

QUALITY LEARNING IN FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE IN NEW BRUNSWICK

A BRIEF TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Table of Contents

Preface / 1

Recommendations / 2

Recommended Model for French as a Second Language Learning / 7

Quality Learning Agenda: Current Status of FSL Results / 8

Research on the Effects of Second Language Learning on First Language Literacy and Academic Skills / 9

Research on Children with Exceptionalities / 10

Previous Studies of FSL Programmes in New Brunswick / 12

Regional and National Studies / 12

Trends and Innovations in FSL Programmes / 13

Challenges with Regard to Human and Other Resources in New Brunswick / 16

Current Research and Insights into Intensive French in New Brunswick / 17

Perceptions of FSL Programme Results / 19

Reflections on Some Major Questions for this Brief / 19

Conclusions, Implications and Options / 21

Appendix A – Documents Consulted / 23

Appendix B – Necessary Conditions for Successful Follow-up to Intensive French / 28

Appendix C – Summary of Intensive French Parent Survey Data / 29

Appendix D – Summary of Conclusions and Implications based on “Beyond Time on Task in Second Language Teaching and Learning: A Case Study of Cognitive Processing in Intensive French” / 30

Appendix E – Highlights from the Principals’ Survey on Intensive French / 31

Appendix F – Highlights from the Intensive French Teachers’ Survey / 33

Appendix G – The European Language Portfolio and its Potential for Canada / 35

Appendix H – The Common Framework of Reference for Languages, Council of Europe / 40

Appendix I – “To Stay or Not to Stay? Factors Influencing Parents of Early French Immersion Students Experiencing Learning Difficulties” / 41

PREFACE

The recent (2003) federal government initiative to improve official bilingualism in Canada sets out a particular challenge for schools. The goal is to double the number of high school students graduating with functional proficiency in their second language by 2013. New Brunswick, in its Quality Learning Agenda (QLA), has set its own target: 70% of high school graduates will function effectively in their second language by 2012. This research brief considers various facets of French as a second language (FSL) programming in New Brunswick and across Canada. The issues highlighted below draw upon previous studies in NB and elsewhere, new research findings and consultations with selected individuals and groups. Essentially, this brief addresses one fundamental question: “Is New Brunswick using the most effective approaches to French second language programming to meet the goals of its Quality Learning Agenda?”

The QLA goal is an ambitious and appropriate one for New Brunswick, Canada’s only officially bilingual province. The goal places the responsibility squarely on the K-12 school system. Language learning, however, takes time and students who can “function effectively” at the end of Grade 10 (when the assessment of proficiency is done) are using a different French than that required to “function effectively” after graduation in the world of work or in post-secondary studies. The topics for discussion are different; the domains of use are different; and the number of people in different roles with whom one interacts is different. Learners need to keep on learning. The schools can provide a very good skill base on which to build, but it would be a mistake to assume that “functioning effectively” is a static condition. It is not so much that learners “lose” their level of proficiency gained through school. Rather, the situations in which they need to use their French outside of and beyond school are not the same.

Thus we are recommending in this brief that French as a second language learning be conceived and articulated as a life-long, inclusive learning model, of which the schools are but one part. We propose a model which sets out the features necessary for a coherent FSL system: 1) enhancement of Core French through the system-wide implementation of Intensive French and follow-up programmes; 2) improvement of French Immersion with a particular focus on including and retaining children with exceptionalities; 3) revamping of high school courses; 3) adoption of a common framework for describing language proficiency; 4) a language portfolio which can be used throughout the learning process and beyond; and 5) inclusion of post-secondary institutions and adult learning centres.

A core strategy for building commitment to these recommendations is to create a new forum for the various stakeholders to engage in finding productive ways to work together. The success of the proposed model requires a broad-based collaboration of groups to guide the various aspects of FSL learning in the form of a provincial FSL Collaborative Committee or Task Force.

We present first the recommendations and the recommended Model for FSL Learning, followed by the summaries of research and discussions. There are six principal recommendations under the following headings:

- Integrated and coherent model for French as a second language learning
- FSL learning for children with exceptionalities
- Assessment
- Engagement
- Implementation
- Promotion

RECOMMENDATIONS

INTEGRATED AND COHERENT MODEL FOR FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

1) Adopt the recommended Model for FSL Learning (p.7), which has the following key features:

- Conception of FSL learning as a continuous life-long process with the learners becoming increasingly autonomous as their proficiency grows.
- Implementation of the Language Portfolio (Passport) from Grade 4 through to adulthood to promote learner autonomy and a common way of describing proficiency across all levels and age groups. This initiative would align with national efforts to establish a Language Portfolio modelled after the European Language Portfolio.
- Teaching and learning strategies reflecting an underlying philosophy of project-based pedagogy having an oral emphasis with balanced literacy components.
- Enhancement of Early French Immersion through: a continued focus on literacy with a renewal of a focus on oral competencies; additional literacy mentors; reduced attrition; single grade classes (i.e., avoid combined classes, especially with Grade 1).
- Renewal of French Immersion resources for Grades 4 to 8, including print, audio-visual and online/software resources.
- Improvement of Late French Immersion through better defined pedagogy and resources and protected LFI classes until at least Grade 10 (i.e., not combined with Early French Immersion).
- Complete overhaul of Core French programmes including province-wide implementation of Intensive French beginning in Grade 5. Introductory enrichment modules in Grades 1-3. One year of Core French in Grade 4 using a contextualized integrated pedagogy. Phased-in implementation based on individual district plans.
- Planned and coherent programmes to follow Intensive French, including keeping Intensive French students together until high school during the phased-in implementation, and using materials which promote active learning.
- Follow-up French enrichment module in Grade 8, which could complement the 6 – 8 week blocks of enriched learning in other areas currently available in most middle schools.
- Improved course offerings at the high school level with a focus on French for Specific Purposes. Examples include: Drama for Language Learning; Conversational French; Hospitality and Tourism; French for Academic Purposes.
- Development of interactive, online courses at the secondary level.

- Opportunities for Grade 12 graduating students to take nationally and internationally recognized tests.
- Collaboration with post-secondary institutions and other adult learning centres in developing and promoting learning opportunities for French for specific purposes.
- Continuation of Language Portfolio (Passport) to bridge with employers and post-secondary institutions.

FSL LEARNING FOR CHILDREN WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES

2) Establish a plan to increase the participation and retention rate of children with exceptionalities (particularly in French Immersion) through:

- A handbook for districts and schools which would disseminate current research on inclusivity and second language learning, and provide concrete strategies for assisting children with exceptionalities.
- Bursaries for French Immersion teachers to enrol in continuing education (e.g., Master's degree) specializing in exceptionalities.
- Short-term internships for French Immersion teachers to apprentice with experienced Resource teachers.
- Awareness-building Workshops for school and district personnel, and parents to increase the knowledge base in the area of second language learning and children with exceptionalities.
- A communication plan for assisting parents of children with exceptionalities.

ASSESSMENT

3) Establish a multi-faceted assessment plan which includes the following:

- Adoption of the Language Portfolio concept based on the European Language Portfolio (see Appendix G) to begin in Grade 4 and continue through to adult learning contexts.
- Participation in the development at the national level of a Canadian Language Portfolio.
- Endorsement of the Common Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe) as a basis for the Language Portfolio.
- Establishment of an assessment committee to calibrate the Oral Proficiency Interview scale to the Common Framework of Reference for Languages.
- Continuation of the Oral Proficiency Interview with Grade 10 students. Addition of a purposive sample of all Grade 12 students, which would include students from all FSL programmes.
- Continuation of literacy-based French Immersion assessment currently being piloted at the Grade 10 level.

- Review of target proficiency levels for early and late immersion (Policy 309) in light of empirical results of the Oral Proficiency Interview over time. Refinement of target proficiency levels to include reading, writing, listening, oral production and oral interaction.
- Provision of opportunities for high school graduates to take nationally and internationally recognized tests.
- A longitudinal study to track the enrolment patterns and FSL proficiency development of children with exceptionalities.

ENGAGEMENT

- 4) Establish a broad-based consultative committee to guide the implementation of these recommendations. A primary goal of this committee would be to engage partners in effective interaction about the various ways to implement the plan and to promote the plan in the wider educational community. Members of this committee could include the following partners:**

- District superintendents, FSL supervisors, and school principals
- New Brunswick Teachers Association
- Provincial Departments: Education; Post-Secondary Education and Training; Intergovernmental Affairs
- Canadian Parents for French
- Second Language Education Centre, UNB
- French and Education Department representatives from New Brunswick universities (including Université de Moncton)
- Community colleges (both Anglophone and Francophone)
- Dialogue New Brunswick
- Business New Brunswick
- New Brunswick Chamber of Commerce
- Offices of the Commissioners of Official Languages (both provincial and federal)
- Department of Canadian Heritage
- Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers
- Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers

IMPLEMENTATION

- 5) **Develop an overall implementation plan within which each District would develop its own strategy. A critical part of the district plans would be the use of the funds targeted for French as a second language programming. Plans should include the components of the recommended model as well as:**

- A human resource plan for teachers
- Demographic projections for student numbers
- Inventory of existing print, audio-visual, and software resources, leading to an acquisition plan for new resources

PROMOTION

- 6) **Develop a promotion and marketing plan for French as a second language. The plan could include the following kinds of key messages (inspired by Edmonton Public Schools French Renewal Project):**

- There are many reasons to learn French (cognitive/academic benefits, post-secondary study, career/employment, travel).
- Learning French does not stop at high school graduation.
- There are many ways to improve one's French proficiency.
- Learning French is fun.
- Learning French as a second language makes it easier to learn third and fourth languages.

There should be clear messages in the plan designed to dispel misconceptions about second language learning and programmes. Some of the more common ones include:

- *Misconception:* "Children need a "good grounding" in their first language before starting a second language."
Reality: A "good grounding" simply means "age-appropriate" development in the first language. There is no danger of a child's first language being diminished because of study of/in a second language when the first language is the majority language of the community (i.e., English).
- *Misconception:* "Literacy should be developed first in a child's first language."
Reality: Literacy can be developed in either language. In fact, first language literacy is often enhanced when developed after second language literacy.
- *Misconception:* "The level of French achieved through school-based programmes should provide graduates with a level of French sufficient to work in French."
Reality: The topics and domains of French used in the work world vary a great deal and are not necessarily the same domains learned in school. Language learning is a life-long process and the schools can provide a very good base on which learners can build.

- *Misconception:* “Learners with exceptionalities should not study a second language because school is already difficult enough for them.”



Reality: Effective teaching strategies used in the second language classroom mirror effective teaching strategies for learners with exceptionalities. With appropriate support, learners with special needs can learn a second language and should not be deprived of the opportunities to do so.

- *Misconception:* “Intensive French should be the only programme available and it should replace French Immersion.”

Reality: Intensive French is designed to enhance Core French programmes, which have not produced a large percentage of graduates who can function effectively in French. Although there is no long-term research on the proficiency of graduates who have taken Intensive French, it does provide a promising springboard for improving Core French. Intensive French is not a replacement for French Immersion, however, and it would be unwise to eliminate a programme which has consistently produced graduates who meet the Quality Learning Agenda’s goal.



QUALITY LEARNING IN FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE IN NEW BRUNSWICK: A BRIEF TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Recommended Model for French as a Second Language Learning

	EARLY FRENCH IMMERSION	LATE FRENCH IMMERSION	CORE FRENCH	
Grade 1 to Grade 3	Continued focus on literacy, renewal of focus on oral, literacy mentors, increase of pupils with exceptionalities, no combined classes in first year of immersion.		Introductory elementary French enrichment modules (one 8-week block or two 4-week blocks in each of Grades 1, 2, and 3)	Grade 1 to Grade 3
Grade 4	Review resources in literacy; match practices currently available in English stream e.g. literature circles, "gender friendly" materials; update inventory including print, audio-visual and software resources. Focus on retaining pupils with exceptionalities through knowledgeable interventions from resource and classroom teachers.	 Introduction of Language Passport (Language Portfolio) based on the Common Framework of Proficiency for Languages (Appendix H) Grade 4 to beyond post-secondary 	Contextualized integrated pedagogy	Grade 4
Grade 5			A) Intensive French, followed by enhanced Core French Program	Grade 5
Grade 6			B) Contextualized integrated pedagogy followed by Intensive French	Grade 5
Grade 7				Grade 6
Grade 8		Maintain Late Immersion entry point and improve with better defined pedagogy and resources. Merge EFI and LFI at grade 10 at the earliest.	Keep IF students together (cohort model) until high school, during phase-in. Recycle, reuse academic themes. Make available current up-to-date programmes. Utilize enriched block concept.	Grade 7
			Follow-up middle level French enrichment module (one 6- to 8-week intensive block in Grade 8 beyond regular Core French time)	Grade 8
Grade 9 to Grade 12	Improve offerings with quality resources and creative approaches. Contextualized integrated pedagogy. New courses in French for specific purposes: e.g., Drama for Learning, Conversational French, Hospitality, Tourism, Technology, French for Academic Purposes. Rethink capacity to offer French Immersion math and science. New resources (e.g. those currently under development by publishers and entering pilot phase). Increase online learning. Cultural opportunities (e.g. camps, exchanges, online learning). National and international assessment opportunities.			Grade 9 to Grade 12
Post-secondary	Include universities, community colleges and other adult learning centres in developing learning opportunities for French for specific purposes.			Post-secondary
Lifelong Learning	Increase FSL learning opportunities. Incorporate ideas from <i>Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities</i> (e.g. promote Language Passport as certification for learners). Involve employers and the business community.			Lifelong Learning

Key pedagogical features of a coherent FSL system

Lower proficiency end
Highly scaffolded

 Project / task-based 
Oral emphasis with balanced literacy
Passport (Portfolio) Philosophy

Higher proficiency end
More autonomous

QUALITY LEARNING AGENDA: CURRENT STATUS OF FSL RESULTS

The New Brunswick Department of Education Report Card has been providing data on student achievement in various areas of study for many years. French proficiency results for students at the high school level in the province's two distinct French second language programmes -- Core French and French Immersion -- have been reported for many years on the Oral Proficiency Scale. The results contained in Report Card 2003-2004 indicate that the vast majority of French Immersion students are reaching or exceeding the QLA target of Intermediate Proficiency. The numbers fall drastically short, however, in the Core French Programme:

- 20.6% of all Grade 12 students (approximately 6500) meet or exceed the target
- 99% of Early French Immersion students meet or exceed the QLA target
- 97% of Late French Immersion meet or exceed the QLA target
- 27% of Grade 12 Core French students who chose to be tested meet or exceed the target
- 1% of non-immersion students meet or exceed the target, when the full Grade 12 enrolment is taken into consideration

A comparison of current enrolment and achievement suggests that there has been some improvement since the Department of Education studied French second language programmes in 1978, the year of the so-called Base Year Study. However, this improvement can likely be explained by the increase in French Immersion enrolment at the secondary level. The dropout rate from French at the secondary level is still very high. Moreover, the percentage of students reaching the QLA proficiency level of Intermediate is still far below the 70% target.

1978	2004
82.1% of a random 10% sample of students had dropped French in high school by the end of Grade 10	76.2% of students had dropped French after Grade 10.
6% of students were enrolled in French Immersion across all grades	25% of students are enrolled in French Immersion across all grades
	171 Grade 12 Core French students chose to be tested through the OPI. This figure is likely fairly close to the number of students actually taking Core French in Grade 12. 27% met the target.
13.5% of a random sample of Grade 12 students reached the equivalent of an Intermediate proficiency level	34.2% of a random sample Grade 10 students are attaining the QLA target proficiency level of Intermediate*

* While 34% of Grade 10 high school students reach the Intermediate level, according to the 2004 Report Card 21% of Grade 12 students attained Intermediate proficiency or better. Since the QLA targets graduates, we would recommend that a purposive sample of Grade 12 students be evaluated half way to 2012 (i.e., in 2008) and then again in 2012. The evaluation should encompass literacy skills as well as oral/aural skills.

These statistics reveal four critical pieces of information:

1. French Immersion programmes are an extremely effective means of reaching the QLA target proficiency goal of Intermediate.

2. Core French programmes as they currently exist are not effective in reaching the target proficiency goal.
3. Although these statistics do not specifically address attrition rates, we know that there is still a problem with attrition in French Immersion at the secondary level, a fact mirrored at the national level (Rehorick, 2004).
4. The numbers of students dropping Core French at the secondary level are astronomical.*

RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING ON FIRST LANGUAGE LITERACY AND ACADEMIC SKILLS

Bournot-Trites and Tellowitz (2002) conducted a review of research on the effects of the second language (L2) on the first (L1). The following are the critical findings that inform the present study:

1. Research shows no evidence of a deficiency in development of English proficiency in early French Immersion programmes; bilingual students often outperform monolinguals, especially for English grammatical usage, punctuation and vocabulary.
2. Reduced time in English has no negative effect on English skills.
3. Reading and writing skills are similar in French Immersion and English programmes with exception of the lag for Grade 4 French Immersion students just beginning English Language Arts. This lag is temporary and has been well documented in research over the years.
4. There is no disadvantage for FI students learning math in French to be assessed in English.

* This high attrition can be attributed to students' perception of lack of success and courses which are "boring, irrelevant and repetitious" (APEF, 2003).

In fact, research conducted in Vancouver points to a possible advantage for EFI students at the upper elementary level. Bournot-Trites and Reeder (2001) found that "increasing the intensity of French in a French Immersion programme by teaching math in French is strongly associated with a positive effect on mathematics achievement evaluated in English" (2001, p.40).

Bournot-Trites and Tellowitz end with this quote that addresses Core French and Intensive French:

Although most studies about the effect of SL on FL literacy have been done in the area of French Immersion education, one can apply the findings to Core French learning. The results also apply to Intensive French ... if studies in French Immersion show positive effects of French learning on English language skills, a fortiori, the results would be positive for any other second language be it Core French or Intensive French. The effect of learning a second language (French) on first language (English) skills has been positive in all studies done (p.30).

Implications There are a few implications of this research for the New Brunswick situation. First, there is widespread thought that children should gain a "good grounding" in literacy skills in their first language before starting the study of a second language. Although this idea seems to make good common sense, the research cited by Bournot-Trites and Tellowitz does not support the first-before-second language development for literacy skills. In some instances, individuals or groups looking to support their contention that FSL (and particularly French Immersion) should not be started in Grade 1 are citing research concerning first language development in minority settings (see for example, Collier, 1995 and McLaughlin, 1992). This research (most notably from the USA) demonstrates that a child's first or home language, when in a minority

setting (such as Spanish in an English majority language community), is at risk of being lost or eroded if the child is placed in a majority language (i.e., English) classroom. While it is true that these minority language children are more likely to retain their first language if they are literate in that language before starting their second language, this research is not at all applicable to the majority English language child in the early French Immersion classroom. In fact the research shows that the EFI model is highly additive in that the second language is learned at no expense to the first. This is a principle that has been borne out in numerous settings around the world. Research that has studied the long-term effects of early French Immersion on the first language has shown that graduates of French Immersion perform at a level equal to their monolingual counterparts on all measures and indeed outperform them on the ability to use language figuratively and to understand and use metaphor (Neufeld, 1993).

With the current emphasis in New Brunswick on the development of literacy skills in the K-3 grades, one might reasonably ask what might be the impact of eliminating Core French at these grades in terms of literacy skills. There is no research that we could locate which specifically tracked student achievement in first language literacy based on whether or not a core-type of second language programme was in place.

RESEARCH ON CHILDREN WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES

The Language Research Centre of the University of Calgary conducted a review of research on the effects of second language learning on students with special needs. A high proportion of this research addresses learning difficulties of the minority language child learning in a majority language classroom. As mentioned above, this situation is not the same as the majority language child learning the second language with other majority language children. A common thread throughout the studies is how to define “learning disabilities” or “special

needs,” since the terms are broad and open to wide interpretations.

Additional themes and features of these studies pertinent for the current brief are: 1) all students can benefit from the learning of a second language; 2) Students who have difficulty in learning an L2 may already have problems with phonological awareness in their L1; 3) classroom teachers are seldom trained in serving children with special needs in the second language classroom; 4) there is a shortage of specialists who are capable of addressing both language- and disability-related needs simultaneously; 5) French Immersion has been found to be suitable both for students having academic difficulties and those with learning disabilities; and 6) the immersion environment per se does not necessarily provide sufficient challenges for gifted children.

The Edmonton Public School Board piloted a French Immersion Disabilities Programme for thirteen students with learning disabilities. The programme was based largely on learning strategy instruction, developing awareness of one’s learning style, and promoting self-esteem. Pupils were in a Grade 3 and 4 combined class; selection was based on nationally established criteria for learning disabilities. They were of above-average intelligence, exhibited discrepancies in performance (strengths and weaknesses) and had minimal difficulties with attendance and behaviour. The results showed that all participants (parents, teachers, children) reported an improvement in achievement and self-concept. Research conducted into the inclusion into Core French classes of children with learning difficulties (LD) as well as behavioural disorders has pointed to the similarity of good teaching strategies for all groups. Arnett (2006) says: “Any standard text or article on LD [...] includes a list of commonly recommended adaptation strategies. The same goes for any standard SL methodology text [...]. Comparing the lists, they are practically identical. [...] The strategies are included on both lists for the same reason: they help to facilitate language comprehension and/or expression” (p. 22).

Moreover, including children with special needs into Core French classes can improve their self-esteem since “the gaps between these students and their more proficient peers are not nearly as large in [Core French] as they are in other subject areas” (Arnett, 2006, p.22). Although Arnett’s research was conducted in the Core French classroom, there are no doubt parallels to be drawn for the French Immersion classroom as well.

MacKay (2006, p. 137) points to the widely held view that “the impact of the French Immersion program in the anglophone sector in New Brunswick is to concentrate higher numbers of students with exceptional needs and general learning difficulties in the English programs.” MacKay offers a number of possible reasons for this. Among these are “... that school personnel strongly encourage students experiencing any kind of difficulty to move out of French Immersion”, “that French Immersion is [perceived as] an elite program”, that there is “... a lack of support services available for the French Immersion program” and that “it is more difficult to find resource personnel who are bilingual.” MacKay further notes that there “was not full agreement about whether the approaches to teaching in the French Immersion program are a factor in concentrating students in difficulty in the English programs.” Our view is that behind these perceptions is one fundamental issue that influences all others: It is not so much that students with exceptionalities *can’t* learn a second language; it is that many people *believe* that these students can’t. And it is because of this belief that many decisions are taken on behalf of students with exceptionalities which are not based on a full knowledge of how second languages are taught and learned. We are recommending a series of Awareness-building Workshops for school and district personnel, and parents to increase the knowledge base in the area of second language learning and children with exceptionalities.

There is a high attrition from Early French Immersion classes, particularly in the primary and elementary grades, among children with

exceptionalities. This is occurring in spite of research that shows that French Immersion is a suitable environment for students experiencing difficulties (Bruck 1978; Genesee 1976, 1987, 1992; Trites, 1976; Wiss, 1989). Parents struggle with the decision whether to leave their children in immersion or change them to the English programme. Noël (2003) explored the decision-making processes that parents of children with special needs followed when deciding whether to keep their children in French Immersion or change them to the English programme. Citing twelve different factors influencing parents’ decisions, Noël found that “even though the majority of the parents had decided to keep their children in EFI, parents clearly felt that there was a lack of support enabling them to help their child succeed in the program. [...] they raised questions about the lack of communication between home and school, the lack of resources and the lack of empowerment in helping their children, especially with homework” (Noël, 2003, p. 6 - Appendix I).

Implications Given the co-existing goals of the New Brunswick government for inclusion and high levels of second language abilities, we suggest that both can be achieved provided that all partners in the system are involved in supporting the goals and that emphasis be placed on providing support personnel at the school level knowledgeable in both second language acquisition and special needs. Careful planning to achieve these co-existing goals needs to include a strong policy to include all students in the study of French, whether Core French or French Immersion. As Dr. K. Arnett asserts: “Excluding students [...] sends the message that language study is for the academic elite, and denies these students a skill that can help set them apart in this multilingual world” (Arnett, 2006, p. 23).

There are some notable efforts in certain school districts to find ways to assist children having difficulties in French Immersion. District 17 has “Procedures for Assisting French Immersion Students,” which involves a three-phase approach emphasizing effective classroom

practice as well as the involvement of a support team consisting (as appropriate) of the French Immersion literacy teacher, the FSL district supervisor, the resource teacher, the guidance counsellor, a member of the school administration, and a member of the Student Services Team. An essential part of this process is the involvement of parents as part of the solution. District 18 has developed a “Good for Kids” approach whereby the classroom teacher gives one-on-one help to pupils experiencing difficulties; the teacher’s class is taught by a supply teacher for these periods of time. Thus there are already initiatives to build on.

It is our view that much is already known through research already conducted about how children with exceptionalities can be full and productive participants in French as a second language education, and there needs to be a concerted effort to increase their enrolment and retention. We are recommending that a handbook be developed that would assist school personnel with these goals. Resource teachers are already stretched to serve their clientele. We are also recommending that steps be taken immediately to increase a) the number of knowledgeable classroom teachers of French as a second language (especially French Immersion teachers), and b) the number of knowledgeable resource teachers to assist with French Immersion children with exceptionalities. Such steps should include: a) bursaries for French Immersion teachers to enrol in continuing education (e.g., Master’s degree) concerning children with exceptionalities; b) short-term internships for French Immersion teachers to apprentice with experienced Resource teachers; and c) a communication plan for assisting parents of children with exceptionalities.

PREVIOUS STUDIES OF FSL PROGRAMMES IN NEW BRUNSWICK

A number of previous studies of FSL programmes conducted for the NB Department of Education have identified a need for improvement in both Core French and French Immersion programmes. In 1979 a study noted that the

general public was disenchanted with FSL programmes. In 1989 it was recommended that options at the high school for French Immersion be “strengthened and appropriately scheduled.” The same study recommended that Core French be enriched. In 1993, there was a call for “more intensive learning in Core French” and recognition of the problem of “FI attrition at the high school” (Rehorick). Policy 309 resulted from Rehorick’s 1993 study. The Price WaterhouseCooper report (2000) recommended an enhanced full year non-semestered Core French programme for Grade 9 and 10 students who would opt to continue in their FSL studies. Shortly after the Price WaterhouseCooper report, Rehorick recommended to then Minister of Education, Elvy Robichaud, that the Department of Education investigate Intensive French, which had been implemented in Newfoundland and Labrador. The 1993 and 2000 studies suggested that the Oral Proficiency Interview scale be re-examined. All studies underlined the importance of qualified teachers in French second language programmes.

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL STUDIES

Regional and national studies have also examined FSL programmes. The APEF Core French study (2003) indicated the general dissatisfaction of students with regard to Core French across the entire Atlantic region. *Plan 2013: Strategies for a National Approach for Second Language Education* (Rehorick, 2004) was commissioned by the Department of Canadian Heritage to identify challenges and make recommendations for achieving the national goal of doubling the proportion of bilingual graduates by the Year 2013. Fifty-four recommendations were presented in the report, many of which are relevant to New Brunswick and are integrated into the present research. *Plan 2013* echoed the need for an overhaul of Core French programmes across the country, particularly at the middle and secondary levels. It recommended developing courses that focus on authentic communication and communication for

specific purposes. It also encouraged the implementation of Intensive French across the country followed by one or more of the following programmes/options: Late French Immersion, Extended Core French and/or quality middle and high school programmes. *Plan 2013* also made recommendations for revitalizing French Immersion, noting that attrition at the high school level is an issue across Canada.

TRENDS AND INNOVATIONS IN FSL PROGRAMMES

Research was undertaken to identify successful or promising initiatives in FSL programming in Canada. Specific new initiatives under way in New Brunswick are also included here.

Material Resources

New Core French materials for the middle and secondary levels are being produced by national publishers that are based upon the principles of communicative-experiential language teaching and consequently have been adopted by most Canadian provinces. Some of these materials are currently being used in NB middle schools. In addition, Grade 9 and 10 Core French teachers are now piloting commercially produced units. These resources, in the hands of qualified teachers, have the potential to improve student proficiency in Core French.

There are now commercially produced kits to assist elementary French Immersion teachers in assessing student reading proficiency. Some companies have included videos on how to compile running records as part of the kit. This provides teachers with a greater selection of materials and contributes to greater consistency in assessment methods and results.

Human Resources - Quality Learning Agenda French Immersion Literacy Support Teachers

French-speaking teachers have been assigned to provide intervention or literacy support to French Immersion early years students and teachers in NB. In districts where this is

happening, their presence has been beneficial and expertise is developing.

Pedagogical Initiatives - Integrated Use of Technology

The potential for interactive and online technologies such as computers and the Internet is great. One of the most exciting examples of the use of such technologies is here in New Brunswick with the Spanish programme in the Anglophone high school. The curriculum, teaching strategies and the way the technologies are used are truly cutting-edge. The teacher, Chantal Lafargue, is currently conducting master's research on her work; this will be completed this spring. Her classes are highly interactive, using all channels (reading, writing, speaking, listening); she has been successful in bringing Spanish "alive" through her project and task-based approach and through connecting her students with Spanish native speakers in Columbia and Spain.

A cautionary note: Such innovation can only be accomplished in the hands of a well-prepared teacher with appropriate support systems around her/him. It is a highly labour-intensive style of delivery, contrary to what might be popularly believed. It would be a mistake to try wide-scale implementation of such programmes without planning. Nevertheless the potential for quality second language programmes to reach, in particular, students in isolated areas, is great.

A first step in implementing such efforts in the FSL classrooms would be to take an inventory of technology-savvy personnel in each district who are involved already with FSL delivery. From among the people identified, FSL technology mentors could form a kind of "ideas and implementation" group, who could liaise as well with the Spanish teacher and Department personnel who are involved in the current online learning endeavours.

Renewal and Revitalization of Programmes - Edmonton Public School Board

In April 2002, the Edmonton Public School Board initiated a three-year French Language Renewal Project to implement the recommendations of its review of their FSL programmes. The purposes of this project were to:

- Increase student enrolments in French language programmes
- Help students attain levels of French language proficiency that meet national and international standards
- Increase student contact with francophone communities
- Form partnerships with school jurisdictions and agencies interested in enhancing French language programmes

The Project was guided by a broad-based Advisory Committee with representatives from a variety of stakeholders including Alberta Learning, Canadian Parents for French, Department of Canadian Heritage, Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, Alliance française, Faculté Saint-Jean, University of Alberta, and La Chambre économique de l'Alberta.

It is important to understand the context of the Edmonton Public Schools. School choice has been a part of this school board since the mid-1970s. Students can choose from a wide variety of specialized schools located anywhere in the district. Several of these schools offer bilingual programmes in languages such as Arabic, Ukrainian, German, Spanish and French plus 10 other international languages. FSL therefore has a great deal of competition from other languages and enrolment had experienced a steady decline over 12 years.

Results after two years of the three-year renewal project were highly positive and enrolments increased by 41% in EFI, by 28% in LFI and by 4% in Core French (Grades 1 through

12). A few of the effective features of the Project, which could be useful ideas for New Brunswick include:

- The advisory committee has a wide range of partner organizations including Canadian Parents for French. Alberta educators, including the Alberta Department of Education, have long considered CPF an ally and an active partner. This is in contrast to the New Brunswick scene where the relationship between CPF and the Department of Education has been somewhat adversarial at times.

- A Learner Assessment Project established standardized French reading and writing tests for immersion students. As we indicate later in this report, we feel that the OPI as a method of assessment may be insufficient to represent the full abilities of French Immersion students and could be misleading; the method of assessment should be revisited.

- The test of the Public Service Commission of Canada was offered to Grade 12 students. An analysis of the results showed that the test was an appropriate measure of oral, reading and writing proficiency for FI students, most of whom achieved the B level on all skills (the level required for bilingual jobs in the civil service). There is some feeling that this national test of proficiency was one of the main reasons that enrolment increased: The test had a positive washback on enrolment.

- The French Language Renewal Project had a marketing and promotion plan that contained key messages such as: there are many reasons to learn French (cognitive/academic benefits, post-secondary study; career/employment; travel, fun); learning French does not stop at high school graduation; there are many ways to improve your French proficiency; learning French is fun. In New Brunswick, there is too much emphasis on learning French in order to improve employment prospects. This highly utilitarian approach underestimates the broad appeal that learning another language can have. Because of the deep-seated emotions associated with official languages in this province, there is a need to be

very proactive in promoting the FSL programmes.

Our feeling is that there has been an alarming increase over the last number of years of negative attitudes towards FSL and, in particular, toward French Immersion. This development is in spite of the proactive goals of the Quality Learning Agenda. It is time to establish a visible and strong philosophy of FSL in New Brunswick that promotes openly the benefits of language learning. Otherwise we risk losing what has been and should continue to be a flagship for education in the province. We recommend that such a plan be established guided by a broad-based consultative group to include partners such as Canadian Parents for French, the NBTA, the superintendents and school principals, the Offices of the Commissioners of Official Languages (both federal and provincial), NB Chamber of Commerce, UNB and Université de Moncton, Department of Education, Training and Post-Secondary Education, Dialogue NB and the provincial representatives of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers and the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers. Including representatives from outside the K-12 public education system would help to promote the essential philosophy that learning French is a continuous process throughout one's life.

Intensive French*

Intensive French started as a research project based in Newfoundland and has expanded over the last decade. There are now pilot sites in nine provinces and territories and Intensive French is an approved programme in Newfoundland and Labrador. Manitoba, Yukon and Northwest Territories began piloting Intensive French in September 2005. In NB there are 18 classes where Core French students are enrolled in Intensive French during their Grade 5 school year.

The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) is working with the

Intensive French Steering Committee and researchers to provide support to Intensive French teachers and pilot projects across Canada. Four workshops on Intensive French have been developed by CASLT for the purposes of teacher professional development.

With the longest history of Intensive French, Newfoundland is the only source of information beyond the initial implementation years of Intensive French programmes. A major difference in the implementation pattern of Intensive French in Newfoundland is that it targeted especially the rural areas, where French Immersion did not exist on a large scale. Thus, Intensive French was not seen as a possible threat to French Immersion, which is a perception held by some people in New Brunswick. Thus the Intensive French programme was seen in the light intended: as an improvement to the Core French programmes, not as a replacement for French Immersion.

Preliminary analyses of a three-year follow-up study of 824 students in Newfoundland and Labrador indicate that students who continue in regular Core French for three years after their Intensive period in Grade 6 have maintained (but not increased) oral production, written production and reading skills acquired during the intensive year (MacFarlane, 2005, p. 15). Beyond the Grade 9 level, there has been no research which has tracked the progress of the Intensive French students in Newfoundland.

Student assessment initiatives

The Public Service of Canada test described in the earlier section on the Edmonton Public School Board is being explored by Alberta as a possible way to offer their students a benchmarked test recognized nationally. There are, at the current time, some issues of access that are preventing its wide scale adoption. In addition the test is currently under revision. Nevertheless, we recommend that New Brunswick stay in touch with developments and investigate the possibilities of offering the PSC for N.B. graduates. In Alberta, efforts are underway to

* See also section on Current Research and Insights into Intensive French in New Brunswick later in this brief.

offer international standardized assessment opportunities to high school graduating students.

The European Language Portfolio is an exciting endeavour implemented in several countries of the Council of Europe in 2001. Based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, it provides a transferable and common way of describing and tracking development in several languages, while allowing for local variations and autonomy according to the context. The levels of language across five skill areas are common and are thus portable across borders. The Department of Education has received a full report on the European Language Portfolio and its applicability to Canada based on a national workshop organized by the Second Language Education Centre in Edmonton in October 2005. We recommend that a pilot project be implemented in New Brunswick and the Department continue with efforts at the national level to create a national language portfolio.

CHALLENGES WITH REGARD TO HUMAN AND OTHER RESOURCES IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Material resources

High school French Immersion and Core French materials in NB are frequently dated and in poor condition. In addition, reading materials are typically not of interest to males. At the secondary level in French Immersion, in particular, reading materials such as new novels have not been renewed since at least 1988. This is in contrast to English Language Arts classes, where new materials are the norm. In popular opinion, French Immersion is often considered to be resource-rich and expensive to run; however, the history of the programmes shows that frequently new curriculum, programmes and materials are available to the English classes well before the immersion classes, leaving Immersion teachers to scramble to implement new programmes and curricular goals. New courses of study should be considered for the high school

level, responding to the needs identified within the APEF/CAMET Core French study of 2003 and *Plan 2013*. As mentioned above, new resource materials are being developed. The problem is that the materials don't seem to be getting into the classrooms in a timely fashion. In addition, for certain approved French Immersion courses, French versions of the curriculum guides have not been produced (e.g., World Issues 120, Law 120, Media Studies 120). We recommend that each district take a classroom by classroom (or school by school, according to the situation) inventory of key materials identified by the Department (i.e., recent and new materials). Once the inventory is complete, a plan for acquisition, distribution and professional development with the materials should be developed. This plan should include audio-visual and software resources. We also recommend that all guides for approved French Immersion courses be made available in French as soon as possible.

Funding

Questions have been raised pertaining to transparency of the federal FSL funding. Since each district handles their budget allotment in different ways, it is difficult to track the allocation of funds designated for FSL. However, we are aware of one instance in which supplementary funding sent to a district for FSL programmes from the Department in fact replaced the existing FSL budget, such that the overall amount available actually diminished. In another district, the supplementary funds were added to the existing FSL budget. We recommend that an annual audit be conducted to track the FSL-designated funds, particularly in the case of supplementary funds sourced from Canadian Heritage for the achievement of the federal government's 2013 goals.

Human Resources

As noted above, French-speaking teachers are being assigned to provide intervention or literacy support to French Immersion early years students and teachers. However, it does not appear that the

number of FTEs assigned by the districts to support French language literacy is proportionate to the percentage of students enrolled in the immersion programme. We recommend that this situation be remedied as soon as possible.

Schools are seeking assistance regarding best practices particular to French Immersion literacy and such support is not always readily available. In some cases, there is no district level professional development. Schools want to improve literacy results but are unsure of how best to proceed. Districts have lost the two days that used to be allocated to professional development at that level.

The provincial consultant is spending the majority of his time servicing the Intensive French pilot and there is little available support for issues and questions relating to French Immersion or Core French. Concern has been expressed about the linguistic proficiency of some of the new FSL supervisors. Some are not sufficiently proficient in French even to participate in provincial meetings in French. In addition, time available to supervisors to be dedicated to FSL support is reduced due to other responsibilities.

CURRENT RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS INTO INTENSIVE FRENCH IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Enrolment

Intensive French is currently in the fourth year of a five-year pilot in NB. There has been a rapid expansion of the programme from four classes in Year 1 to eighteen in six of the nine Anglophone districts. There are ten classes of Grade 6 Post-Intensive French and two classes of Grade 7 Post-Intensive French in the province. In District 2, there is an alternate pilot programme where students in six schools are enrolled in Intensive French for five months of Grade 4 and a further five months in Grade 5. With the exception of Newfoundland and Labrador, where there are about sixty classes at the present time and where Intensive French is an officially

recognized programme, New Brunswick has the most classes of Intensive French in the country.

Proficiency Results of the NB Pilot

Initial results of the Grade 5 pilot in New Brunswick indicate the potential of Intensive French to raise students' proficiency by one full level or more on the NB Middle School Scale (from the Novice low level to the Basic Low / Basic Mid range).

Follow-up to Intensive French

According to MacFarlane (2005, p. 19), "the greatest challenge is not in implementing Intensive French, but in providing adequate follow-up options. Intensive French is not just a five-month experience but should be a package deal until the end of high school." She suggests that mixing Intensive French students and non-Intensive French students in the grades following Intensive French will not maintain student motivation and that a planned follow-up is necessary. There are different models of follow-up being tried in several of the pilot districts, in Districts 10 and 16 in particular. In some provinces (e.g., BC and Saskatchewan) the Intensive French students are kept together as a cohort for two years after Intensive French during which they take one hour per day of content-based extended Core French. The programmes are in their initial stages and results of assessment have not yet been received. For New Brunswick's purposes, we have outlined the conditions necessary for successful follow-up to Intensive French in Appendix B.

Perceptions of Intensive French Parent Surveys (Appendix C)

With respect to *Intensive French Parent Surveys* conducted in all classes from year 1 to 3 of the pilot, parents expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the pilot programme. The majority of parents made positive comments about the affective environment, about the Intensive French teacher and about the learning activities in which their children participated. In

particular, parents viewed the classroom climate created in the Intensive French classes as having a positive effect on learners' confidence and self-esteem, both in a general sense and with respect to the French language. Parents also remarked on the experiential and communicative nature of the Intensive French pedagogy and some viewed the pilot as a “new and fun way to learn.” Many respondents were also pleased with the amount of French learned in a short period of time but hoped follow-up programmes would be available so students could maintain and improve language learned during Intensive French. Although some concerns and questions were apparent, the *Parent Surveys* indicated favourable parental support for the Intensive French pilot. This positive response can reasonably be expected to continue as long as the same implementation patterns are followed and as long as follow-up programmes continue to the end of secondary school – MacFarlane’s “full package.”

Intensive French Teacher Surveys (Appendix F)
There are currently eighteen teachers of Intensive French New Brunswick teaching at either the Grade 4 or Grade 5 levels. Information gathered from the 2005 teacher surveys is similar to the information gathered on the 2002 survey of the original four teachers. Many of the Intensive French teachers have five years teaching experience or less. Intensive French teachers are experienced in a variety of different teaching areas. Most have B or D contracts, although there is currently one long-term supply teacher.

The 2005 survey indicates that the Intensive French teachers with the highest levels of proficiency are in District 2. That district is also using the highest number of immersion-trained teachers to deliver Intensive French. All of the District 2 teachers (6) have previous FSL methodology training, whereas only two of the teachers in other districts have prior FSL methodology training.

There is some variation in the quantity of homework given weekly. Ten of eighteen teachers give nightly homework, six assign

homework three to four times per week, two assign it one to three times weekly and two only assign homework rarely.

Finally, when asked on the 2005 survey which model will benefit students most, four teachers felt that one term of Intensive French followed by one term with another teacher is preferable, whereas thirteen of the eighteen felt that it is preferable for students to remain with the same teacher for the full school year. One teacher felt that both models have merit.

Only the District 2 teachers were asked to rate how appropriate they feel it is to offer two consecutive years of Intensive French (Grades 4 and 5). Three scored it as very appropriate (5/5), two scored it as appropriate (4/5) and one scored it as 3/5. One teacher commented that s/he wasn't sure Intensive French is good for less academically able students. Another commented that the level of French and the demands on students increase in the second year beyond the ability of some special needs students and that these students are feeling less able during the second year.

Principals' Survey (Appendix E)

Principals of schools offering Intensive French reported nearly universal support for the programme among staff members and parents. There are some variations across the sites including the number of interruptions to the Intensive French block of daily time and the amount of contact of the IF teacher with students during the compacted curriculum semester. Twelve of the fourteen principals surveyed anticipated offering IF classes during the following year (the other two were not sure).

Informal Feedback and Reactions: Fear of Losing French Immersion

Some of those directly involved in FSL programming and promotion (e.g., FSL supervisors, members of Canadian Parents for French) have expressed concerns about the potential effect of Intensive French on French Immersion. They have heard, for example, that

the Intensive French programme will be a “one-size-fits-all” solution for FSL programming in New Brunswick, and that it will lead to the elimination of Early Immersion. We feel that it is essential for the Department of Education to allay these concerns by communicating clearly and broadly that the intent of Intensive French is to improve Core French, not to replace French Immersion.

PERCEPTIONS OF FSL PROGRAMME RESULTS

There is also lack of awareness or understanding of the profiles in proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking which students who have completed the various programmes typically attain. This may be due to the fact that, in recent years, there has not been any individualized formal assessment of the reading, writing or listening abilities of students in the French Immersion programme at the high school level. Furthermore, Report Card results indicate that the majority of French Immersion graduates has consistently not met the Oral Proficiency Interview targets for French Immersion. This gives the distinct impression that French Immersion is not as successful as it should be and, as a result, alternatives may appear to be suitable replacements for French Immersion. It is time to reconsider how proficiency in FSL is defined, measured and communicated to stakeholders.

REFLECTIONS ON SOME MAJOR QUESTIONS FOR THIS BRIEF

In this section, we address the specific questions contained in the Terms of Reference for this research.

How many qualified teachers are currently available for Core French assignments? Of these, how many would be capable of teaching Intensive French?

We do not have data for the number of Core French teachers (and more especially at the

Grades 1 – 5 level). This would require a district-by-district analysis, which should form part of a feasibility phase for the recommendations in this report. However, we feel that it is safe to say that early years Core French teachers in general create a highly active and motivating environment for their students: For these teachers who want to transfer to Intensive French, we feel that it would be a “good fit,” provided that specific training is offered to them in Intensive French.

What research is available to show the impact of K-3 Core French experiences on student achievement with respect to French as a Second Language, and with respect to First Language (English) literacy?

- a. **FSL** – there is no research that we could locate that correlates the ultimate achievement in French for students who take Core French in K-3 versus those who don’t. What we do know about the level of FSL students after four years of Core French and who are entering Intensive French is that their oral proficiency is negligible. However, these students may very well have abilities in the receptive skills of reading and listening but there are no studies reporting these skills.
- b. **First language literacy** - as mentioned in the section of this report on the impact of second language learning on first language literacy, there is no negative impact on English from study in Core French. The research in this area has been conducted in the French Immersion environment mostly and the impact is a positive one on first language literacy. Nevertheless, we have sensed that there are feelings in some quarters of the educational community (including among some parents) that a “good grounding” in the first language, including literacy skills, needs to be in place before FSL begins. Research in this area shows that “good grounding” in the first language simply means “appropriate” level

of abilities in a developmental sense. In other words, if a child's language development at home has been normal, then that is a "good grounding." Literacy can be developed in either language in the school setting. It is our view that this point needs to be communicated repeatedly throughout the educational community, including and perhaps especially, among school and district administrators, and kindergarten teachers, who are sometimes, perhaps unwittingly, creating fear among parents about early learning of a second language. It is possible that this problem stems from a desire to eliminate Early French Immersion for principally administrative reasons or because of a perceived streaming effect of immersion; unfortunately, the reasons given are sometimes not entirely based on accurate information.

- c. **Attitudes** - as with FSL proficiency, we could locate no research, which measures attitudinal outcomes of K- 3 Core French. There is, however, anecdotal evidence that good attitudes towards French and French culture are achieved at this level. It is our view, however, that introductory FSL enrichment modules in K-3, followed by good Grade 4 Core French and then the Intensive French programme could achieve the same goals.

If Core French instruction were to begin in Grade 4 and Intensive French were the approved programme for Grade 5, what impact might there be on student achievement, and on FSL teacher supply? What benefits and drawbacks might be anticipated with this change?

Some of the impacts are discussed above. As noted, we do not have data on French teacher supply; however a full-scale implementation would need between 50 and 100 Intensive French teachers for a Grade 5 implementation. Discussions with the NBTA and other partners are essential here. A great deal of positive

promotion and communication would be necessary to ensure parents and educators who are pro-FSL that Intensive French is an enhancement to the Core French program and that French Immersion (especially Early) is not at risk.

The impact on student achievement (FSL, literacy, other subjects) is only known over the shorter term, at this point. Newfoundland and Labrador, the only province with a cohort of Intensive French students who have completed high school, has not conducted any studies on their Intensive French high school students, as far as we know (Netten, 2005, personal communication). In the short term, Intensive French shows consistently high achievement in FSL with no detriment to first language or other subject matters. Indeed there are indications in the data that students in Intensive French have higher scores in regular subjects than non-IF students. This optimistic outlook could likely be sustained for a large-scale implementation with careful planning and follow-up.

What programmes/options would need to be available for students after their Intensive French experience? What professional development and programme changes would be necessary for teachers to deliver these options?

Follow-up should be considered from Grade 6 to Grade 12 "a package deal" and should contain the conditions necessary for success (see Appendix B). Our view is that a cohort model (i.e., keeping the Intensive French students together) from Grades 5 – 8 during the phase-in stage is important. The definition of "follow-up" needs to be refined, as well. At the moment, there is a good deal of work going into the development of thematic units (the same for everyone), which would seem to be desirable for consistency. However, if, for example, the Core French curriculum guides were enhanced to include more focus on reading and writing, if materials were purchased to support additional reading/writing in the programme and if follow-up teachers had professional development to

explain the methodologies that are relating to Intensive French that are being continued, the follow-up could be systemic. If there are teacher training, good materials, ongoing and enough support for FSL, and a few new and interesting high school courses (see *Plan 2013* recommendations and the Recommended Model for FSL Learning in this brief), we could encourage some choice and creativity for teachers to achieve the overall curriculum goals.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND OPTIONS

It is not possible that the Quality Learning Agenda goal can be achieved even with the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report. The reasoning is this: The only students to reach the Intermediate goal consistently are French Immersion and virtually all graduates do so. The success rate of Core French students against the QLA goal is negligible (and we might even speculate that some of these students who are successful might be former French Immersion students). The province is already at the end of the fourth year of the Quality Learning Agenda's timeframe. Language learning takes time.

One strategy would be to work on retaining more French Immersion students at the high school level. This would involve revamping courses, providing more variety of courses, etc (Rehorick et al, 2004). With the right approach, schools might be able to increase FI secondary enrolment from 20% to 30%.

In order to reach the 70% target however, another 40% of the high school population (i.e., non-immersion students) will have to attain Intermediate proficiency in French. Current Core French programming is not producing anything near those results. A concerted effort in the area of Core French is needed.

Intensive French provides the best springboard for making substantial gains for Core French students towards the QLA goal. We are recommending a phased-in implementation of Intensive French across all districts as the main

enhancement of the Core French programme. We caution, however, that Intensive French is untested and unresearched over the longer term. Nevertheless, we can tentatively project that Intensive French with appropriate follow-up programmes can produce Intermediate level graduates by the end of Grade 12 and possibly by the end of Grade 10 when the provincial testing is done. To reach the QLA goal by 2012 is not feasible because we would need to ensure that the additional 50% (i.e., of New Brunswick's students) needed to reach that level would have to be registered in Intensive French during the coming school year (2006-2007). If we estimate about 6000-6500 students per year go through the system, then this means that 3000 students would have to start this year which represents approximately 100 new classes of IF; we currently estimate 540 students. Such a large-scale implementation would be impossible in such a short time. We are recommending that each district conduct a rollout plan which would include their own human resources projections (both students and teachers).

With regard to assessment, we need to reconsider how we report on student proficiency. The Oral Proficiency Interview has a solid history in the province but needs to be complemented with a more comprehensive four skills assessment profile of students' abilities. The European Language Portfolio (see Appendix G) or some modification of this tool holds much promise in this regard. In our proposed model, we recommend that the province undertake the implementation of the language portfolio (passport) beginning in Grade 4. In addition, we recommend reviewing the target proficiency levels for both Early and Intermediate Immersion, in light of the empirical results of the OPI over time showing that the majority of immersion students are not meeting stated goals of Policy 309. The goals can be reached with the enhancement of FI programmes outlined in the proposed model and with a concerted effort to retain students in FI until the end of high school. However, if these enhancements are not

undertaken, then the best option is to reduce the targeted goals by one-half level for each programme.

Standardized assessment tools that have national or international recognition can often serve as motivating factors for learners. One of the essential features of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) is its ability to track learner progress against a standardized framework of language proficiency (the Common European Framework of Languages-CEF); the ELP and CEF thus ensure mutual understanding and transferability of learners' proficiency levels across jurisdictions. We are recommending that an assessment committee be established to relate

the OPI scale to the Common European Framework and to other frameworks in use in Canada (e.g., Canadian Language Benchmarks, the Public Service Commission's FSL tests, the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol's Common Curriculum Frameworks).

We also recommend that the Department of Education investigate the possibility of offering national and international tests to graduates who wish to take them. One example would be the "Test d'évaluation du français" available in Canada from the "Centre de langue, directions des relations internationales de l'enseignement, Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris."

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APPENDIX B

Necessary Conditions for Successful Follow-up to Intensive French

University of New Brunswick, Fiona Cogswell, Faculty Associate
Second Language Education Centre

Coherent District Plan

Following the semester of intensive instruction, students should remain together as a cohort until the end of middle school and until the phased-in implementation of IF is finished. Each school district should have a consistent model and defined themes for the various years to avoid repetition. The district model will define how French as second language is scheduled for intensity and for increased time on task. It will define possible additional subject areas for extended FSL in the middle school.

Training

Families of schools should receive all training together so that the transition from elementary to middle school is undertaken in a smooth, coherent manner. An IF team-based approach would foster communication and cooperation. More teacher buy-in for the post-intensive phase would be created if teachers were trained in adapting existing, new materials for classroom use in a manner according to the principles of IF. In addition, there should be some completed units for each grade level (from Grade 5 through 8) which serve as model units and are available for teachers who are either new to the profession or to the IF approach.

Training sessions should be scheduled in the spring or early summer in preparation for the upcoming school year. For teachers who are hired during the summer, a separate training session must be offered in early to mid September.

Materials

Materials used in the post-intensive FSL classrooms should be cognitively rich, project-based and consistent with a balanced literacy approach. They should emphasize contextualized, scaffolded language acquisition. There needs to be a continued emphasis on the acquisition of oral language skills, which are reinforced through listening, reading and writing. Modelling of written and oral language should be apparent.

APPENDIX C

Summary of Intensive French Parent Survey Data based on *Beyond Time on Task in Second Language Teaching and Learning: A Case Study of Cognitive Processing in Intensive French*

University of New Brunswick Doctoral Dissertation by Paula Lee Kristmanson,
Assistant Professor, Second Language Education Centre

Based on the parent survey data collected in the first three years of the pilot, the majority of parents whose children participated in the program held positive views about the IF pilot. The following points represent the key themes brought out by parents in these surveys.

Academic Benefits:

- The majority of parents felt that IF was a good way to learn how to gain basic skills in understanding, speaking, reading and writing in French.
- Parents felt that the pilot offered other academic benefits such as the development of cooperative skills, listening skills and cultural openness.

Programme Features:

- Some parents made specific reference to characteristics of the programme such as group work and hands-on projects, which they felt increased student participation and interest in the pilot.
- Some parents felt that the pilot offered a new and interesting way to learn and wished school in general more often reflected this sort of teaching.

Affective Benefits:

- The majority of parents felt the pilot was a positive experience which boosted their children's general self-esteem and their self-confidence with respect to speaking French.
- The majority of respondents reported that their children exhibited positive feelings and attitudes toward the pilot and toward school when they were involved in the pilot.

Importance of Teacher:

- All parents underlined the importance of an energetic and caring teacher who could communicate in a positive way with the children.
- Some parents noted that the teacher must have a good knowledge of the language and of the way the program works.

Concerns:

- Some parents wanted to know what would happen after the pilot and wondered how their children were going to keep the French they gained.
- Some parents worried about the effect the increased time for French would have on their other subjects (especially English language arts).
- A few parents of children with learning difficulties were not sure the pilot was appropriate for them.
- A few parents were concerned that they would not be able to help their children in French.

APPENDIX D

Summary of Conclusions and Implications based on *Beyond Time on Task in Second Language Teaching and Learning: A Case Study of Cognitive Processing in Intensive French*

University of New Brunswick Doctoral Dissertation by Paula Lee Kristmanson,
Assistant Professor, Second Language Education Centre

One of the key elements for successful second language learning is time; an increase in quantity of time and intensity of time allows learners and teachers to create an environment that maximize linguistic and cognitive development. Based on data collected in the first year Intensive French (IF) pilot, the following components are necessary in order for this environment to be achieved:

- **Teachers who have had the opportunity to be involved in professional development related to effective second language pedagogy:** In the case of IF, teachers need to understand its vital components and participate in pre-service and in-service which helps them to understand these dimensions.
- **Attention to the affective component of the environment so that students will experience success and be encouraged to take risks:** Establishing a positive affective climate is key to promoting communication.
- **Understanding of the connections and differences between cooperative learning and project-based pedagogy:** Unguided group work and lengthy independent group projects are not effective tools in a beginner second language learning environment.
- **Pedagogy which promotes the link between interaction and cognition:** The teacher must help learners to construct meaning and to make sense of this new language through interactive scaffolding and the activation of prior knowledge.
- **Carefully orchestrated and modeled tasks linking all four language skills:** Speaking, listening, reading and writing must be connected in an integrated fashion in order for learners to maximize linguistic development.
- **Pedagogy which allows for carefully orchestrated learner-learner communication:** In order for peer-peer interactions to be meaningful and contribute to linguistic development, teachers need to provide models and specific guidelines for these interactions.
- **Time for teachers to effectively implement an interactive pre-activity /activity /post-activity approach:** In order for a task to meet its full potential teachers need time to appropriately introduce, model, scaffold, guide and debrief from the task.
- **Time for students to process their learning in meaningful ways:** Learners need to be given opportunities to individually and collectively create meaning and reflect on their learning experience. In order to develop autonomous learners, teachers need to play an integral role in the beginning stages.
- **Tasks which push learners to develop their linguistic skills while expanding on their world knowledge:** In order to personalize the learning experience and maximize cognitive development, learners need to be involved in experiential activities that promote problem-solving, analyzing, reasoning, and linking to prior knowledge.
- **Intensive environments (e.g., IF and the pre/post-IF semester) promote a focus on essential learning outcomes, a creation of a learning community and a task-centred environment where learners and teachers can make the most of the time allotted.**

APPENDIX E

Highlights from the Principals' Surveys on Intensive French

University of New Brunswick, Fiona Cogswell, Faculty Associate
Second Language Education Centre

School Day/Timetables

- Mathematics is taught in English. 5/7 schools have a different teacher teaching math.
- 6/7 schools indicated that the IF time is blocked together, yet only two schools indicated that there is no interruption to the actual IF block. Across the other schools, there is an average of four interruptions per week to the IF block.
- None of the sites besides District 2 offer early French Immersion.

Staffing

- Only one of the Grade 5 IF schools has maintained the same teacher since the pilot started in that school.
- The IF teacher teaches some subjects to the IF class after the intensive semester in 6/8 cases. Two of the teachers will continue with Core French, two will be teaching multiple subject areas and one will continue with math.
- Outside of District 2, the highest total number of teachers in any given school who speak French a minimum of Advanced level was four. In District 2, the answer ranged from a low of six teachers, to a high of thirteen. There were substantially more French speaking teachers in District 2 IF pilot schools.
- In response to the question of whether a teacher could be shared with another school, of the fourteen sites, three said yes, seven said no and four said that they didn't know.
- Staff response to the IF pilot sites was very positive across the province. Eleven of the fourteen sites rated it as 5/5, one rated it at 4/5 and only one school rated it at 2/5, but that site had particular problems, which became clear later in the questionnaire.
- Twelve of the fourteen sites stated that they anticipate offering pilot classes next year. Two did not know.

Parents

- General parent satisfaction was rated very high across all grades and districts.
- Of the fourteen sites, two said that they had not invited parents or were not sure if they had invited parents. When the programme was introduced, it was recommended that parents be invited regularly to the IF classrooms.
- No children withdrew from IF outside of District 2, although one request was received. Three schools in District 2 received requests for withdrawals and one school had four students withdraw, "because they didn't like the French language." Another school had two withdrawals; one was a profoundly deaf child and the other child transferred to another school.
- Only one school of the fourteen sites expressed any dissatisfaction with the English-only portion of the 2004-2005 school year.
- Parent satisfaction with the English –only portion of the IF programme for the 2004-2005 school year was strong (seven said 5/5, four said 4/5, one said 3/5 and one said 2/5).

Students

- Four schools in New Brunswick have all their Grade 5 students in IF.
- Only two school currently have previously French-speaking students enrolled in the IF programme.
- Ten of the fourteen schools with IF have students in their classes with identified special needs who require SEPs.
- One class in District 2 requires two SEPIs, seven SEPMS, five SEPAs, and two ESL students.
- There is wide range of students participating in IF across the province, including those on individual plans, modified plans, and those individuals with autism spectrum disorders. In one school, a non-verbal autistic child is participating in the programme.

Department of Education

- There is a high level of satisfaction with the Department of Education support for IF across the province (nine schools said 5/5, six said 4/5 and only one school said 2/5).
- Only two schools indicated a lack of satisfaction with resources provided by the Department of Education for the IF programme (one in District 2 and one elsewhere).
- Twelve of the fourteen schools indicated that a suitable level of in-service had been provided by the Department of Education to support the programme (one response sheet was missing and one-no comment at this time).
- When asked what, if any, additional types of in-service would benefit teachers, six schools independently suggested (with no possible answer provided) that IF teachers would benefit from having time to get together with other IF teachers for visitation, consultation, sharing of resources and observation. Another commented that teachers would benefit from additional training in the instruction of reading and writing, as this is not normally a focus at this grade level.

District

- Responses were mixed when schools were asked if they were satisfied with district support for IF. Outside of District 2, the satisfaction scores were: three at 4/5, three at 3/5 and one at 2/5. Within District 2, the scores were: three at 5/5, two at 4/5 and one at 2/5.
- Outside of District 2, only one school indicated that the district had provided any additional resources for IF this year. Within District 2, four schools responded that they had received additional resources.
- Only one district (District 17) outside of District 2 has provided additional in-service opportunities for IF teachers this year. Within District 2, five schools responded that additional in-service has been provided.
- Only two schools responded that their district had an identified plan for post IF. District 2 schools were not aware of a plan, although one school indicated that there was a plan, but that it was not definitive.

APPENDIX F

Highlights from the Intensive French Teachers' Survey University of New Brunswick, Fiona Cogswell, Faculty Associate Second Language Education Centre

7 respondents to Grade 5 survey

11 respondents from District 2 Grades 4 & 5

Personal Information

- Ten of the total group of eighteen teachers had five years teaching experience or less.
- Ten of the teachers have taught at both elementary and middle levels.
- Most of the respondents have taught in a variety of subject areas.
- The majority of the teachers with high proficiency (i.e., above Advanced) are in District 2.
- District 2 is using a higher proportion of immersion trained teachers in IF than elsewhere in the province.
- All eleven of the teachers of IF in District 2 have prior methodological training, whereas only two of the other IF teachers have received methodological training prior to teaching IF.

IF Teacher Distribution By Grade Level

- There are ten teachers of Grade 5 IF (seven outside of District 2 and three from within the district).
- There are four teachers of Grade 4 IF and one of 4-5 combined. There is also one teacher who teaches Grade 4 one term and Grade 5 the next.

Homework

- There is a lack of consistency in regards to the amount of homework given nightly in IF. Some teachers assign nightly homework and others said that there is rarely homework.

Interprovincial Guide And IF Curriculum Guide

- Six teacher responded that the IF curriculum guide is not applicable. These teachers with one exception were from District 2. It would appear that the District 2 Grade 4 IF teachers have not had access to the general IF curriculum guide. This guide contains a variety of information pertaining to principles of IF pedagogy as well as strategies for instruction which would be of benefit to IF teachers regardless of grade level.
- District 2 Grade 4 IF teachers were satisfied with the IF units.

Staffing Model For IF

- When asked which model of IF would benefit students most, thirteen teachers preferred the model with the same teacher all year round. Four preferred a model with one IF teacher for half the year and another teacher for the remainder. One teacher felt that both models have advantages.
- When asked which model they preferred for themselves, then preferred having the same students all year and six preferred teaching two blocks of IF per year to two different groups of students. The preference of teachers in District 2 is to have the same students all year round. The preference elsewhere in the province is two blocks of IF.

Benefit Of IF To All Learners

- Thirteen of the eighteen teachers felt that IF is of benefit to all learners (6 + 7 from District 2). Five teachers felt that IF was not of benefit to all learners (1 + 4 from District 2). Comments added included that IF is of little benefit to modified students and that not all students are oral learners.

Reaction to District 2 Model of IF in Grade 4 & 5

- There is a mixed reaction to the District 2 IF model:
 - 5/5 – three respondents
 - 4/5 – two respondents
 - 3/5 – one respondent who indicated that s/he was not sure if it is good for low students.

One teacher wrote that the level of French and the demands on students increase in the second year beyond the ability of some special needs students. They are feeling less able during the second year.

APPENDIX G

The European Language Portfolio

The European Language Portfolio and its Potential for Canada

NATIONAL WORKSHOP REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sally Rehorick, Director
Second Language Education Centre, University of New Brunswick
November 14, 2005

Focus

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the national workshop on language portfolios held in Edmonton, Alberta from October 12 – 14, 2005.

Organization

The lead organization for the workshop was the Second Language Education Centre at the University of New Brunswick. The Edmonton Public School Board acted as on-site hosts. Funding support was provided by the Department of Canadian Heritage, the New Brunswick Department of Education, the Edmonton Public School Board and the University of New Brunswick.

Background

Sally Rehorick, Director of the Second Language Education Centre at the University of New Brunswick, has been participating as Canadian observer in a project of the Council of Europe concerning the implementation of the European Language Portfolio (ELP). Based on a design and proficiency guidelines that are common across all 47 member states of the Council of Europe, the ELP provides a method for learners, from young children to adults, to document their competence in different languages (including their first language), to describe their contacts with other cultures, and to guide their language learning. Implemented in 2001, the European Language Portfolio was developed by the Council of Europe through the European Centre for Modern Languages.

Objectives of the workshop

The workshop was exploratory and informational in nature. The specific objectives were:

- To learn about the European Language Portfolio from its conception and design through to implementation
- To examine the European Common Framework of Languages, as a model of language competence
- To learn about a specific ELP implementation: the model of Sofia University

- To identify complementary endeavours in Canada in the specific areas of frameworks of competence, assessment and plurilingualism
- To determine the potential for a language portfolio in Canada in terms of values, feasibility and desirability
- To develop strategies for and elements of an action plan, if warranted

Features of the European Language Portfolio (ELP)

- The ELP began through a Resolution on the European Language Portfolio adopted at the 20th Session of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education of the Council of Europe in October 2000.
- The objectives of the portfolio are: a) to encourage learners to continue language learning throughout their lifetime and b) to provide a common measure of language competence to facilitate mobility from one country to another.
- The basis for the ELP is the *Common European Framework of Reference*, which describes 5 skill areas (listening, spoken production, spoken interaction, reading, writing) and 6 skill levels. Developed through a process of scientific research and wide consultation, this document provides a practical tool for setting clear standards to be attained at successive stages of learning and for evaluating outcomes in an internationally comparable manner. The Framework provides a basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications, thus facilitating educational and occupational mobility.
- The Common European Framework describes proficiency guidelines that each member state uses for its own portfolio(s). Thus each educational jurisdiction defines the objectives and targeted standards for their own needs based on these common proficiency guidelines.
- The ELP has the potential to track several languages, including the learner's mother tongue. The portfolio is the property of the learner.
- All ELP's have a common design core which includes: a Language Passport, summarizing the self-assessment, the courses/experiences, and diplomas/tests/certificates of the learner; a Language Biography, which contains the learner's detailed self-assessment and a record of linguistic and cultural experiences inside and outside formal educational contexts; and a Dossier, containing evidence and samples of the learner's work.
- The Common Core, based on the *Common European Framework of Reference*, assures coherence in the use of the ELP since this Common Core is the same for all ages of learners, from young learners through to adults.
- In addition to this common core, each portfolio model is tailored to local situations. Depending on the focus of a particular country (or jurisdiction within that country), a particular portfolio could be addressed to any age or level of learner from young children through to adults. There are now more than 70 validated models in use across Europe with additional models being presented continually.
- Each portfolio model is designed according to defined Principles and Guidelines, and validated through the Council of Europe's Validation Committee. In this way, standards and quality are assured.

The ELP has 2 principal functions:

- 1) *Pedagogic function*: to motivate the learner and to provide a way for the learner to track and plan his/her own learning.
- 2) *Reporting function*: to document its holder's plurilingual language proficiency and experiences in other languages in a comprehensive, informative, transparent and reliable way. The instruments contained in the ELP help learners to take stock of the levels of competence they have reached in their learning of one or several foreign languages in order to enable them to inform others in a detailed and internationally comparable manner.

What is the interest for Canada?

- There are recommendations on several fronts for national proficiency guidelines and certificates in language learning.
- The Council of Ministers in Education Canada is interested in the themes of Literacy and Internationalization. Both of these themes coincide with the objectives and potential of the ELP.
- The Council of Europe resembles Canada in many ways, especially concerning education: the 47 member nations each have their own autonomous Ministry (or Ministries) of Education, yet share several common goals for cross-border mobility and comparability.

Principal conclusions

At the conclusion of the workshop, participants agreed that:

- The European Language Portfolio has potential as a concept for Canada and should be examined further.
- The Common European Framework is a useful scaffold for describing language proficiency and should be examined further.
- There are strong assets in language assessment and learner development already in place in Canada that can be built on.
- There is strong interest among participants to cooperate in some way.
- There is value in continuing to stay abreast of developments in Europe and elsewhere.

Next Steps

- Information about this workshop will be disseminated via this report and via the individual commitments and follow-up actions of the participants. The list of these commitments and follow-up actions is attached to this report as Appendix 2.
- A Language Portfolio Study Group, formed by the participants, will exchange information on the various follow-up endeavours which take place over the next year.
- Participants will reconvene in the fall of 2006 on the occasion of the annual conference of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) Canada in Winnipeg, conditional on funding.

Presenters

The following experts made presentations:

- Rolf Schärer, Consultant on language policy, educational strategies and innovation, Switzerland. “Patterns of Implementation of the European Language Portfolio.”
- Maria Stoicheva, Lecturer of English, Sofia University, Bulgaria. “ELP Case Study: the Model of Sofia University.”
- Sally Rehorick, Director, Second Language Education Centre, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton. “Background to the workshop: *Plan 2013* and the IMPEL project at the Council of Europe.”
- Alina MacFarlane, Consultant and Project Manager, Perth, Ontario. “National Language Competencies, Proficiency Test and Certificate in Canada.”
- Larry Vandergrift, University of Ottawa, Virtual Scholar in Residence, Department of Canadian Heritage. “Development of a Definition for ‘Functional’ Competency in a Language.”
- Wally Lazaruk, Principal Consultant, Evaluation Plus Inc., Edmonton. “Is Canada read for a nationally-recognized assessment tool? Alberta’s French as a second language project with the Public Service Commission of Canada.”
- Pauline MacNaughton, Executive Director, Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, Ottawa. “The Canadian Language Benchmarks and related assessment tools.”
- Joanne Pettis, Coordinator, Adult EAL Curriculum Development & Implementation, Manitoba Department of Training and Immigration, Winnipeg. “Collaborative Language Portfolio Assessment: An example from Manitoba.”
- Joan Boyer, Acting Director, Social Sciences Unit & Second Languages Consultant, Saskatchewan Learning, Regina; John Sokolowski, Team Leader International Languages, Alberta Education and Janice Aubrey, Consultant, International Languages, Alberta Education, Edmonton. “The Common Curriculum Framework for Languages as Developed by the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol.”
- Loretta Kuttner, Consultant in Language Evaluation, Fredericton. “Language Assessment in New Brunswick: Public Schools and Civil Service.”
- Sandy Forster, Program Coordinator, Curriculum, Edmonton Public Schools. “Promoting plurilingualism in the Edmonton Public Schools: FSL Renewal Project and International/indigenous language learning.”

Participants

Forty participants attended the workshop, representing the following organizations:

Provincial and Territorial Departments of Education

- British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia

Federal Ministries and other nationally-focussed organizations

- Department of Indian Affairs, Department of Canadian Heritage, Canada School of Public Service, Public Service Commission
- Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks

- Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages

Post-secondary institutions

- University of New Brunswick, University of Ottawa, University of Western Ontario

Participants brought a wide range of expertise, responsibilities and language areas. These included:

- Curriculum
- Teacher development
- Evaluation
- Indigenous languages
- English as a second language
- French as a second language
- Heritage languages
- International languages
- Professional teacher associations (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, Ontario Modern Language Teachers Association)
- Adult learners: immigrant language needs
- K – 12 school system

Additional Resources

European Language Portfolio, online at: <http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio>

Complete Report of Proceedings

A copy of the complete report can be obtained by contacting the Second Language Education Centre at the University of New Brunswick at slec@unb.ca or by download at <http://www.unb.ca/slec> .

APPENDIX H

Self-assessment grid					
 EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO Portfolio européen des langues					
A1		A2	B1	B2	C1
C2					
Understanding  Listening	I can understand familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.
Speaking  Spoken interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
Writing  Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.

APPENDIX I

SUMMARY

To Stay or Not to Stay?
Factors Influencing Parents of Early French Immersion Students
Experiencing Learning Difficulties
 By Marguerite Noel, 2003

INTRODUCTION

French Immersion (FI) is an alternative program available, where numbers warrant, to non-francophone students enrolled in anglophone schools. This program relies on the teaching of French as a subject (French Language Arts) as well as the use of French as the medium of instruction for other subjects. The most popular form of FI is early French Immersion (EFI) where students begin at grade one. Presently in New Brunswick, 90% of instruction is in French during grades one, two, and three. In grades four and five, 80% of instruction is in French. In grades six, seven, and eight, students receive 70% of their instruction in French. Currently, approximately 23,000 students are enrolled in FI in New Brunswick. From that amount, about 8,000 students (35% of the FI population) are enrolled in EFI from Kindergarten to grade five (as reported by the NB Department of Education, September 30, 2002).

Parents of EFI students who have difficulty learning are often confronted with many different questions: *Is my child coping despite having difficulty learning? Should my child remain in the program or return to the English program? What are the long-term consequences?* These parents placed their children in the EFI program with the hopes that their children would benefit from all that the program has to offer. However, some begin to wonder if they made the best decision. Others are quite confident that EFI is the right program for their child, while some decide to remove their child from the program. What would cause the parents of these children, who have difficulty learning, to have such different opinions about choosing the EFI program for their children?

Some research has been done regarding EFI students experiencing difficulty learning. These studies dealt with the suitability of FI for students experiencing such difficulty (Bruck, 1978; Genesee, 1976, 1987, 1992; Trites, 1976; Wiss, 1989) or with students transferring out of the program to enter regular English programs (Dubé, 1993; Keep, 1993; Trites, 1986). Very little has been documented about those students who remain in the EFI program despite experiencing difficulty learning. Even less attention has been paid to these same students' parents who ultimately decide whether or not their child will remain in the program.

What actually influences these parents to have their child remain in, or leave the EFI program? It is extremely important to be aware of what influences these parents to make such an important decision regarding their child's education in order to effectively accommodate parents' and students' needs within the EFI program.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to discover and describe the decision-making process lived by parents of students enrolled in the early years of EFI and experiencing learning difficulties. The study explored what influenced parents' decision-making process in regard to either keeping their child in EFI despite their learning difficulties, or removing their child from the program. The main objective was to get a better sense of circumstances faced by parents of EFI students experiencing difficulty learning and a deeper understanding of their decision-making.

METHODOLOGY

This study took place in two New Brunswick school districts. It involved seventeen parents of EFI students with learning difficulties. Fourteen students were at the primary and elementary levels, with three students in grade seven. Three of the parents had more than one child experiencing difficulty learning.

A multiple case study approach was used to investigate parents' decision-making process. The study comprised two focus group discussions with parents and follow-up personal interviews. In order to get an accurate picture of the larger context in which the parents' stories unfolded, interviews were conducted with eleven educators and other professionals at the school, school district, and Department of Education levels. In addition, an in-depth descriptive analysis was conducted for two of the cases: one involving parents who decided to keep their child in the EFI program; the other involving a parent who decided to transfer her child out of the program.

FINDINGS

Although each parent's experience was unique in itself, parents mentioned common factors that influenced their decision-making. As such, the information they provided can help educators and policy makers to better support parents and accommodate the needs of their children who are experiencing difficulty learning in EFI. Moreover, this study may enable other parents of EFI students experiencing difficulty learning and parents who are considering enrolling their child in the program, to make more informed decisions about their child's second language education.

Factors that influenced parents' decision-making

Parents elaborated on twelve factors that influenced their decisions. These factors are grouped in four categories of decision-making: *choice of program*, *academic concerns*, *parent comfort*, and *child comfort*. The intermingling of these various factors made each parent's decision-making process unique. Because of the interactive nature of the factors, any positive or negative changes within one category of concern could have some impact on any one or more of the four categories aforementioned. This type of reaction could have affected the decisions of parents who either kept their children in EFI or transferred their children out of the program (See **Table 1** below and **Figure 1** on page 4).

Table 1: Categories of Parents' Decision-Making Factors

<p style="text-align: center;">Choice of Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Looking to the future ▪ Outside factors ▪ Perceived quality of both the English and the EFI programs 	<p style="text-align: center;">Academic Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child's achievement ▪ Child's progress ▪ Support systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School system • System outside the school ▪ Perception and/or understanding of second language acquisition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's difficulty: Same in both programs? • What about the effects on the first language (English)?
<p style="text-align: center;">Parent Comfort</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge about the EFI program ▪ Homework ▪ Working the system 	<p style="text-align: center;">Child Comfort</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child's behaviour ▪ Child's affective variables

The model that follows depicts the four categories of factors that underpin parents' decision-making process. The various arrows represent the intermingling of the factors within the four categories of concerns. The diagram illustrates that there were many possible combinations of factors that may have influenced the parents' decisions.

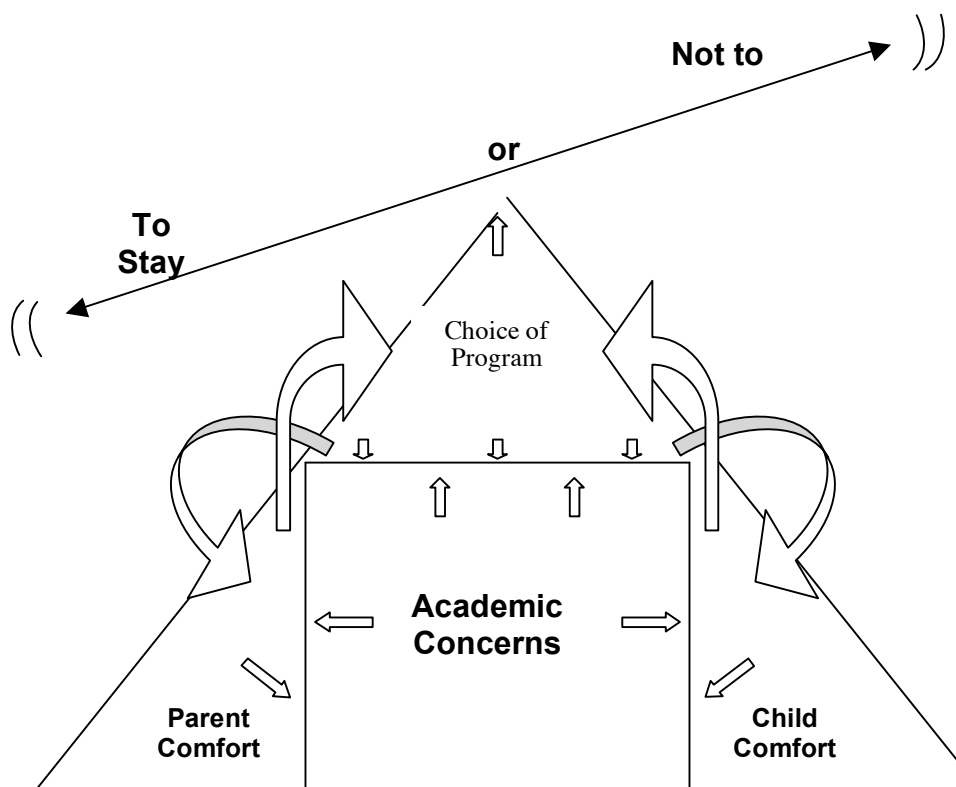


Figure 1: Model of parents' decision-making process

Choice of program

Parents presented a wide range of factors that affected their choice of program. These factors were related to their child's future, outside factors, and parents' perceptions of the EFI and the English programs. Bilingualism and job or career opportunities were the two most common factors mentioned regarding choice of programs as parents looked to their child's future. Although bilingualism was referred to the most by parents in the context of their child's future, some parents had mixed feelings about its importance in choosing the right program for their child or about specifically choosing EFI for their child to learn French. They also pointed to factors that came from outside their immediate immersion context. Surprisingly, parents devoted a large portion of time talking about how their perceptions of the EFI and the English programs impacted on their choice of program for their children.

As they were asked to reflect on one particular aspect of the program that they favoured, parents spoke about their children's response to the program as well as some of the program's features. In response to whether or not they would recommend EFI to other parents of children experiencing learning difficulties, a small majority of parents leaned towards recommending the program. Some parents were apprehensive about certain aspects of the English and the EFI programs.

Interestingly, the three topics parents discussed regarding choice of program not only influenced parents' decision to choose EFI for their child, but were also contributing factors as to whether or not they would have their child stay in the program.

Academic concerns

Parents closely monitored their children's academic achievement and progress to confirm whether or not they were coping in the program despite their difficulty learning. Most parents expressed grave concern over a lack of appropriate support, which is crucial for the children to achieve success and for their parents to help them in that endeavor. Also contributing to parents' uneasiness about their decision, was a lack of communication in terms of keeping parents updated on their children's progress. In spite of this, some parents were still motivated to keep their child in EFI since some of the children were improving after all, and others were achieving satisfactorily. How informed parents were of their child's situation i.e., their academic abilities, their progress and their achievement based on second language acquisition, either raised or lowered parents' comfort level.

Parent comfort

Not all parents were comfortable advocating on their children's behalf. Some didn't really know how to go about doing it. Others were more comfortable seeking and requesting help their child deserved. Parents worried about what their commitment to having their children stay in EFI was doing to their relationship with them. How the child responded to the program made parents feel more or less comfortable about their decision-making.

Child comfort

Children's comfort levels sometimes were indicators to parents as to whether or not they were coping with the program. In some instances, that may have resulted in transferring the child out of EFI. In others, it may have confirmed parents' decisions to keep their child in the program.

Two important elements to consider

Early in the investigation, it became evident that two elements strongly influenced parents' decision-making: initial choice of program and levels of commitment to the program. Whether or not the program actually lived up to parents' expectations may have been a critical factor in their decision to stay or not to stay. Similarly, the degree to which the parents were committed to the EFI program may have induced some of them to re-visit their initial decision at a later time. As described in the study, the different reasons why parents chose EFI for their children could have affected their level of commitment to the program.

Areas of concern underscored by parents

Even though the majority of the parents had decided to keep their children in EFI, parents clearly felt that there was a lack of support enabling them to help their child succeed in the program. Namely, they raised questions about the lack of communication between home and school, the lack of resources and the lack of empowerment in helping their children, especially with homework.

These specific concerns as well as the interactive nature of the factors influencing parents' decision-making bring forth implications for parents, educators and policy makers.

IMPLICATIONS

The following section summarizes how the lack of support in the three specific areas of parent concerns translates into implications for the main stakeholders of this study.

Lack of communication

Implications for the school system

Even though the schools and the district offices involved in this study sent information home and held information sessions, some parents still claimed that they received insufficient information about EFI prior to enrolling their child in the program. Others did not find the parent information meeting helpful since some of their concerns were not addressed, particularly in terms of whether or not the program was suitable for their child.

This lack of communication implies that educators at the school and at the district levels may need to consider more effective means of providing clear information about the EFI program to as many prospective parents as possible:

- Parents need to be strongly encouraged to attend information meetings.
- School and district personnel should take extra care to make parents feel comfortable to ask questions and express their concerns.
- Getting information out early to parents in an effective manner could prevent unnecessary misunderstandings and communication breakdowns further down the road.

At times, parents felt left “out of the loop,” not being able to judge how well their child was doing. For some parents, there was a language barrier that made it difficult to communicate with some of the teachers. When it came to their child's progress or achievement, some parents felt they were given vague comments and/or mixed messages from the teacher, or they found out too late about their child's poor performance:

- When a parent inquires about whether or not their child is successful in the program, teachers need to be able to provide direct answers because parents rely on their experience and their expertise for advice and information.
- It may be that teachers are uncomfortable recommending to parents whether or not the child should stay in the program. There was a general consensus among the educators interviewed for this study, that teachers would most likely not directly tell a parent that their child should not be in the EFI program. Nevertheless, teachers have the responsibility to report about the child's situation as accurately and as promptly as possible to the parents and they should employ whatever means is needed to facilitate that task.
- Some teachers could benefit from in-servicing to improve their communication skills.
- In order to competently and confidently inform and advise parents, EFI teachers need to keep abreast of past and current research conducted in the various areas pertinent to their teaching.
- The above concerns likely indicate the need for the Department of Education or the school districts to provide further professional development to teachers in regard to addressing the above concerns.

Implications for the parents

Once parents contemplate enrolling their child in EFI, they should make a point of getting well informed about the program:

- Part of that commitment involves making the effort to read all the material provided by the school and to attend meetings, using these opportunities to ask specific questions and to voice their concerns.
- It would also involve parents providing the school with any pertinent information that would help the child to learn and would assist the teacher to enhance the child's learning experience.
- Parents may need to work in partnership with the school to improve home/school communication issues.

Lack of resources

Implications for the school system

Some parents were convinced that their children could profit from getting extra help to improve their performance in different areas. In at least two cases, the teacher had emphasized the child's need for individual attention. But the prospect of these students obtaining any assistance from Resource and Methods (R&M) would appear to be minimal at best. According to one of the Department of Education consultants, the likelihood of offering R&M help in French was near impossible at this point in time.

Both school districts had resources available and programs in place to enhance the learning of FI students; however, many parents were unaware of their existence. The majority of the parents were not aware of whether or not their children were receiving those services. Most of these services were provisional, depending on the funding availability. Moreover, these accommodations were not consistent in both districts.

- If the government legislates that every student has the right to become proficient in French as a second language, and the school districts are promoting and providing open admission to the FI program, there is a responsibility to answer the needs of all the students enrolled in it. According to Bruck (1978) and Cummins (1984), these students can learn a second language providing there is support in place for them.
- Because of the difficulty to secure qualified bilingual R & M teachers for FI students, steps must be taken to remediate the situation.
- If the resources that are in place are only temporary, they will amount to no more than "Band-Aid" solutions. Long term support would offer more consistency.
- The various sources of support should be available throughout the school districts. At the very least, they should be publicized so that other school districts could pilot them in their areas.
- R&M teachers and FI teachers need to make principals aware of the problem and be assertive in their request to ameliorate the situation.

Implications for the parents

Once it has been established that their child is experiencing difficulty learning, the next step is for parents to find out what exactly is the problem and how it can be alleviated.

- Parents need to be vigilant and find out what is being done at the school level to help their child. They should also inquire about what type of resources are available.
- Parents should be aware that it is their child's right to receive that support.
- Parents may need to demonstrate their support for their child's teacher in justifying the requested resources to the administration or the district office.

Lack of parent empowerment

Implications for the school system

Parents often found it overwhelming advocating on their child's behalf. Part of this was due to parents not being aware of what recourse was at their disposition to accomplish that task.

- Making parents aware of what is at their disposition to advocate for their child should be part and parcel of the information that parents receive prior to enrolling their child in the EFI program. All parents found homework to be particularly challenging. They often felt helpless in assisting their children with homework.
- Teachers need to make a concerted effort to work with parents on this issue. They could explore ideas that would involve parents working as partners to improve their children's overall performances. This could help ease the sense of isolation that many EFI parents feel during their child's enrolment in the program, especially during the early stages.

Implications for the parents

When parents enrol their child in EFI, they should be aware that there will be challenges along the way and that it would require a huge commitment on their part.

- This commitment would most likely include advocating for their child and being actively involved in a partnership with the school to help their child succeed in the program. If this proves to be exceptionally difficult for them, parents should make the effort to find support.
- Parents could also be a source of pertinent information to one another. Again, this would help alleviate the isolation felt by some parents.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Five topics deemed valuable to further explore are suggested in this study. Two of these suggestions include addressing the lack of resources and taking a closer look at some of the circumstances parents encounter when their child is enrolled in grade 2 EFI.

Resource help available to EFI students experiencing learning difficulties

It was observed from this study that both districts had different types of resources or programs in place to assist EFI students who had difficulty learning. It may be possible to survey what type of resources and programs are available in all the anglophone districts in the province of New Brunswick. In this way, all districts could benefit from the findings.

The grade two check-point

As this study brought to light, distinct events seemed to take place the period of time shortly before, after, or while the children in this study were enrolled in Grade 2 EFI. For some parents, this time may have seemed like "the storm before the calm." A study could be undertaken to take a closer look at why certain events take place at that particular time of the child's enrolment in the EFI program. Would such a study reveal a possible threshold in the parents' decision-making process?

REFLECTIONS

As a teacher, I was once again reminded by this study, of the importance of open and ongoing communication between home and school. This study has shown how important it is for teachers to communicate more consistently and effectively with parents so that they feel adequately informed about their child's abilities as well as their difficulties. At the same time, it is equally important for teachers to make the effort to provide parents with suggestions about how they can work together to meet the child's needs. Accordingly, parents will be more apt to genuinely feel that they are part of the process of helping their child succeed in the EFI program.

Making the right decision is very difficult for this particular group of parents, even for those who are proactive. At times, when they turn to research for confirmation or for guidance, they are met with conflicting reports, and new questions are raised: To assess or to not Assess... To speak French or English to their child ... and the ultimate question, To Stay or not to Stay....?

One parent blurted out that for her, making the right decision was like playing "Russian Roulette" with her child's future. To other parents, deciding to stay or not to stay is a kind of balancing act, weighing the advantages or disadvantages of staying in or leaving the program. The choice is never crystal clear; however, being better informed and getting the needed support from the school system as a whole, makes the task easier and not as stressful for parents.

As educators strive to help students overcome or work around some of their problems, parents need to be factored into the equation as being part of the solution. Furthermore, the parents in this study who were proactive in approaching their children's difficulties appeared to be more confident in their decision-making. This home and school partnership can only result in benefiting the child. Ultimately, when everything has been tried, said and done, what's important to their children is important to the parents.

In final analysis, one item is very noteworthy of mentioning. None of the parents singled out their child's specific learning difficulty as their reason for being dissatisfied or for transferring their child out of the EFI program. Parents who removed their children from the program were concerned about their children's lack of self-confidence and their general well-being, were worried about not being able to help their children with their homework, or felt that the EFI program was not accommodating their children's needs. Any significant changes affecting support in the areas of communication, resources, and parent empowerment in helping their children, affected parents' decisions.

The majority of the parents in this study decided to keep their children in EFI; thus, for them, the interplay between their choice of program, their academic concerns, their comfort levels and their children's comfort levels ruled in favour of having their child remain in the program.

This study's contribution to research was threefold; it provided a model explaining parents' decision-making process, it raised new questions to explore, and it provided a forum for parents to give insight into their lived experiences as they went through their decision-making process.