of funds towards increasing the number of BC high school graduates with second Official Language proficiency.

## Students With Learning Disabilities

When lacking the appropriate learning support resources, and or research, educators often encourage French immersion students who have special needs, be it learning challenges or learning disabilities, to deregister from the program and re-enter the English stream. While the intention is often to best support the development of the student with special needs, it has proven to often to have the opposite effect. It also denies the student, through no fault of their own, the lifelong social and career mobility benefits of learning Canada’s two Official Languages.

**Toni Lander, Cobble Hill B.C.** parent of a French immersion student with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, a cognitive impairment, a mild mental handicap and sensory processing issues,

*“We understand the importance of languages, we love French and knew it was a culturally appropriate choice for our Métis son; but, it hasn’t been easy. Despite a supportive principal, dedicated teachers and support staff, we would regularly advocate for his needs to be met and ours to be valued. Disabled children are not regularly represented in French immersion programs and we are breaking ground if he remains there.*

*However, the biggest shock and hurdle came from our discovery that no educational assistants in the French immersion program were required to speak French.*

*...How do we know that French Immersion is the right program for our disabled son? We don’t. There is no lighted path here. We are still shooting in the dark, just like all the other parents that choose ballet or music and hope their choice will be a good fit and benefit their child.”*

Drawing from academic research and local best practices Canadian Parents for French National as well as the CPF BC & Yukon Branch have published reports outlining the facts about the accessibility of French second language education to students with learning disabilities. To read the full reports please visit: [www.cpf.bc.ca/site3/index.php/parents/what-about-learning-difficulties](http://www.cpf.bc.ca/site3/index.php/parents/what-about-learning-difficulties).

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## Some important facts:

- Research shows that there is notable improvement in special needs student performance in French immersion when appropriate assistance is provided [Bourgoin 2012, Genesee 2012];
- Students with language impairment performed the same whether in immersion of non-immersion programs;
- Struggling learners are at no greater disadvantage in second-language programs and have the ability to learn two languages despite their difficulties,

**Recommendation BC Ministry of Education:** when drafting the next OLEP Agreement & BC French Action Plan we strongly recommend the Action Plan include the following target: **“decrease attrition of students with learning disabilities by 5%.”** This will require closer tracking and analysis of students with learning disabilities in FSL programs, as is currently the practice of students with special needs in regular English programs.

- We further recommend that future Ministry of Education Special Reports on ‘Students With Special Needs’ include a section on students in FSL programs with special needs. We believe FSL students face unique academic challenges. It would be beneficial for additional research and statistical analysis, including but not limited to ‘attrition rates of students with learning disabilities in FSL programs.’
- We request Ministry of Education financial support for CPF BC & Yukon to launch a research-based **“French For All” public education campaign:**
  - Include the benefits of learning French and the facts about students with learning disabilities in French second language programs.
  - Target young parents considering FI for their children, parents who currently have children with learning disabilities in FI, as well as early childhood educators.

## Shortage of qualified French second language teachers

In 2011-2012, 220,920 students in BC were registered in Core French courses. In a 2007 University of British Columbia survey of 800 core French teachers **only 22% of elementary school teachers reported being at ‘ease in conversing or reading’ in French**, this number increases slightly for middle school teachers; 29% reported being at ‘ease in conversing or reading French.’ Nationally, 75% of elementary and middle school Core French teachers reported being at ease in conversing or reading French<sup>5</sup>.

This lack of French language proficiency amongst elementary and middle school Core French teachers in BC has impacted the quality of French second language instruction. It also limits the growth and vitality of the French language in our province.

**Anneka, Richmond B.C.** French immersion high school student, *“I have had my fair share of substitutes filling in for my sick French teachers. All these years I’ve only had one substitute who could speak a full sentence in French. One! That isn’t fair to other students like me, who are eager to learn French.”*

**Recommendation BC Teachers Regulation Branch:** **require all new teachers to take one mandatory French methodology course as part of their teacher certification.**

**Recommendation BC Ministry of Education:** growth of French Immersion is further being limited by an acute shortage of qualified French immersion teachers across BC:

- Strategies are required to address this issue, possibly lead by CEMEC in collaboration with other Federal ministries as well as the Provinces;
- Investigate the possibility of a national teacher labour mobility agreement permitting teachers to exercise their profession anywhere in Canada. This would require a standardization of teacher requirements across the country. CMEC is currently studying this recommendation. Reinforce French language training for students at the post-secondary level, so they are better prepared to become teachers in French immersion;
- Provide funding to support student mobility and language training in a francophone post-secondary institution within Canada.

[5] <http://www.bcatml.org/CFinBC2007.pdf>