



FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION CENTRE

# **FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN NEW BRUNSWICK SCHOOLS**

## **Paradigms, Challenges and Strategies**

**Sally Rehorick  
Principal Investigator**



**Faculty of Education  
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# **FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN NEW BRUNSWICK SCHOOLS**

## **Paradigms, Challenges and Strategies**

### **I. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Second language learning in Canada's only officially bilingual province has been a well-established fact in the public school system for some time. As with any program in education, second language education needs to be reviewed periodically to ensure that the aims of the programs continue to be relevant and that the systems which support the programs continue to be of high quality. Since the report of the Commission on Excellence in Education was released in May 1992, there has been ongoing dialogue in education circles and elsewhere about the nature of the changes needed to bring about the goals of the report. The need to review the French second language (FSL) programs has arisen partly out of this overall climate of change in education and partly as a result of a perception that there is little consistency across the province in the delivery of FSL programs.

The terms of reference given to the principal investigator by the Department of Education were to review and make recommendations to the Department in the following areas:

- guidelines which define minimum requirements with regard to French second language programs which all school districts must meet;
- consultative processes for school districts that would lead to effective parental input with regard to French immersion programs in their community;
- assessment models to monitor student progress and outcomes and evaluate teacher and program effectiveness.

The principal investigator sought the opinions of many groups and individuals during the course of the two and a half month study. As well a reference committee was

struck to assist the principal investigator; this committee was composed of the following individuals:

Marilyn Adam-Smith, Superintendent, School District 17

Cheryl Reid, Superintendent, School District 2

Anna LeBlanc, President of the N.B. Home and School Association

Keith Ashfield, President of the N.B. School Trustees' Association

Barry Lydon, Director, Program Implementation Branch, Department of Education

Dwain McLean, Director of Professional Development, NBTA

Roy Lyster, Assistant Professor of Education, McGill University

In addition to the reference committee, who met twice, a wide variety of stakeholders provided their insights on the issues related to FSL learning. Through discussion and interviews held with students, parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, coordinators and supervisors, New Brunswick Department of Education officials and educators in other provincial jurisdictions, the principal investigator was able to hear numerous valuable perspectives. (See Appendix A for a detailed schedule and workplan.) Although the short timeframe accorded for the study did not allow for surveys or interviews with everyone who might have wished to provide input, the willingness to speak candidly on the part of those who did participate ensured that rich and illuminating data informed the investigation.

## II. PREAMBLE

Second language education is in many ways the most volatile aspect of public education, given its inherent relationship to the political, social, cultural and economic fabric of the province. Because of this, second language education is not, in fact, like any other subject in schools although many educators would have it treated as if it were. In addition to the linguistic environment of the province, there are also a number of paradigms (i.e. frames of reference) which have shaped thoughts about second language learning. Notions about what constitutes a definition of “bilingual”, about the optimum age to learn second languages and about the role of the learning environment, drive and determine individuals’ varying perspectives on second language learning. These and other paradigms influence thinking about language learning in fundamental ways and have an effect on how FSL programs are conceived, on how individuals define their own personal commitment to FSL learning and on how the ultimate success of this educational endeavour is assessed.

The overarching challenge of this review is to provide a balanced view of the various critical aspects of FSL learning in New Brunswick and to make recommendations which will provide the best possible alternatives for FSL learning within the environment described above. The strategies for doing this are as follows:

- to outline the expectations for French second language programs currently held by the various groups involved in second language learning;
- to describe FSL programs as they currently exist in New Brunswick;
- to identify the kinds of variables which affect second language learning;
- to outline realistic standards which FSL programs in New Brunswick can be expected to meet;
- to describe ways for the key players in the system (parents, students, teachers, coordinators, principals, Department of Education) to enhance the effectiveness of their roles;

- to propose strategies for determining the overall effectiveness of the various components of FSL learning.



### **III. BACKGROUND**

In the last 15 years, there have been two complete reviews of French second language education in New Brunswick. A 1979 report published by the Department of Education responded to a number of identified needs in FSL learning. These needs were made evident, in part, by the alarming statistic arising from the base year study (1979) which assessed the oral proficiency of a sample of graduating students: only 61% of graduating students managed to achieve a rating above what was then termed a 0+ and is now referred to as Novice. (See Appendix B for a complete description of levels as measured by the oral proficiency interview in New Brunswick.) Two key recommendations emerged from the 1979 report: the improvement of the core French program and an intermediate level of proficiency as a graduation requirement of all students. Since then a great deal of effort has been put into the core French program and it might be surmised that the positive results achieved in immersion have been in part responsible for this increased attention to core French programs. A follow-up study 10 years after the base year study revealed substantial improvements in the proficiency of graduates. Another important recommendation was the need for teachers of FSL to be fully proficient themselves in the French language.

In 1988, the Minister of Education struck a review committee which undertook a full analysis of FSL education programs and organization. The report (1989) dealt with student evaluation, teachers and teacher training, extra-class opportunities for FSL learning and a cost analysis. The committee made extensive recommendations in several areas, including teacher retraining in both language and methodology, improvements in the oral proficiency interview and a call for a more complete assessment approach at various grade levels in the schools. In 1989, the Department of Education's Strategic Plan outlined a far-reaching framework for conducting inservice programs for FSL teachers. The plan was responding in part to the Minister's review committee report and in part to a projected deficit in the supply of qualified FSL teachers (a deficit which was predicted to be critical across the country by the end of the decade) (Obadia & Martin, 1993).

The recommendation of the review committee in 1989 to reassess the oral proficiency interview and to make any necessary improvements was answered by a year long study which resulted in revisions to methods of determining the proficiency rating, of training interviewers, and of monitoring the quality of interviews (Rehorick, 1991). In addition, the French Second Language Teacher Education Centre was commissioned to search for a method of assessment which would improve upon the oral proficiency interview while at the same time keeping a focus on authentic communicative language use.

#### **IV. EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS**

Notwithstanding the substantial progress made as a result of the reports, analyses and interventions, there has been a widespread perception that FSL education has been gradually eroded over the years. In a general sense, this perception seems to centre on beliefs about reduced instructional time in French and a reduction of specialized personnel at the Department of Education and within school districts. These beliefs are not shared universally or equally among all interested individuals and groups and, where they are shared, there is little consensus about the effect on FSL learning. Nor are the same expectations held with regard to French second language education in general. While most people refer to the desired goal to be “bilingual”, there is not a mutual understanding of what bilingual means. In other words, how bilingual is bilingual?

##### ***Students***

High school students who participated in a focus group discussion during this study revealed that they had very high expectations of themselves in terms of their level of proficiency upon graduation and their hopes for using their French. A group of students graduating from a late immersion program revealed that their goal was to reach at least the advanced level on the proficiency scale. Some were more specific: “[I want to be able to] start a business in which I can serve people in both languages”; “[My goal is to be] able to fully communicate with any French speaking person and to acquire a job that requires you to be bilingual”; “[I want to] go to a French university”; “I want to be able to go to a completely French country or province and communicate easily with the natives.” In one case, the expressed goal was somewhat less precise: “[I want to have French] in case I need it.”

One might surmise that students studying in the core French program might hold expectations which are somewhat less lofty than the immersion students. Although this was true of some of the core French students interviewed, most expressed the same kinds of aspirations as the immersion graduates: “[I want to be able to] read and write and speak French clearly to another group”; “[I want to] work in a bilingual job”; “[I hope to be able to]

carry on a conversation and to read and understand French.” In some cases the core French students recognized that they would need to continue their study of French after high school to reach their goals of fluency. Except for two students of the 26 interviewed in both groups, the students rated their chance of reaching their goals to be good or excellent.

Whether the goals expressed by these students can be said to be representative of all students studying French is a point for discussion. There is no doubt that these individuals are among those who have chosen to continue their study of French until the end of grade 12 and therefore might be more the exception than the rule. Since the study of French is compulsory only to the end of grade 10, one might expect that the attitudes of these two groups might be somewhat slanted by virtue of their choice to remain in the French programs. (Indeed the subject of the attrition rates in high school French programs is the subject of much controversy and debate; this topic will be addressed later in this report.) A more complete study of student expectations with a random sample of students could well form the basis of future research. However, there is some evidence to suggest that even students who might be considered to be most likely to stop their study of French after Grade 10 hold goals similar to the students quoted above (Macfarlane, Nice and Rehorick, 1989).

## Teachers

Opinions expressed by teachers for results expected from their students were somewhat less consistent than the students' opinions. The table below summarizes the expectations of the five teachers and one principal who participated in the survey.

TABLE 1

**Expected achievement levels of students in Core French programs and late immersion programs as estimated by teachers and one principal.**

EXPECTED LEVEL	Average students		Best students	
	Core French	Immersion	Core French	Immersion
Novice	2			
Basic	3	2	3	
Intermediate	1	3	3	3
Advanced		2	1	2
Superior				1

N.B. The totals for each column are different because individuals occasionally gave more than one response

There is clearly a difference in opinions of students as compared to their teachers. Students' expectations for themselves would seem to be a good deal higher than teachers' expectations, at least in this small sample surveyed. Why this is the case is a matter for speculation. It might be that, although the students' expectations are encouraging and laudable, the teachers' opinions are tempered by familiarity with their students' performance coupled with a more thorough knowledge of the oral proficiency scale definitions.

To what extent the findings from these very small samples can be generalized to the whole population of students and teachers cannot be answered here. However it is clear that one of the challenges to be addressed as a result of this study is to close whatever gaps might exist among groups holding different expectations through improved communication.

## ***Parents***

Many of the people consulted during this study felt that parents hold highly pragmatic views when it comes to their expectations for their children's French achievement. Comments such as "economic reasons", "to get a job" or "to provide the most career choices possible" were typical. The most widely held view is that parents expect that their child will be able to compete successfully in a job market requiring bilingual skills. One individual, representing the Home and School Association, noted that parents expect "total bilingualism" with a level of competency in French equivalent to the proficiency of a native speaker, especially from the immersion programs. Although the original intent of French immersion programs was not to produce native proficiency but rather to provide an improved alternative to core French programs, the tendency to make comparisons with native speaker ability continues to be prevalent. The principal investigator heard from several people that parents frequently experience disappointment when they receive the results of their children's oral proficiency interview.

This view was not held universally however, and an important minority of individuals interviewed noted that parents' expectations are in fact realistic, and that they understand that students who wish to practise a profession in French will require further specialized study in the language. They noted that this was no different than, say, the study of physics, where parents would not imagine that their child could be a practising physicist, for example, immediately after high school.

During focus interviews with individual parents, reasons other than purely pragmatic ones for studying French surfaced frequently. When asked why she had registered her children in French immersion, one parent replied: "I wanted them to be comfortable in the language, not perfect, but comfortable so that they wouldn't have to struggle as an adult learning French as I am doing. They need to have the ability to be able to communicate easily in a French environment." Another parent noted that she wasn't sure why she put her children into immersion apart from a vague notion that they would be missing something if they didn't follow the immersion route. Yet another parent mentioned "broadening his horizons" as a reason for wanting her son to learn French.

There was some indication, especially on the part of teachers, that parents in some communities have begun to question the value of learning French. In one notable case, a parent refused to allow his children to take French at all. It is possible that political undercurrents are playing a role in scenarios such as this one. In these cases, decision makers would do well to consider to what extent the example represents widespread opinion before assuming that it does. One person interviewed during the course of the study suggested that core French be made optional. Recognizing that compulsory French from grade 1 to 10 represented a major and hard-fought decision, she nevertheless felt that in all likelihood, the vast majority of parents would choose to put their children in core French in any case.

I found little evidence to suggest that parents expect the school system to carry the entire responsibility for the FSL learning of their children. However parents were very clear about their expectations for input into major decisions about the education of their children. Although some parents expressed concern that they didn't feel qualified to help their children with homework in French, there was nonetheless an overriding feeling that parents should and could provide productive opportunities for children outside the classroom to use their French. Both the Home and School Association and Canadian Parents for French acknowledged that their associations do provide and would continue to seek opportunities to assist in this regard.

### ***School Districts***

The expectations for FSL programs on the part of school districts are closely linked with their responsibility to allocate scarce resources fairly. They described the difficulty in satisfying all parents while at the same time maintaining fiscal responsibility. While districts acknowledge their role in providing high quality FSL programs, they are painfully conscious that they must do so at no expense to other programs. The consensus among districts seems to be that realistic expectations need to be set for FSL learning and that these need to be communicated effectively to parents, students and other interested people. The emphasis on "realistic" is a key notion and its interpretation seems to vary somewhat

depending on the perspective adopted. What does seem to be common, however, is that districts know they must streamline their offerings and not try to be all things to all people. The best option from the districts' perspective, is to concentrate on offering fewer programs well rather than many programs poorly. This view would seem to illustrate one of Peter Senge's laws of the fifth discipline that "if you cut an elephant in half, you don't get two elephants" (1993, p. 135).

There seems to be a certain degree of mutual suspicion between parents and school districts. Parents are concerned that school districts will take unilateral action on FSL offerings without adequate parental input (many cited former School District 26's decision to drop early immersion programs and District 2's decision to offer only middle immersion announced on November 3, 1993 as key examples). For their part, districts feel that parents often lack a full understanding of the overall picture of the district and expect that parents should trust the professional educators to make the right decisions. It is my view that there are, in fact, more points of commonality among the various players who are striving to make FSL learning worthwhile than are generally thought to exist. To quote one source, "everyone is flying in the same direction; they're just on different planes taking different routes at different speeds." However, the similarities which do exist among stakeholders are frequently so hidden that standoffs of not inconsequential proportions have occurred; this causes further retrenchment on both sides.

It is evident that a major paradigm shift is necessary on the part of both parents and districts. The current position for many parents is one of confrontation and, in some instances, of political lobbying. For their part, districts frequently operate from an orientation not unlike the cartoon depicting a mother "telling" her child why he must obey her; the caption reads, "because I'm the Mommy, **that's** why." Consultations with parents in some districts means explaining clearly the reasons for decisions which have already been taken. The paradigms will have to shift towards a truly client-centred and collaborative approach if effective partnerships are to develop.



### ***Department of Education***

The expectations expressed by individuals at the Department of Education are that students who follow the core French program until the end of grade 10 can be expected to attain an Intermediate proficiency level; those who continue until the end of grade 12 can be expected to maintain their level. Graduates of early immersion programs should be able to attain an Advanced level of proficiency after 7000 hours of instruction (i.e. by the end of grade 12) and late immersion graduates can expect to attain a level of Intermediate Plus (Macfarlane, 1992). Given the results of the oral proficiency interviews over the years (see Appendix D), it is important to differentiate what can be "expected" from what is "possible". It may be that the stated expectations are not realistic.

There are also expectations that districts will deliver only programs recommended and authorized by the Department. Although the Department recognizes that local options are sometimes desirable because of local needs, there is nonetheless a certain degree of consternation expressed when wholesale changes, such as extended core French and middle immersion, are made to FSL programs without departmental approval. Such variations in programs make the Department's role in providing curricular and evaluation support especially difficult. There is a popular misconception about what curriculum development means and how much time and expertise it takes to develop good curriculum. An FSL curriculum is not just a list of vocabulary and grammar points; it is a highly integrative document with multidimensional aspects which takes a great deal of time, energy and expertise to develop. The Department does not feel that sufficient resources exist to provide the support necessary for several program variations.

In addition to the curriculum question, there is also an issue of mobility from one district to another. From the Department's perspective, it seems to be very important to have consistency in programs across the province so that families who move from one district to another can register their children in the same programs. To what extent there is a great deal of mobility around the province could not be ascertained in the course of this short study. District superintendents reported various scenarios ranging from "little mobility in my district" to "a great deal of mobility". Demographic research into this question could provide some helpful information.

If there is one shared concern which runs through all the expressed expectations, it is that students need to be able to use their French for purposes outside the classroom. There seems to be the feeling that if one learns French in the classroom, one should automatically be able to use it in the workplace, in social settings, and for purposes of travel and communication with native speakers. One superintendent cautioned that schools can only provide opportunities to develop “classroom-based language” and that students, parents and employers need to be aware that this kind of language cannot be transferred automatically to other contexts.

There is clearly a need to clarify the different expectations for FSL learning. A carefully prepared document prepared by the Department of Education, in collaboration with other stakeholders, will help to rectify this question (see Recommendation B1).

## V. CHARACTERISTICS OF FSL LEARNING IN NEW BRUNSWICK

### *Programs*

The Department of Education currently provides guidelines for FSL programs which define both the intensity and frequency of time on task for the three program routes recognized officially by the Department. (Appendix C contains a description of the recommended guidelines.) While substantial curriculum and developmental support is provided for core French, early immersion and late immersion, the Department acknowledges, albeit with a certain degree of reluctance, that two other programs exist at the local level: extended core French and middle immersion.

What became increasingly clear as this study proceeded was that there exist many more programs than the five mentioned above. Indeed, a rough count revealed no fewer than 18 different variations of programs. In some cases the variations were developed by design (for example, the 50/50 early immersion program in District 15) and in some cases by default. The reasons given for this latter situation were generally attributed to lack of human and financial resources, lack of will, or organizational structures not conducive to a standardized delivery of programs (e.g. high school semestering, itinerant core French teachers, etc.)

In the analyses provided by districts of their programs, it is very clear that programs which follow departmental guidelines to the letter are the rare exception. The principal investigator was told of no early immersion program that followed the 7000 hour standard of the department. The likelihood of an individual student taking anywhere close to the 7000 hours (particularly if s/he withdraws from the program after grade 9 as frequently happens) is extremely remote. Consequently, expectations of reaching an Advanced level need to be revised downward if these trends continue. With the move toward outcomes-based education (see *Education 2000*), the need to specify contact hours will be lessened.

### ***Enrolment Patterns***

Enrolment in FSL programs is affected by a number of variables. Issues such as choice, access, attrition and mobility all come into play. It is difficult to track patterns precisely because of the recent amalgamation of districts. However from the information obtained, it would seem that the overall enrolment in French immersion is relatively stable from year to year (Source - Program Development and Implementation Branch, Dept. of Education, French Immersion Statistics, 1991-1994). This matches a national trend in enrolment patterns (Obadia & Martin, 1993).

What these overall data do not reveal, of course, is information about who enrolls, who stays and who leaves. Immersion programs are frequently the object of criticism which maintains that immersion is an elitist program, excluding all but the "best" students. Early research showed that children who were the most likely to choose immersion came from higher socio-economic backgrounds than those who chose regular programs. This was also true of late immersion programs in the initial stages. However, both of these programs have become more heterogeneous over the years.

The implementation of middle immersion in some districts has given rise to renewed fears of elitism. Those who object to middle immersion as an alternative are concerned that any initial difficulties which primary students may have in school will deter their parents from enrolling their child in middle immersion and result in an elite population in the middle immersion option. In addition, several school principals of single-track regular program schools expressed their dismay that "the best students" were being drawn away by the middle immersion schools. A study conducted in District 2 cautioned that it might be a mistake to conclude that early immersion programs are more heterogeneous than middle immersion: "The significant decline in immersion enrolments from program beginning to end tends to indicate that the heterogeneous nature of the program does not remain constant" (Jones & Mazerolle, 1993, p. 24) .

The issue of elitism is a volatile one and makes immersion programs an easy target for detractors. One is reminded of statements made by the Commissioner of Official Languages in his 1981 annual report:

One is tempted to observe that this word [elitism] is increasingly used in contemporary circumstances to express disapproval when one cannot find anything else wrong. [...] Have we come so far in the lowest-common-denominator approach to schooling that a successful programme which would be the envy of many countries, and is a going concern for thousands of Canadian students, should cause serious misgivings because it is apparently not everyone's cup of tea?

(Yalden, 1982, p. 49)

Interpreting data on attrition in immersion programs is a complex task. It would be a mistake to draw conclusions about who is withdrawing and for what reason by simply examining overall total enrolment. It may well be, for example, that the children withdrawing from early immersion programs in District 2 and elsewhere are doing so for entirely different reasons and that the remaining students still form a fairly heterogeneous group. Only an analysis of the particular group of students would provide the answers needed to make firm conclusions.

### ***Attrition at the High School Level***

Numerous sources indicated that attrition from immersion programs at the high school level had reached critical levels and that a school's continuing ability to offer courses in French for immersion would be seriously compromised by further attrition. In one district, the superintendent reported that only 10% of students who start the early immersion program continue at the high school level. In some schools, the attrition rate varies according to which immersion program the student began his/her studies in; one school reported that late immersion students withdraw with three times more frequency than early immersion students. One superintendent noted that attrition was "not a problem" in his district although a closer examination of the statistics from his district over a two year period revealed that between grade 10 and 11, 20 of 81 (24.7%) early immersion students withdrew from the program while 17 of 45 (37.7%) late immersion students withdrew between grade 9 and 10 (Source - Dept. of Education, French Immersion Statistics, 1991-92, 1992-93). The differences in views regarding what constitutes a "problem" may be due to a variety of factors not the least of which is how attrition is defined (Halsall, 1994; Lapkin & Hart, personal communication). The enrolment statistics available in New Brunswick

track aggregate numbers and can only reveal what Lapkin and Hart refer to as “quasi-attrition” which is the net result of simple comparisons of enrolments in succeeding grades. The term “attrition” should not be applied where there is not a fixed population base. A true reading on attrition would track a particular cohort of students longitudinally.

Attrition from FSL programs (both core French and immersion) is not a new phenomenon and has been the object of a great deal of research over the years (see, for example, Heffernan, 1981; Ullmann, Geva & Mackay, 1985; Lapkin & Hart, personal communication; Massey, 1994; Halsall, 1994). Although New Brunswick has not conducted research on attrition in this province, it might be surmised that findings elsewhere would have some transferability here. The research examined for this review revealed that students withdraw from immersion programs at the secondary level for one or more of the following reasons:

- courses not interesting enough to justify the extra work;
- the need for extra time for other courses;
- perception that better grades would be obtained in courses taught in English and therefore chances for university entrance and scholarships would be enhanced;
- lack of opportunities outside of school to practise oral skills;
- boredom;
- satisfaction with present level of French competence;
- dissatisfaction with quality of instruction;
- dissatisfaction with location of immersion programs;
- immersion doesn't accommodate those with special needs (gifted and learning disabled);
- varying degrees of commitment on the part of students, parents, boards;
- limited choice of courses.

I heard many of these reasons cited during consultations associated with this review. One member of the reference committee noted that many, if not most, students feel that they have attained a high enough level of proficiency for their needs by the end of grade 9. The notion of a lack of choice in courses was also thought to be problematic. In most high schools, students have the option of taking a French language course plus a

history course. In a few high schools, electives such as law are available. However there is only one high school in the province which offers a wide range of courses in French (eleven in total including mathematics). It may well be that there is an underlying, subtle message being communicated to students that English is the language of "important" subjects:

...if mathematics and science, technology and computers are taught in the English language, will the hidden message be that English is of more value for scientific communication, for industrial and scientific vocations? [...] If the [...] second language is used for humanities, social studies, sport and art, is the hidden message that [second] languages are only of value in such human and aesthetic pursuits? The choice of language medium for particular subjects may relegate or promote both the functions and the status of [second] language. (Baker, 1993, p. 228)

Whether or not students would register in, for example, a science course if it were offered can only be speculated. If indeed students' attitudes are affected in the way noted above, simply offering the course in French might not attract students. And if, as many people indicated, students are "bored" with immersion and dissatisfied with the quality of instruction, then it is these issues which bear closer scrutiny.

### ***Learning Environments***

Definitions of what constitutes a "good" learning environment, or indeed what the relevant component parts are, in a school setting are difficult to pin down (Allwright, 1991). A study conducted in New Brunswick in 1988 compared the learning environments of immersion and non-immersion classes from the points of view of students and teachers (Edwards & Rehorick, 1990). One of the more significant findings suggest that "grades 7 and 9 immersion and non-immersion classes in New Brunswick are very traditional in approach and that classes are generally teacher-centred. Such accepted non-teacher-centred techniques as peer tutoring, cooperative learning groups, progressive management techniques and various other desirable classroom characteristics are not evident in either the immersion or non-immersion classes." (p. 490)

Teaching style is one of the issues that was brought up repeatedly by those consulted during the study. Comments such as “very traditional”, “not innovative”, “too many mimeographed sheets”, “too much emphasis on grammar with little opportunity to use the grammar in real use” were typical of people assessing immersion classes. Teaching style definitely makes a difference to the results achieved by students; research conducted in this area will be discussed later in the report. This review did not set out to investigate teaching style; however there were enough comments made on this very important point that it might be useful to examine the profiles of FSL teachers in New Brunswick and conduct a study of teaching styles in FSL classes in New Brunswick.

### ***Teachers***

Six districts provided analyses of their teaching personnel for the study. My original interest was to determine to what degree the level of French language competence was adequate, since this had for so long been a point of contention in the past. In addition, I was curious to know whether teachers had received either preservice or inservice training in second language acquisition and methodologies and if there had been follow-up evaluations of this training. The delivery mode of the inservice training was also an area of discussion.

It is worthy of note that the problem of finding teachers with a high enough level of French (a problem so critical in the not-so-distant past) has largely been overcome. Coordinators report that there are still some isolated cases of unqualified core French teachers - probably between seven and 10 percent. However, recruitment of teachers competent in French seems to be much less a problem now than it was seven or eight years ago. This matches a national trend (Obadia & Martin, 1993). The reasons for the improved situation is a stabilization of the immersion population, less turnover of teaching staff, successful retraining efforts on the part of school districts and the availability of an increased number of qualified graduates from universities. While we should feel heartened by this happy turn of events, we should not take it for granted. Diligence is still warranted in maintaining high levels of French competence and in assisting less qualified teachers in reaching their proficiency goals. When core French is taught by the homeroom



teacher in the elementary school, care should be taken to ensure that the teacher is qualified in every way.

This encouraging situation is somewhat tempered however by the finding that, although the level of French among teachers has improved, a corresponding improvement in qualifications in second language teaching has not. Approximately half of the teachers are trained in teaching in a first language setting (French) only. Some, of course, have taken inservice courses in second language didactics but an alarming number have never taken any of these courses at all. I must caution the reader that statistics on this question were not available for all FSL teachers; nonetheless the following data from one district should not be ignored: Of 215 FSL teachers for whom I had information, 79 had never taken any courses or workshops in FSL acquisition or methods. It cannot be surprising, then, that some teachers might be using teaching strategies and learning activities which are more appropriate for a first language setting, or which date back to their preservice education and internship experience.

I found little evidence of delivery modes for inservice programs which differed from traditional workshops. Creative alternatives, such as distance education and self-directed learning projects, need to be explored (see Burge & Roberts, 1993 and Rowntree, 1992 for some excellent suggestions). In addition, participation in ongoing professional development seems to be largely voluntary; consequently those who really need assistance are not always those who choose to participate. Some consideration needs to be given to incentives for participating in professional development activities. Finally, there is little or no follow-up to assist teachers with transferring the training to the classroom. Without a planned approach to this very important aspect of professional development, corresponding evaluations of effectiveness of training interventions and assessment of the value of expending resources on training cannot be done. Without answers to these important issues it will be difficult to justify ongoing expenditures in this area.

In addition, thoughts about what constitutes "language development" for the purposes of assessment of students would likely be very different in teachers who are "knowledgeable about the nature of language, language proficiency (especially for

academic purposes), second language development and strategies for teaching through a second language” (Genesee, 1993, p.52). Those who do not possess this knowledge may fall into the trap of one high school teacher consulted during this study who compared the competence of late immersion students with that of early immersion students by giving a *dictée* (an assessment strategy used frequently in French first language classrooms). She noted that one of the early immersion students scored 95% while one of the late immersion students scored -25%. Quite apart from the negative effect on the classroom atmosphere of telling a student that he is worth -25%, one must wonder at the underlying notions that this teacher has about what constitutes language development for a second language learner. *Dictées* can be used in a second language class to assess the deeper-level understanding of students but it is much more frequently used as an inappropriate check on surface features of the language.

Teachers who are trained as subject matter specialists in a first language environment may be particularly prone to treating the immersion classes as content classes only. Research into the pedagogical beliefs and practices of immersion teachers has demonstrated that “immersion teachers believe discipline to be their top priority, with content learning second, and second language attainment third” (Salomone, 1992, p. 40). The reasons for understanding the inextricable link between content and language learning will be discussed in the next section of this report. Suffice it to say for now that a paradigm shift about second language development should be a goal of future teacher development programs.

### ***The Isolation of FSL***

There was a vague feeling of isolation expressed by some of the people who participated in this study. Teachers of both core French and immersion reported feeling “left out” of planning issues and of events happening at the school and district level. Core French teachers, who have the highest burn-out rate of all teachers (especially at the junior high school level) according to the counselling services of the NBTA, often have to travel between two schools. One itinerant teacher covering both an elementary and junior high school painted a very bleak portrait indeed of her teaching life: no permanent classroom,

having to claim a storage room for her own personal space, lugging materials around with her, no sense of belonging to a particular school long enough to establish a collegial relationship with peers, being perceived as part-time or auxiliary teachers, eating lunch in the car, energy drain through rushing all the time and lack of cooperation from other teachers in the schools. This picture may in fact represent the lot of all itinerant specialists but it is no less excusable because of this fact.

Immersion teachers feel that they are often treated differently by principals who seem to wish to leave the supervision of French teachers to the district coordinators. Sometimes innovations are implemented only in the regular stream because both principals and immersion teachers are of the opinion that it cannot be done in immersion. "It is always slower to get things going in immersion," one coordinator said. Why this is the case is probably due to two factors: first, principals often feel they lack the skills and French knowledge to intervene in immersion classrooms; and second, immersion teachers (perhaps because of the lack of second language training mentioned above) may give the impression that certain innovations just can't be done in immersion settings. This attitude only serves to isolate immersion teachers further, thus removing them one more measure from innovations which are going on elsewhere in the curriculum. As Gilbert Jarvis says in his article "Re: Vision": "We often pride ourselves in being different from other disciplines, and we exempt ourselves from educational reform movements based on that uniqueness" (1993, p. 68).

Coordinators and supervisors also reported feeling excluded from many aspects of program planning within their districts. One coordinator pointed out that she was treated as the "immersion coordinator" as if "immersion" were a subject area rather than the vehicle of study that it is. As a result, the coordinators are often not invited to district meetings of subject or program areas (e.g. science, social studies, elementary). The notion of "immersion as subject matter" is fairly widespread. While it can be said that French is a subject matter, immersion definitely is not. Immersion is an **approach** to learning subject matter through a second language. The prevalence of this paradigm probably accounts for the coordinators' feeling so "stretched" at the moment: they cover not only the subject area of French but also all the subject areas and programs taught in French.

The coordinators also spend time in administration and in carrying out supervisory responsibilities which normally fall to the school principal. Most coordinators carry a fairly substantial teaching load in addition to their other duties. They have concentrated heavily in the past years on delivering inservice programs to their teachers in line with the Department's Strategic Plan of 1989. This leaves precious little time for working in the classrooms with teachers and on conducting follow-up assessments of training programs to ensure that transfer of training to the classroom occurs.

### ***Evaluation Processes***

New Brunswick is, in many ways, in the avant-garde with respect to evaluation in FSL. The tradition of the oral proficiency interview (OPI) is well established and has been widely recognized to have had a positive washback effect on classroom teaching. The OPI has provided a common vocabulary among educators, students and employers which serves a very useful purpose indeed. Current efforts to monitor and improve upon the OPI (*Education 2000*, 1993, p. 29) are laudable. A relatively easy transition to an outcome-based evaluation system which is being recommended by the Department of Education in all areas (*Education 2000*, 1993) can be foreseen since the theoretical construct of proficiency testing is not unlike that of outcome-based evaluation.

The OPI is not a reliable instrument for either predicting the eventual attainment of a particular student, for predicting the results of a particular program route, or for comparing the results of one program to another. The reasons for this lie, not so much with the instrument itself, as in the nature of individual differences in language learning and in the enrolment patterns of New Brunswick students. One might be cheered, for example, by the apparent improved results of core French students over the last three years of OPI testing (Appendix D) and correspondingly dismayed by the apparent decline in the results of early immersion students. A close examination of the enrolment patterns in these years reveals that the students who withdraw from early immersion programs in high school are in fact those students who are tested in the core French program; their OPI results are reported under core French and thus it is not surprising to see an upward trend in core French results.

I must sound another cautionary note with regard to generalizing results from the OPI. One district superintendent noted in a report to his school board trustees that the core French students in the district achieved substantially higher results than the provincial norms (School District 15, 1993, p.6). It is not clear from the report, however, what the linguistic profile of these students is outside of class. Because French native speakers can be schooled in English in the anglophone school system, and because many of the students tested at the advanced level in the core French program would seem to be from francophone families (Rehorick, 1991, p. 92-93), one needs to use a healthy measure of judiciousness in interpreting the implications of the District 15 report.

The province has recently adopted the *Maritime Oral Communication Assessment Portfolio (MOCAP)* as a classroom-based FSL assessment tool for teachers in grades 6 and 9 (Dicks & Rehorick, 1992). MOCAP is innovative in many ways: It is organized thematically so that the testing techniques are contextualized; it incorporates a multi-faceted model of communicative competence; and it assesses student to student interaction, a feature which is expected to have positive washback on classroom practice. The Department is exploring ways to use MOCAP-like techniques for standardized testing; the advantage of this approach will be that teachers and students will be familiar with the performance-based approach of the techniques and thus the test will be “biased for best” (Swain, 1984) performance.

Assessment of language proficiency is a complex issue. We have seen an example above of a teacher who is using an inappropriate tool, the *dictée*, for making conclusive comparisons between two immersion programs. The tendency is frequently to leap from concrete surface data (e.g. “parler” instead of “parlé”) to abstractions about competence (“students can’t spell”). Oversimplification of interpreting language performance data is probably the most common deficiency in testing. Teachers often express their need to know more about evaluation and I would encourage the Department of Education and school districts to increase training in this important area.

## VI. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING?

### *An Analogy*

A parent of a young child interested in the sport of figure skating recently approached a figure skating judge with the following question: "If I buy skates, hire a coach to give my child five lessons a week, register her for 15 hours of skating a week and send her to spring and summer school, will she pass her gold medal test after 12 years of skating?" Not wanting to set up unrealistic expectations in the parent, the judge replied: "Those things certainly represent necessary components before your child can pass her gold test. However there are no guarantees. There are other kinds of variables such as her motivation, the qualifications and training of the coach, the environment and her exposure to other skaters as role models, the way in which she uses her ice time, the quality of the skates and so forth which contribute to the eventual success of your child. She might indeed attain her gold medal and she might do it in less than 12 years; she might attain her silver or bronze medal. But whatever the level of her eventual attainment, she will be able to skate fairly competently and will have benefited by her involvement in the sport."

The above scenario is not unlike the situation facing parents making choices for their children's second language schooling. It would be very comforting to be able to say to parents that their child will achieve the "gold medal" level of bilingualism at the end of a specified number of years of schooling. However there are many variables peculiar to each child and peculiar to the system as a whole which enter into the question of expectations for eventual attainment of French proficiency. As one coordinator said: "All immersion programs can be effective. That is not to say that all programs produce the same results." We are reminded of the expressed need to clarify the expectations of the FSL programs and to clarify the variables that are intertwined with any one individual's attempt to learn a second language.

It would be reassuring to be able to say that there is one tried and true formula for achieving success in second language learning. While it is true that there are a number of

necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for achieving language proficiency, there are nonetheless some paradigms about second language learning which are commonly held by many people and, if left unchallenged, could impede necessary changes to FSL education in this province. I do not intend to summarize all the research pertaining to second language learning and particularly of the comparisons of different program routes; excellent summaries are easily available elsewhere (see for example, Jones & Mazerolle, 1993 and Rebuffot, 1993).

### ***Some Paradigms about Second Language Learning***

#### **Optimal Age**

Probably the most common paradigm is that “younger is better”, that the young child learns far more easily than the older learner. There have been numerous studies into the question of optimal age (see Ellis, 1986, Rehorick, 1983 and Cook, 1991 for summaries of this research) with very little conclusive evidence to support one starting age over another. Very often the lay person’s notion that “younger is better” is shaped by direct observation of children in naturalistic settings. “Of course, younger is better,” one mother told me. “We lived in a French area and within weeks my four year old daughter was speaking French with her French playmates next door.” It is true that in naturalistic settings (that is, not the classroom) young children outpace the older learner. The younger learner tends to have the advantage in the realm of social-psychological factors; hence the observation that they are linguistic risk-takers while the older learner tends to be more inhibited. In addition, young learners appear to have a less rigid social identity as members of a specific language and culture group. Consequently young children may be less prejudiced and more open to other languages and to difference in general. In classroom settings, however, the stronger cognitive abilities of the older learner to generalize, to analyse and to reason are superior to the younger learner. This means that when teachers want to point out different aspects of the language in an analytical way, the older learner is more likely to respond favourably to this information. Giving feedback to the younger learner is usually most successful when dealing with the overall communication of the message and the younger learner responds most effectively to experiential learning.

The strong attachment on the part of many parents to the early immersion program may be due in part to this belief in the advantages of the younger learner. However, these parents also have another compelling concern with regard to the possible loss of early immersion: conscious of the high attrition rate from immersion programs at the secondary level and, in the absence of concrete evidence that secondary programs will improve, parents fear a further erosion of opportunities for their child to learn French. Stronger high school programs may compensate for this.

### **The Case of Kindergarten**

Suitability of the immersion environment for the early childhood learner is a hotly debated issue in New Brunswick. With English kindergarten only recently becoming a reality, many people associated with its implementation do not welcome the possibility of French immersion kindergartens. Three questions seem to be at issue: 1) Will first language development suffer in the immersion setting? 2) Can the immersion kindergarten follow the same philosophy as the English kindergarten, which is to say language-rich, play-based experiences characterized by exploration, negotiation and collaboration? and 3) Are there teachers qualified not only by their command of French language but, more importantly, by virtue of their knowledge and expertise in early childhood education? (Leavitt, 1993 and School District 15, 1993)

There has been extensive ethnographic research conducted in French immersion kindergartens in Edmonton (Weber & Tardif, 1991 & 1992, Tardif, 1994). Weber and Tardif's observational work was guided by these questions: "What is the child's experience? What is the content and nature of classroom interaction? How does the child make sense of her/his experience? What does what is going on mean to the child?" (Weber & Tardif, 1991, p.95) They noted that their data analysis revealed three layers or categories of culture that seem important to understanding immersion kindergartens: 1) the culture of childhood; 2) the culture of schooling; and 3) the culture of French immersion teaching. They make three important conclusions:

Like most kindergarten contexts, immersion and otherwise, the classrooms we observed included structured circle time, play centres,



dress up corners, fine motor tasks, art activities, logic games, problem solving situations, music, and movement activities. These activities provide opportunities for children to explore, to initiate, to act on their environment, and to develop through concrete experiences.

... our observations of English kindergartens (which were similar in many respects to the immersion kindergartens) lead us to hypothesize that, in many important ways, immersion kindergartens are not very different from other classrooms.

Although the fact that the teacher speaking a language that the children cannot understand would seem a priori to be a major source of frustration and difficulty, contrary to our expectations, the second language element seemed to play only a minor, albeit significant, role in classroom communication. [...] Meaning is continually being interpreted and negotiated within the social context of the classroom: between individual children and the teacher, between small groups of children, and among the larger group.  
(Weber & Tardif, 1991, 104-5)

Weber & Tardif's research does not explore the issue of first language development. However, there have been numerous investigations since the inception of immersion programs about the effects on mother tongue development. Early total immersion students experience a lag in literacy-based language skills but this lag is temporary. Within one year after the introduction of English language arts instruction, they usually "reach parity with control students in all-English programs" (Genesee, 1987, p.43). Moreover, there appears to be a general consensus among researchers that

the presence of more than one language code in the neurocognitive system of children makes them generally more aware of language form and of how it allows them to interact with the world. [...] The bilingual learner has access, therefore, to more than one way of processing information, and this cannot help but diversify and enhance the child's overall cognitive capacities. (Danesi, 1993, p.8-9).

The picture painted of the young child schooled in an early immersion setting is one of an "effective and flexible" (Danesi, 1993, p.7) learner who handles ambiguity with ease.

Nor is there any longterm disadvantage to the early French immersion student. Research recently conducted at the University of Ottawa examined the question of "... whether or not disruption in development of the mother tongue that must result in any

intensive second-language program taken between the ages of five and 10 inhibits the growth of psycholinguistic skills requisite for the use of language in complex thinking in adulthood" (Neufeld, 1993, p.9). On all measures except one, the immersion students showed no difference from the English-only control group. However, the immersion students scored significantly higher on the measure of figurative and metaphoric use of English prompting Neufeld to speculate about "...the positive indication of the linguistic and cognitive benefits of learning another language early in school"(p.10).

Regarding the question of whether there are enough qualified teachers for the kindergarten level, it is important to note that Weber and Tardif point out that "we are not asserting that all French immersion teachers share exactly the same culture of teaching. [...] Teaching cultures may, in fact, be vastly different according to factors such as age, experience, teaching philosophy, gender, social class, school norms, location, subject matter and grade level. The first and second language history and ethnic identity of the teacher may also be important factors." (p. 107)

While it would seem from Weber and Tardif's research (see also Freeman and Freeman, 1992) that children can experience high quality learning experiences in immersion kindergartens, and from the research on first language development that first language development is not hindered, it is also true that there may not be enough well-qualified early childhood teachers in New Brunswick to staff the program. I share Leavitt's view that immersion kindergarten should not be introduced "without careful planning and preparation and a period of time to try out a number of approaches in a few field sites" (1993, p.3).

### **Instructional Time**

Closely tied to the question of optimal age is the issue of quantity of instructional time in French. Most people consulted seem to feel that "more time is better". They point to the higher results achieved by early immersion students on the oral proficiency interviews (see Appendix D) as proof. Research comparing early and late immersion programs has generally shown that the early immersion students outperform the late

immersion students in oral production, oral comprehension and written comprehension (Rebuffot, 1993, p.110).

However, these research results have not been consistent and Genesee, in particular, has pointed out that "there is no simple or consistent relationship between amount of time in immersion and achievement" (1991, p.193). As important as the amount of instructional time is how the time is actually spent. Students in immersion classes are given very little opportunity to engage in active, meaningful discourse (Genesee, 1991, p.190). Increased attention to teaching strategies might improve this situation (Netten, 1991). A useful way to describe the amount of instructional time necessary for effective language learning might be "enough time over time". Thus, in immersion programs, anything less than 50% of instructional time in a given academic year would be unproductive. In the first few years of an immersion program, a much higher percentage of time will produce better results. If the percentage of time drops to below 50% during the later years of an immersion program, then the program should not carry the immersion designation (see Recommendation A3). In addition to the intensity of instructional time, the *extensivity* of this time is equally important. Thus a Grade 7 student who begins an immersion program with 50-60% of instructional time in French and who continues for three years will not achieve as high a competency level as one who continues over a period of six years.

### **Teaching Strategies**

The dichotomy between experiential and analytical learning has been the focus of recent research into teaching strategies in French immersion classrooms (Lyster, 1990, 1994 and Dicks, 1992). This research has arisen partly out of questions dealing with the characteristics of the speech of immersion students. Lyster (1987) found the high proportion of fossilized errors in the speech of early immersion students at the secondary level to be more than a little disconcerting. He noted that teachers paid little attention to the form of their students' speech but rather attended more to the message expressed. This is true particularly at the primary level where teachers don't like to interfere with the efforts at communication of their students. He speculated that, by introducing

contextualized, targeted “negotiations of form” within language arts and content lessons that students would learn to communicate more correctly. His in-class interventions with teachers at the junior high level have shown that students can indeed learn to improve certain aspects of their linguistic competence with analysis of the forms and functions of language within meaningful contexts followed by opportunities for practice. It is worthy of note that Lyster’s research is with older learners. The degree to which pupils at the primary level could respond as well to the analytical interventions is a question that has yet to be answered.

Observational research conducted in classrooms in Newfoundland has shown similar results. Conclusions of a study of three classrooms (Netten & Spain, 1989) point to firm linkages between classroom processes (teaching strategies) and achievement in French immersion classrooms. The findings tell us that in the classroom with a lot of lecture and drill type activities with a great deal of teacher-talk, lower achievement of students was reported than might have been expected, given the profile of the students; the classroom with high priority placed on the affective development of students produced better results than the first type and results more in line with the profile of the students; and the classroom in which the teacher gave high priority to learning the content matter as well as the language achieved the best results relative to the student profiles. Netten and Spain conclude that “despite a common curriculum, teachers organize and instruct their classes differently, and these differences are significant with respect to the learning outcomes for pupils” (p. 153).

As mentioned earlier in the report, immersion classes have often been the target of criticism from those who see the teaching strategies as too teacher-centred and traditional. Observational research of immersion classes, identified as excellent examples of child-centred classes, have shown that these classes can be just as child-centred as regular classes if the appropriate teaching strategies are used (Halsall & Wall, 1992).

Increasingly, researchers are looking inside the classroom for answers about how students learn the second language. In New Brunswick, educators interested in defining required outcomes for programs would do well to turn their attention to what is actually happening behind the classroom doors.

## **Language and Content**

When immersion was first introduced in the late sixties, it was thought that the second language would be learned by virtue of the content being learned. In the intervening years since its inception, immersion has been researched and studied more than any other educational innovation. While the integration of content and language instruction remains a fundamental feature of immersion, we now know that “it is not merely the integration of content and language instruction that is important, but rather how they are integrated.” (Genesee, 1991, p. 188) A belief that was prevalent until only recently, was that “comprehensible input” was all that was necessary for a competent speaker of the second language to emerge (Krashen, 1985).

We now know that, just as listening to piano music cannot make one a piano player, receiving comprehensible input is not enough and does not produce, on its own, competent speakers. Comprehensible output and analytic feedback on that output are the other parts of the equation (Swain, 1985, 1993). The implication for second language learning is that teachers need to know how to structure collaborative activities in their classrooms; this kind of group activity has been shown to increase opportunities for extended discourse and negotiation of meaning (Lyster, 1994).

The relationship between content and language is just as true for the core French classroom as it is for the immersion environment (Handscombe, 1993). With increasing value being placed on integrating curricula and integrating language across curricula, it would seem to make good sense to ensure that the core French classes build on the curriculum being taught in the English classes. The integration of language and content “provides a substantive basis for language teaching and learning, in that content [...] provides cognitive hangers on which new language structures can be hung.” (Genesee, 1991, p. 186)

## **Linguistic Environment**

Because of the bilingual geography of this province, each district has its own particular make-up. In most communities where French is being taught as a second

language, English is the majority language. In a small number of communities, such as Grand Falls and Edmundston, English is the minority language. In this situation there is no doubt that the opportunities and motivation for using French outside the classroom would be greater than in the areas of Bathurst, Moncton, and Campbellton, where the ratio of English to French is approximately equal, or in Sussex, St. Stephen or Woodstock where English is the language of the majority. Linguistic proximity is no guarantee of second language usage outside the classroom and therefore a cautious approach to reducing contact in-class hours because of the linguistic environment should be taken. There is certainly no conclusive evidence available in New Brunswick or, for that matter in Canada, that linguistic proximity ensures better second language learning. In fact, one of the gurus of second language teaching, Wilga Rivers (Professor Emerita, Harvard University), confirmed to the principal investigator that some of the most effective second language teaching in the world is done by nonnative speakers in environments remote from the linguistic community in which the language is spoken.

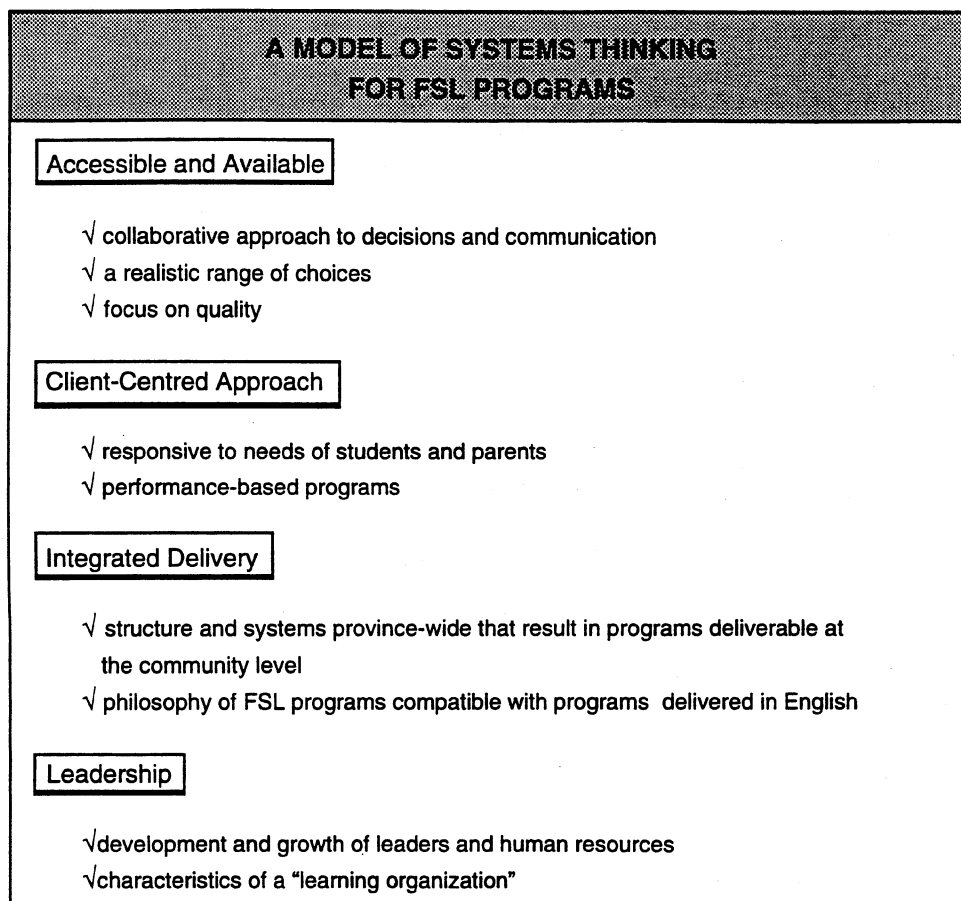
### ***Key Factors for Individual Success***

Key factors in individual success in second language learning are affected by the following variables:

- positive attitude and motivation;
- quality of the learning environment;
- willingness to seek opportunities both in and out of class to use the language;
- quality of the curriculum and materials (both school materials and home materials);
- intensity and frequency of time spent in learning the second language.

## VII. SHIFTING THE PARADIGMS: STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

The challenge of creating environments conducive to the paradigm shifts which will be necessary to improve FSL learning in New Brunswick is substantial. We should, in the first instance, not fall prey to the kind of linear thinking which can predominate in organizations. The complexity and inter-relationships of the numerous components of the educational system do not lend themselves readily to quick-fix solutions. What I am proposing here may well form the basis of a long-term plan in which some priorities will take precedence over others. To the overall question of whether high-quality FSL programs can be balanced with the many competing needs within the system, the answer is a qualified yes. However as Senge points out, "you can have your cake and eat it too — but not at once" (1993, p. 135). The recommendations presented on the next few pages might be best understood within this framework:



## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are presented under the terms of reference for the study.

### ***A. Guidelines which define minimum requirements with regard to French second language programs which all school districts must meet.***

#### **1. That there be two entry points for French immersion programs: an early entry at either kindergarten or grade 1 and an intermediate entry at either grade 5 or grade 6.**

There are several reasons why these two entry points make sense in light of the expectations and the current situation outlined in this study. Two entry points will:

- streamline the development of curriculum and materials so that the resources are used most effectively;
- give a choice of programs to districts, parents and students;
- allow for the implementation of the middle school concept to coincide with the intermediate entry point;
- ensure uniformity across districts;
- allow for mobility from one district to another.

It is clear from this study that there is a need for consistent as well as manageable and predictable programs. No single entry point can be deemed to be "best" given the variables identified during this review process. Two entry points should meet the needs of all stakeholders concerned and provide satisfactory levels of achievement.

In implementing the intermediate option, districts should take care to ensure that steps be taken to avoid a high attrition rate after grade 9. If instructional time is reduced in



the early years and the high school years, an individual student's opportunity for achieving a satisfactory level of French competence is substantially reduced.

Because of the unanswered questions concerning teacher supply with regard to kindergarten, pilot projects should be continued to allow for careful, unhurried planning.

**2. That all districts conduct a study of the needs of their particular communities as well as their resources before making major decisions relative to immersion programs.**

Since the amalgamation of school districts two years ago, it has become clear that treating the new districts as if they were a homogeneous entity can be hazardous at best and foolhardy at worst. Districts need to define carefully what the different communities within the new district lines are like and determine to what extent the characteristics of these communities differ. Without such attention to needs, districts can expect a continuation of the balkanization battles which have been waged in recent months. It is important to remember that there exists a clear policy at the Department of Education that immersion will be offered where sufficient demand exists.

Districts should notify the Department of Education when the district(s) is considering changes to immersion programs. A comprehensive plan for consultation with parents should accompany this initial notification. Following consultations with parents, the district should submit a report to the Department of Education which outlines the results of the consultations and the proposed recommendation(s). In this way, the Department of Education will be able to monitor the consistency of the programs province-wide.

**3. That an immersion program be defined as one in which students receive no less than 50% of their instruction in French in any given year, and that programs with any less exposure not carry the immersion designation.**

This represents an absolute minimum percentage of time for instruction in French. Districts are encouraged to provide 60-90% of instruction in French especially in the first four years of the program whether early or intermediate. Higher outcomes can be

expected with higher proportions of instructional time in French. If high schools are unable to ensure the 50% exposure time, then the programs should not be designated "immersion". Expectations for achievement would necessarily have to be revised downwards. Students who wish to increase their level of competence should take advantage of extra class opportunities to use their French (e.g. listening to French radio and television, reading French magazines, attending summer camps, etc.).

**4. That the time allotted to core French programs remain as currently prescribed and that core French curriculum contain a minimum of 40% content related to the regular curriculum.**

Given the increased learning expected when content is integrated with language (see Section VI), it makes sense for the core French curriculum to draw on the content of the curriculum in English. Core French classes should be given in French, whether or not the objectives are solely cultural or a combination of cultural and linguistic. Current efforts to improve core French programs through applying the principles of the *National Core French Study* should be continued.

**5. That the Department of Education and districts collaborate to develop an action plan for improving programs at the high school level through increased attention to improved teaching strategies, curricula and course offerings.**

Second language learning with young adults can be extremely effective with appropriate curriculum and teaching strategies. Attrition at the high school level will continue (see Section V) unless a plan is implemented for program improvement.

**6. That all FSL classes be taught by teachers qualified in terms of their own language level and their knowledge of second language acquisition and teaching strategies.**

A qualified FSL teacher is one whose level of competence in French is at least at the Advanced level (as measured by the oral proficiency interview) and who has

knowledge/training in second language acquisition and teaching strategies. Districts should keep an up-to-date skill inventory of all their FSL teachers. If a teacher is currently teaching in the FSL classroom and is not considered qualified, the district needs to outline a plan for upgrading and monitoring the teacher's skills. In the case of a new hire, an orientation/institute of a minimum of five days should be given to the teacher before the start of classes. In addition, an induction period of one year should be provided for the teacher to assist her/him with the transition to the classroom.

**7. That immersion and core French programs respect the integrative philosophy of education espoused by statements contained in *Education 2000*. This includes primary schooling and the concept of the middle school.**

This means that any planning for regular programs should include FSL personnel in order to ensure a compatible program. There needs to be caution, however, in assuming that there are no differences between mother tongue education and immersion education. The real dilemma for program and curriculum development for immersion has been that either immersion personnel has been simply excluded from the implementation process for innovations, or, it has been assumed that immersion is exactly parallel to the regular program and needs no extra attention when it comes to implementing new techniques.

**8. That school districts demonstrate that they are meeting the minimum requirements through an established annual reporting system to the Department of Education.**

There is a clear need for the Department of Education to have ongoing and specific information about how FSL programs are being delivered. This annual report would include such information as entry points for immersion, participation rate for immersion, instructional time, teacher qualifications and skill development, attrition rates and extra-class opportunities for students.

***B. Consultative processes for school districts that would lead to effective parental input with regard to French immersion programs in their community.***

**1. That a handbook for parents concerning second language education be prepared by the Department of Education with input from students, parents and districts, and be issued to all parents.**

The primary purpose for this booklet would be to clarify expectations for French second language learning (see Section IV). It would clearly outline the characteristics of the FSL programs and delineate, in realistic terms, the outcomes possible with the different programs. Parents become aware of the variables which have impact on the achievement levels of their children. The booklet would also describe the educational philosophy and teaching strategies which underlie the FSL programs. Ways for parents to have their voice heard concerning decisions regarding French immersion programs and effective ways for parents to participate in their children's second language education would also be outlined.

**2. That when a school district is facing major decisions concerning the FSL programs, it ensure that the voices of parents are considered in a balanced way.**

Since parents are not all comfortable with one single method of having their voices heard, a variety of methods will be used to collect parents' opinions including, but not restricted to, the following: family surveys, individual interviews, public forums, invitations for written submissions, and focus group sessions. The intention would be to avoid two common tendencies in public consultation: "the tyranny of the majority" which may not represent an informed view, or the situation of one voice being magnified through repeat reporting. Since the art and science of public consultation is not always a self-evident process, a training program for districts should be developed.

***C. Assessment models to monitor student progress and outcomes and evaluate teacher and program effectiveness.***

**1. That a set of performance-based outcomes be developed to describe the expectations for student competence at specified points in the FSL programs.**

The outcomes (or levels of performance) will be the driving principle of the curriculum design, teaching strategies and assessment models used. A computerized tracking system should be developed for classroom teachers to monitor their students' progress.

**2. That performance-based tests be implemented at the grade 6 and 9 levels to measure student progress.**

The focus on performance will enhance the outcomes-based orientation of the curriculum and have a positive washback on the classroom.

**3. That a set of standardized performance tests be administered at the high school level.**

There is clearly a need for students and their parents to have feedback on students' level of French language competence. In addition, districts and the Department of Education need to monitor the quality of programs on an ongoing basis. The tests should include oral communication, reading and writing components for both core French and French immersion and should be based on the performance outcomes of Recommendation C1 above. An attestation of competence should be awarded to students at the end of high school. Current efforts on the part of the Department of Education to explore alternative modes of testing should continue and be implemented as soon as possible.

**4. That the role of the coordinator/supervisor be re-examined and redefined.**

A role clarification and development of a competency profile for coordinators and supervisors should be undertaken by a small group of people which would include a facilitator, two coordinators/supervisors, a superintendent, a principal, a teacher, the consultant from the Department of Education and the Director of the Curriculum Branch. They would examine the changing role of the coordinator/supervisor and draw up a “blueprint” by which coordinators and supervisors can be guided. It is likely that the paradigm shift for coordinators/supervisors will involve redefining their role as human resource and organizational development professionals .

**5. That a priority be placed on providing principals with leadership training focusing on providing guidance and supervision to core French and immersion teachers.**

Collegiality within schools can only occur if everyone in the school is included. Principals need to play a much more active role in including the FSL and immersion teachers in the community of learners and leaders in their schools. An orientation program should be developed for principals with immersion in their schools. The Department of Education should prepare a manual for principals to assist them with the supervision of the FSL teachers.

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## Appendix A


# WORKPLAN AND SCHEDULE

PROJECT: FSL Policies/Guidelines Department of Education		DATE: November 24, 1993										Page 1 of 7		FSL DEC
WORKPLAN NO.	OBJECTIVES/TASKS	RESPONSIBILITY	09/20	09/27	10/04	10/11	10/18	10/25	11/01	11/08	11/15	11/22	11/29	COMMENTS/STATUS
1.	To recommend guidelines which define minimum requirements with regard to French second language programs which all districts must meet.													
1.1	Determine the characteristics of current programs offered by each board in New Brunswick with regard to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contact hours in each program</li> <li>• organizational responsibilities</li> </ul> (Who makes decisions? How are they made? How are they communicated?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessment procedures and results</li> <li>• curriculum followed</li> <li>• methodologies followed (method of determining if methodologies are adhered to)</li> <li>• methods of ensuring compliance in each school</li> <li>• reasons for not complying with recommended guidelines</li> <li>• perceptions vs. realities</li> </ul>	S. Rehorick B. James		X	X	X	X	X						Meeting with D. MacFarlane, Sept. 28. Set meetings with: Reference Committee (Oct. 8, Nov. 9)  Request for statistics from Dept of Education. Research concerning program definition examined (Rebuffot, Genesee, Calvé, Edwards). Reports submitted from most coordinators.
1.2	Conduct a force field analysis to determine constraints and opportunities peculiar to each board.	Rehorick			X	X	X	X	X					Prepared workbook based on Reference Committee meeting and meetings with coordinators/ supervisors. To be used as input document for Reference Committee's input and input from other stakeholders.

PROJECT: FSL Policies/Guidelines Department of Education		DATE: November 24, 1993										Page 2 of 7		
WORKPLAN NO.	OBJECTIVES/TASKS	RESPONSIBILITY	09/20	09/27	10/04	10/11	10/18	10/25	11/01	11/08	11/15	11/22	11/29	COMMENTS/STATUS
1.3	Determine the characteristics of current programs offered by sample of boards in other provinces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ottawa and Carlton Boards</li> <li>• Scarborough Board</li> <li>• Lakeshore Board (Montreal)</li> <li>• Winnipeg Boards (TBD)</li> <li>• Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows (B.C)</li> </ul>	S. Rehorick  V. Edwards	X	X	X	X	X	X						Meetings held with R. Lalonde and M. Shea, J. Daoust, O Little.
1.4	Review policies and guidelines of other provinces concerning program guidelines and standards.	S. Rehorick		X	X	X	X	X						Meetings held with N. Pynch-Worthylake, F. Lentz, D. Lussier, G. Painchaud, D. Pineau  Material obtained from Ontario, Québec, Manitoba, Nova Scotia.
1.5	Define currently held expectations of FSL programs from the points of view of students, employers, parents, superintendents, trustees, teachers, consultants, universities, coordinators/supervisors, principals, senior Department of Education officials.	S. Rehorick/ D. London/ D. LeBlanc		X	X	X	X	X						Focus group sessions held with teachers and students. Questionnaire distributed to principals.  LeBlanc study of 1985 immersion graduates (available June 1994). Meeting with Emery Goguen on November 3.



PROJECT: FSL Policies/Guidelines Department of Education			DATE: November 24, 1993										Page 3 of 7			
WORKPLAN NO.	OBJECTIVES/TASKS	RESPONSIBILITY	09/20	09/27	10/04	10/11	10/18	10/25	11/01	11/08	11/15	11/22	11/29	COMMENTS/STATUS		
1.6	Review research in the area of FSL program components. effectiveness and outcomes.	S. Rehorick	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					Ongoing		
1.7	Examine situation at secondary level with regard to curriculum, course offering, attrition/retention, teaching strategies.	S. Rehorick			X	X	X	X	X					Reference Committee meetings, coordinators' meeting. Research by Halsall, Hart, Lapkin, Lewis and Shapson obtained and reviewed.		
2.	To develop alternatives for consultative processes for school districts that would lead to effective parental input with regard to French immersion programs in their community.													Focus interviews held with 2 parents. Meeting with CPF representative on October 14 and telephone meeting with CPF president Oct. 28.		
2.1	Examine views of individual parents and already established parent groups.	S. Rehorick												Reference committee meeting, October 8. Meeting with Minister and Deputy Minister, Oct. 27.		
2.2	Survey other Departments of Education and school boards to determine how parental input is achieved.	S. Rehorick/ V. Edwards	X	X	X	X	X							Telephone meeting with S. Lynch, Sept. 24. Meetings held with R. Lalonde and M. Shea, Sept. 23. Materials/studies obtained from Niagara South Board of Education and Ontario Ministry of Education and Training.		
2.3	Assess value of obtaining students' opinions.	S. Rehorick/ Reference Committee			X									Reference committee meeting, Oct. 8. Focus group sessions held with high school students October 19. Focus interviews with principals and parents held.		
2.4	Assess impact of increased and/or changed parental input on issues of school governance.	S. Rehorick/ Reference Committee						X								

PROJECT: FSL Policies/Guidelines Department of Education			DATE: November 24, 1993										Page 4 of 7		
WORKPLAN NO.	OBJECTIVES/TASKS	RESPONSIBILITY	09/20	09/27	10/04	10/11	10/18	10/25	11/01	11/08	11/15	11/22	11/29	COMMENTS/STATUS	
2.5	Review methods of and research on public consultation processes.	S. Rehorick			X	X	X	X						Meeting with S. Turner, October 4.	
3.	To recommend assessment models to monitor student progress and outcomes and evaluate teacher and program effectiveness.														
3.1	Examine profile of current teachers of FSL in New Brunswick . Profile to include the following components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• French language level (How is it defined by boards? How is it determined? How often are boards unable to meet their hiring goals?)</li><li>• attrition rates and trends (particularly of core teachers) and factors affecting attrition.</li><li>• qualifications (preservice) other than language level (Where are they trained? What kind of program have they taken? Does the program include any component on second language learning and teaching? Do districts conduct any induction or orientation for teachers entering FSL or immersion classroom for the first time?)</li></ul>	S. Rehorick/ B. James  Coordinators - MacFarlane/Rice  LeBlanc		X	X	X	X	X	X	X				Rehorick to request statistics on teachers from Dept of Education (B. James)  Meeting with coordinators held on for October 20 & 21. Requested specific data from coordinators. Several reports received.  Focus interviews with teachers September 26.  Examine B. Ed. program from University of Moncton. (Preliminary information from R. Rice is that development of FSL courses is being undertaken by Saint Onge).	

PROJECT: FSL Policies/Guidelines Department of Education		DATE: November 24, 1993										Page 5 of 7		FSL DEC
WORKPLAN NO.	OBJECTIVES/TASKS	RESPONSIBILITY	09/20	09/27	10/04	10/11	10/18	10/25	11/01	11/08	11/15	11/22	11/29	COMMENTS/STATUS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>nature of ongoing inservice (How are needs assessments conducted? What evaluation and/or followup is conducted? Is inservice optional? Are there any incentives for attendance? Are there optional ways of accessing inservice such as self-directed learning and/or distance education? Are there any incentives for implementing ideas from inservice in the classroom?)</li> <li>assignment to classroom (Who assigns teachers? What are decisions based on? How much does content knowledge, e.g. science, play a role in assignment? )</li> <li>teacher effectiveness ( How is teacher effectiveness assessed? Is assessment for FSL / immersion teachers done differently than for other teachers? Who carries primary responsibility for determining effectiveness? Are there any inclass observations of teacher style?)</li> </ul>													Reference Committee meeting, Oct. 8. Coordinators' meeting Oct. 20, 21. Research material reviewed: Netten and Spain, Lyster, Genesee, Swain, Senge, Martin and Obadia.
3.2	Examine methods used by boards outside of New Brunswick for determining the above (i.e. 3.1).	V. Edwards/ S. Rehorick	X	X	X	X								Meetings held with R. Lalonde, M. Shea, J. Daoust, O. Little.
3.3	Examine policies on teacher qualifications and effectiveness of other Departments of Education.	S. Rehorick	X	X	X	X								Meetings held with N. Pynch-Worthylake, F. Lentz, D. Lussier, G. Painchaud.

PROJECT: FSL Policies/Guidelines Department of Education		DATE: November 24, 1993										Page 6 of 7		FSL DEG
WORKPLAN NO.	OBJECTIVES/TASKS	RESPONSIBILITY	09/20	09/27	10/04	10/11	10/18	10/25	11/01	11/08	11/15	11/22	11/29	COMMENTS/STATUS
3.4	Review current methods of assessing student progress in New Brunswick boards (At what grade level are students assessed? How is assessment conducted? What training do teachers have in second language assessment methods? How and to whom are results reported? )	S. Rehorick			X	X	X	X						Reference Committee meeting, Oct. 8. Information from C. Grobe and coordinators.
3.5	Define the parameters for student and program evaluation (What needs to be evaluated? Who needs the information? What constitutes a workable definition of "standards"? What does "accountability" mean for FSL and does the need for accountability extend to implementing a required school exit standard for each student?)	S. Rehorick/ Reference Committee			X	X	X	X	X	X				Reference Committee meeting, Oct. 8. Coordinators input obtained. Reviewed draft of <i>Education 2000</i> .
3.6	Examine trends in student and program evaluation through surveying other Departments of Education and boards outside New Brunswick.	S. Rehorick/ V. Edwards		X	X	X	X	X	X					Meetings held with Ottawa Board, Scarborough Board, Nova Scotia Dept. of Education, Manitoba Dept. of Education, Québec Ministry of Education. Research reviewed: Manitoba Follow-up study of FI students; Wesche; Massey; Dicks and Rehorick. Reviewed outcomes-based document from Ontario Ministry.
3.7	Review research in student and program evaluation.	S. Rehorick		X	X	X	X	X	X					Several assessment methods reviewed.
3.8	Determine to what extent work currently underway in the Evaluation Branch will meet the needs outlined in 3.4.	S. Rehorick/ C. Grobe					X	X	X					Telephone conversation with C. Grobe, Oct. 6. Examined reports on OPI, on Québec system of evaluation.

DATE: November 24, 1993

PROJECT: FSL Policies/Guidelines  
Department of Education

WORKPLAN NO.	OBJECTIVES/TASKS	RESPONSIBILITY	09/20	09/27	10/04	10/11	10/18	10/25	11/01	11/08	11/15	11/22	11/29	COMMENTS/STATUS
4.0	To establish a communication strategy for keeping key and secondary interlocks involved in and informed of the status of the FSL review.													
4.1	Select and inform members of the Reference Committee of their role.	B. James S. Rehorick	X	X										Roy Lyster (McGill University) recruited as outside consultant (Sept. 27) Regular meetings held.
4.2	Issue a press release to inform members of the general public, the educational community and the executive of the University of New Brunswick of the study.	B. James		X										Completed October 7.
4.3	Keep Assistant Deputy Minister, Educational Services informed on a regular basis.	S. Rehorick						on-going						All correspondence sent. Workplan updated weekly. Meetings held on October 20th, October 28.
4.4	Draft an interim report.	S. Rehorick							X	X				Delivered report to Byron James on November 12. Discussed report with B. James, P. Kiely, B. Lydon. Second interim report delivered Nov. 24.
4.5	Present final report.	S. Rehorick										X	X	Final report delivered December 9.

## **Appendix B**

### **DESCRIPTION OF LEVELS OF ORAL PROFICIENCY INTERVIEWS**

## ORAL PROFICIENCY LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

**Basic Level:** Able to satisfy routine travel needs and minimum courtesy requirements. Can ask and answer questions on topics very familiar to him: within the scope of his very limited language experience can understand simple questions and statements, allowing for slowed speech, repetition or paraphrase; speaking vocabulary inadequate to express anything but the most elementary needs; errors in pronunciation and grammar are frequent, but can be understood by a native speaker used to dealing with foreigners attempting to speak his language. While elementary needs vary considerably from individual to individual, any person at Novice Level should be able to order a simple meal, ask for shelter or lodging, ask for and understand simple directions, make purchases, and tell time.

**Intermediate Level:** Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. Can handle with confidence but not with facility most social situations including introductions and casual conversations about current events, as well as work, family, and autobiographical information; can handle limited work requirements, needing help in handling any complications or difficulties; can get the gist of most conversations on non-technical subjects i.e., topics which require no specialized knowledge, and has a speaking vocabulary sufficient to express himself simply with some circumlocutions; accent, though often quite faulty, is intelligible; can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately but does not have thorough or confident control of the grammar.

**Advanced Level:** Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social and professional topics. Can discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease; comprehension is quite complete for a normal rate of speech; vocabulary is broad enough that he rarely has to grope for a word; accent may be obviously foreign; control of grammar good; errors never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker.

**Superior Level:** Able to use the language fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to professional needs. Can understand and participate in any conversation within the range of his experience with a high degree of fluency and precision of vocabulary; would rarely be taken for a native speaker, but can respond appropriately even in unfamiliar situations; errors of pronunciation and grammar quite rare; can handle informal interpreting from and into the language.

## **Appendix C**

# **New Brunswick French Second Language Programs**



New Brunswick  
Department of Education  
French Second Language Program\*

## CORE PROGRAM

Since 1987, the program has been compulsory from Grade 1 to Grade 10. French is taught (in most schools) for one period every day. By the end of grade 10, pupils should have received approximately 1065 hours of instruction.

Grade 11 and 12 - pupils may elect to pursue their studies in the Core program for an accumulated total of 1300 hours.

### Current standard

1 period per day of French  
grades 1-2, 20 minutes/day  
grades 3-6, 30 minutes/ day  
grades 7-9, 40 minutes/day  
grades 10-12, 75 minutes/day per 1 semester

Total: Approx. 1200 hours

### Expectations

At the end of grade 10, most students should attain the Intermediate level in oral communication. (See level descriptions attached). However, it is not compulsory to attain this level in order to receive a credit.

At the end of grade 12, most students should be able to maintain their competence at the Intermediate level in oral communication, or improve upon it.

## IMMERSION PROGRAMS

Pupils spend the majority of their classroom time in the second language. Most subjects are taught in French, especially in the early stages of the programs.

There are two official entry points. Early Immersion (beginning in grade 1) and Late Immersion (beginning in grade 7).

\* Source, Macfarlane, 1992.

## **1. Early Immersion**

### **Current standard**

grades 1-2, 95% of time in French  
grade 3, 85% of time in French  
grades 4-9, 70% of time in French  
grades 10-12, 33 1/3% of time in French

Total: Approx. 7000 hours

## **2. Middle Immersion**

As yet, there are no departmental guidelines with respect to Middle Immersion.

## **3. Late Immersion**

### **Current standard**

grade 7, 90% of time in French  
grades 8-9, 70% of time in French  
grades 10-12, 33 1/3% of time in French

Total: Approx. 2900 hours

### **Expectations**

**Early Immersion:** At the end of grade 12 (approximately 7000 hours), most students should be able to attain the Advanced level in oral communication and equivalent competence in written communication.

**Late Immersion:** At the end of Grade 12 (approximately 2900 hours) most students should be able to attain the Intermediate Plus level and an equivalent competence in written communication.

**Middle Immersion:** No outcomes have been established for this program.

## **Appendix D**

# **ORAL PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW RESULTS 1990-1993**

### Comparison of Oral Proficiency Results 1990-1993

	UNRATABLE/NOVICE			BASIC			INTERMEDIATE			ADVANCED/SUPERIOR		
	90-91	91-92	92-93	90-91	91-92	92-93	90-91	91-92	92-93	90-91	91-92	92-93
CORE	10.9	6.3	7.2	46.7	44.6	45.3	32.6	39.8	35.9	09.8	09.3	11.7
EXTENDED CORE	1.8			17.8	19.6	5.3	50.1	65.8	75.4	30.3	14.6	19.3
LATE IMMERSION		.6		5.5	3.9	4.8	50.2	62.8	73.9	44.3	32.8	21.5
EARLY IMMERSION		.4		1.0	1.1	1.3	38.9	48.2	54.8	60.1	50.4	43.9

