Getting Started with the Revised Curriculum

The Ontario Curriculum, French as a Second Language, Grades 1-8, Core French, Extended French, and French Immersion, (revised), 2013

Grades 1 to 8: Core French, Extended French, and French Immersion

The Ontario Curriculum, French as a Second Language, Grades 1-8, Core French, Extended French, and French Immersion, (revised), 2013 details the vision and goals for French as a Second Language instruction in Ontario, as well as seven enduring ideas for lifelong language learning.

Vision and Goals for French as a Second Language – Core, Extended, and Immersion, Grades 1 to 12

Vision
Students will communicate and interact with growing confidence in French, one of Canada’s official languages, while developing the knowledge, skills, and perspectives they need to participate fully as citizens in Canada and in the world.

Goals
In all French as a second language programs, students realize the vision of the FSL curriculum as they strive to:

- use French to communicate and interact effectively in a variety of social settings;
- learn about Canada, its two official languages, and other cultures;
- appreciate and acknowledge the interconnectedness and interdependence of the global community;
- be responsible for their own learning, as they work independently and in groups;
- use effective language learning strategies;
- become lifelong language learners for personal growth and for active participation as world citizens.

Philosophy in FSL Teaching
French is no longer just the object of instruction; it is the language of instruction. Students use the target language to complete specific tasks or problems presented within authentic and meaningful social contexts.

Teachers
- embed language conventions within these authentic contexts;
- provide purposeful instruction, on-going modeling, and practice in a variety of authentic contexts;
- provide opportunities for peer and student-teacher collaboration and reflection; and
- create opportunities for spontaneous interactions.

Seven enduring ideas
- Emphasis on FSL learning for personal growth and for active participation as world citizens.
- Responsibilities and roles for all members of the FSL student’s community – student, parent, teacher, principal and community partners – are clearly articulated.
- Focus on functional fluency: clear distinction between production and interaction in expectations of all 4 strands.
- Emphasis on spontaneous interaction for an authentic, contextualized purpose (inquiry, problem solving, critical thinking, transfer of skills), with French as the medium.

Four Strands
- Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing
  - Overall expectations in all strands are supported by specific expectations which are scaffolded and consistently worded, linking strands, grade levels and programs in order to provide continuity.
  - Intercultural Understanding: a new overall expectation in all strands.
  - Specific expectations provide scaffolded learning leading to increased awareness, understanding and appreciation of culture and socio-linguistic conventions in Canada and around the world.

No explicit language conventions
- Language conventions are embedded in each expectation. Action-oriented goals determine language conventions that are needed based on the social context.
- FSL instruction is about teaching literacy skills...showing students HOW to use the target language to complete a specific task.

Specific considerations
- Alignment with other Ontario Ministry of Education and Training documents and policies: Instructional approaches, Cross curricular and integrated learning, Planning FSL programs for students with special education needs and English language learners; Environmental education; Healthy relationships; Equity and inclusive education; Financial literacy; Literacy, mathematical literacy and inquiry; Critical thinking and critical inquiry; Role of the school library; Role of information and communications technology; Education and career and life planning; Health and safety.

Metacognition
- Thinking about thinking now a specific expectation in all strands.
  - Links metacognition and critical literacy.
  - Defines metacognition and explains its role in the FSL classroom.
  - Provides strategies, examples, and teacher prompts to guide teachers and students in self-reflection and self-evaluation activities.

Teacher resources
- Teacher prompts, instructional tips, and examples included, suitable for modeling and instructional support.
- Expanded glossary to inform and enable consistent understanding and use of terminology.

So, What’s New?

“Effective instruction is key to student success. To provide effective instruction, teachers need to consider what they want students to learn, how they will know whether students have learned it, how they will design instruction to promote learning, and how they will respond to students who are not making progress.”

- The Ontario Curriculum, French as a Second Language, Grades 1–8 Core French, Extended French, and French Immersion, (revised), 2013, page 30
Exploring Considerations for Program Planning in FSL

The Ontario Curriculum, French as a Second Language, Grades 1-8, Core French, Extended French, and French Immersion, (revised), 2013

Grades 1 to 8: Core French, Extended French, and French Immersion

The revised curriculum describes fourteen considerations for FSL program planning and explains how the revised FSL curriculum aligns and connects with other Ontario Ministry of Education and Training policies and initiatives. Seven of the considerations are profiled here. See pages 30 to 51 in the revised curriculum for more information.

Inclusive Education

In an inclusive education system, diversity is valued, and all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. Every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning.

In the revised FSL curriculum, specific expectations start with the student's personal and familiar environments (self, family, classroom and peers) and explore their roles in their community, region, province, Canada and the world. The overall expectation “Intercultural understanding” found in each strand, provides opportunities for exploring and celebrating the backgrounds and contributions of women and men of diverse ethnocultural, religious and racial communities and the beliefs and practices of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples (pages 42-43).

Planning for the English Language Learner

English language learners bring a rich diversity of background knowledge and experience to the classroom. A prior language learning experience can facilitate further language learning. Succeeding in learning French has been shown to help English language learners improve their English-language skills.

Role of the Teacher

• Encourage parents to continue to use their own language at home as a foundation for language and literacy development.
• Find opportunities to bring students’ languages into the classroom. Consider using parents and community members as a resource.

Program Adaptations

• Modify some or all of the subject expectations so they are challenging yet attainable.
• Use a variety of instructional strategies and simplified learning resources, including reference materials (word walls, visual dictionaries), music, and games.
• Provide assessment accommodations such as extra time to complete tasks; demonstration of knowledge through oral presentations, participation in movement activities, songs, or chants; use of portfolios, demonstrations, visual representations or models.

Additional Considerations for Program Planning

• Financial Literacy
• Critical Thinking and Critical Literacy
• The Role of School Library
• The Role of Information and Communication Technology
• Education and Career/Life Planning, and Health and Safety.
Action-Oriented Tasks

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Social interaction in French is pivotal in the revised curriculum. Students and teachers alike must be using the target language to achieve real goals. Teachers can plan activities using the action oriented approach to encourage students to use French to communicate in a meaningful way.

Authentic Oral Communication
Activities that develop meaningful communication skills
Respond to students’ interests;
Are modeled and scaffolded using authentic situations;
Are practiced in multiple ways to develop fluency;
Can be tailored to meet a variety of student needs;
Are presented across all 4 strands (listening, speaking, reading, and writing); and
Develop the ability to use language conventions in a real-world context.

Comprehensible Input
“Comprehensible input” means the students understand the messages they hear in French. As you describe and model activities for your students, try these comprehension strategies to help them understand.
The message is relevant to the students, the context, and the situation; Is repeated exactly to give more time to understand;
Is repeated with the same key words in a more familiar sentence structure;
Can be negotiated by the students – they can ask questions, model what they think you are asking, and get feedback to confirm their understanding.

Spontaneous Communication
As lifelong language learners, students will continue to develop the ability to communicate in French as opportunities arise throughout their lives. In the classroom, however, students need many opportunities to plan, rehearse, and role-play what they would say in a variety of situations. The ability to speak spontaneously will develop over the years, as will the variety of contexts in which students can communicate meaningfully.
The table below shows the expectations for each French program and division.

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Creating a Positive Learning Environment

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A positive learning environment founded upon cognitive, social, and affective strategies supports students’ development. This support can nurture a resilient state of mental health and overall well-being. Students who feel supported at school can take the risks necessary to use their developing French language skills in class activities.

Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies provide students with the skills needed to make meaning and navigate the complex oral, reading, and writing situations they face in their daily interactions. In class, students develop these strategies as they solve problems within open-ended, action-oriented tasks.

These strategies need to be explicitly taught and practiced until they become second nature for the student. They are not grade- or program-specific, but can be taught across all grades and programs.

Cognitive Strategies:

Listening Comprehension

Teachers cannot assume students understand how to use interactive listening strategies as described in expectation A.2.1 in the revised curriculum.

A possible activity to develop active listening is "bottin de téléphone." Provide students with a blank telephone list and assign each student a number. Over the course of the term, students will listen for their own number and complete the list with their classmates numbers. Students are able to "call" each other during class to engage in questioning, mini-dialogues, or conversations. As a class, discuss potential strategies for listening in order to hear the telephone number.

Instructional Tools

- Choose instructional tools based on current research when planning lessons.
- Scaffolding and observing independent practice/gradual release of responsibility
- Open-ended questioning
- Modelled, shared, and guided instruction
- Frequent check-ins for comprehension (for example, thumbs up/thumbs down)
- On-going descriptive feedback
- Cooperative learning activities (for example, jigsaw, value-line, four corners, inside outside circle, conveyor belt, think-pair-share; descriptions of these activities and others are located in the Appendix of A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6, Volume 1, Foundations of Literacy Instruction for the Junior Learner, 2006.)

Teachers can also use a variety of strategies to engage students and enable their achievement as they deliver lessons. Examples include speaking at a deliberate pace, giving clear instructions, checking information, and pausing after asking a question to allow for think time.

Social Strategies:

Cooperative Learning

In order for students to achieve the goals set forth in the curriculum, they need to build relationships and interact positively with others in groups. Teachers can support cooperative learning by:

- providing flexible groupings: random, student chosen, ability based and various group sizes (pairs, triads, small and large groups);
- explicitly teaching students how to interact with each other in group settings; scaffolding and gradually increasing the time allotted for cooperative group work; and
- Co-creating guidelines for behaviour.

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Technology Tools for Teachers and Students

Using technology can motivate students to speak French. They can have control to listen and re-record until they are satisfied with their work. Students can use technology to collaborate and respond to images, presentations, or videos. For example, show the class an image and have students take turns building on each other’s ideas orally or in a visual idea web.

Digital recorders, smart devices or tablets can also make student thinking visible. Having students use these tools to complete tasks can provide insight into how students work, as well as work samples that can be shared with parents and colleagues.

Affective Strategies:

Taking Risks

Encourage students to make mistakes! Use these mistakes as teachable moments.

- When students are starting to transfer their language skills into new contexts, avoid correcting errors that do not interfere with meaning.
- When correcting students, limit what you correct so as not to overwhelm the student.
- Allow students to finish speaking before correcting so as not to impede their thought or discourage participation.
- Use visuals and gestures to allow students to self-correct without being interrupted.

Pour écouter attentivement il faut...

Regarde la personne qui parle.
Écoute les mots clés/les numéros.
Clarifie si je ne comprends pas.
« Peux-tu répéter s’il te plaît ? »
« Parle plus fort s’il te plaît »

Pour un travail coopératif,
Nous parlons toujours en français.
Nous écoutons les autres membres de notre groupe.
Nous posons des questions.
Nous contribuons nos idées et nos opinions.
Nous répondons aux idées des autres membres de notre groupe.
Nous exprimons nos opinions dans une manière respectueuse.

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The key to effective metacognition is to have students ask the following questions about their learning and their strategy use:

1. Did I select and apply the best strategy for the situation? How do I know?
2. How did the strategy I used help me understand the text of the interaction?
3. What will I do differently the next time I use this strategy?
4. How can I use my reflections to plan for how I might use the other strategies next time?

Assessment of learning is the assessment that becomes public and results in statements or symbols about how well students are learning. It often contributes to pivotal decisions that will affect students’ futures. (Western and Northern Canadian Protocol, p. 42)

Assessment for learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there.” (Assessment Reform Group, 2002, p. 2)

The Seven Fundamental Principles
To ensure that assessment, evaluation, and reporting are valid and reliable, and that they lead to the improvement of learning for all students, teachers use practices and procedures that:

- are fair, transparent, and equitable for all students;
- support all students, including those with special education needs, those who are learning the language of instruction (English or French), and those who are First Nation, Métis, or Inuit;
- are carefully planned to relate to the curriculum expectations and learning goals and, as much as possible, to the interests, learning styles and preferences, needs, and experiences of all students;
- are communicated clearly to students and parents at the beginning of the school year or course and at other appropriate points throughout the school year or course;
- are ongoing, varied in nature, and administered over a period of time to provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate the full range of their learning;
- provide ongoing descriptive feedback that is clear, specific, meaningful, and timely to support improved learning and achievement;
- develop students’ self-assessment skills to enable them to assess their own learning, set specific goals, and plan next steps for their learning.

Growing Success, pg. 6.