

S P R I N G 2 0 1 0

L₂RIC Notes



The Portfolio

Passport

users reflect on their French proficiency

Autobiography

users describe their experiences with French language and culture

Dossier

users include relevant examples of language performance, strategies for language learning, and goal setting

French Competencies

users complete detailed self-assessment grids



Extending the Language Portfolio to Teacher Education

In collaboration with the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT)¹, the Second Language Research Institute of Canada (L₂RIC) is involved with a project designed to increase awareness of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) by teacher educators and student-teachers in faculties of education across the country. This draft portfolio², like the European portfolio upon which it is based, contains a passport, an autobiography, and a dossier. This teacher-education portfolio also contains a French competencies section focused specifically on the French classroom and related professional contexts.



Field-Testing the Portfolio

Overall, reaction to the portfolio by student-teachers and instructors was extremely positive.

Surveys

Dr Joseph Dicks of L₂RIC at the University of New Brunswick, who is a member of the CASLT portfolio committee, coordinated the piloting of the portfolio in eight faculties of education representing varied geographic regions of the country. Instructors and students worked with the portfolio during the fall and winter semesters of 2009–10 and surveys were administered to students and instructors to determine their reaction. The survey was completed by 94 students and 7 instructors.

Survey Results

Overall, reaction to the portfolio by student-teachers and instructors was extremely positive. When asked "Does the portfolio allow you as a professional learner to take control of your own language development?", 91% of students responded either "yes" or "in part". Only 3% said "no". All 7 instructors felt that this was the case as well.

Regarding the teacher educator focus, 87% of students indicated they felt that the language levels and the autobiography adequately described the language skills required of teachers. Six out of seven instructors felt that was also the case. One instructor made an important point about the language sometimes promoting a particular style of teaching and that language related to engagement, cooperation, etc could be added. It was also suggested that more examples would be useful.

Regarding the "I can" statements and the scale, 93% of students agreed that the scale was helpful to them in indicating their language level. Six out of seven instructors also agreed. The autobiography and

dossier sections were also favourably viewed with $\frac{3}{4}$ of students indicating they agreed that the autobiography allowed them to plan and reflect and that the dossier provided a way of showing evidence for their language level and cultural knowledge.

When asked whether the document was, in general, easy to follow and to use, 87% of students responded positively as did all 7 instructors. There was, however, some concern expressed about the length of the document. While $\frac{3}{4}$ of students indicated that they felt the length was appropriate there were 10 students who felt that the document was too long. A high percentage of students and instructors indicated a user guide would be very helpful.

Finally when asked whether the portfolio should be a compulsory component of the B.Ed program, there was a wide range of responses with 52% of students indicating they felt it should be, and 45% indicating they felt it should not. Five out of seven instructors felt it should be obligatory.

Conclusion and Next Steps

These results indicate an overall high level of satisfaction with the draft portfolio. There are however some areas where adjustments are needed. The CASLT committee will be meeting in May 2010 to make these adjustments and produce a final product for the fall of 2010.

Look for follow-up articles on the language portfolio for teacher educators in upcoming issues of the CASLT *Réflexions* journal and right here in future editions of *L₂RIC Notes*.



¹CASLT promotes the advancement of second language learning and teaching throughout Canada by creating opportunities for professional development, by encouraging research, and by facilitating the sharing of information and the exchange of ideas among second language educators. The CASLT mission fosters and advances professional excellence in the teaching of second languages in Canada. For more information about CASLT, visit www.caslt.org.



²An article by Dr Miles Turnbull in the May 2009 issue of the CASLT *Réflexions* journal provides a detailed description of this portfolio.