

Instructional Strategies in the FSL Classroom



The Ontario Curriculum, French as a Second Language, Grades 9 – 12, Core French, Extended French, and French Immersion, (revised), 2014

Grades 9 to 12: Core French, Extended French, and French Immersion

Effective instruction is the key to student success. Effective FSL Instructional Approaches activate prior knowledge and experience; make connections to help students see relevance and usefulness; provide action-oriented, communicative and authentic tasks; offer multiple opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills; incorporate differentiated instructional strategies based on the teacher's understanding and ongoing observation of students' skills, needs, experiences and interests.

Lesson Planning Strategies

- using a **three part lesson design** (minds on, action and consolidation) to provide an effective foundation for use of French as the language of communication, leading to frequent opportunities for oral language practice
- designing meaningful lessons and activities achievable by students
- providing frequent opportunities for collaboration and practice in pairs as well as small and large groups
- providing targeted instruction for students during shared or guided practice
- having students listen to, read or view mentor texts (exemplars)
- modeling and demonstrating various learning processes, following scaffolding, guided practice and gradual release models
- contextualising new vocabulary
- using technology in appropriate ways to support language and literacy development
- demonstrating the use of a variety of research strategies and graphic organizers

Classroom Teaching Strategies

- using a deliberate pace to ensure maximum understanding
- giving clear instructions by providing them orally and in writing
- presenting information in smaller, more manageable pieces (chunking)
- providing frequent comprehension checks
- allowing sufficient response time
- teaching and encouraging students to follow the writing process (research, plan, draft, revise and edit, publish) with checks and conferencing for guidance
- modelling, demonstrating, sharing and guiding students in the use of language learning strategies through gradual release of responsibility

Assessment Strategies

- co-constructing learn goals and success criteria
- scaffolding and observing independent practice for triangulation of data
- using a variety of strategies to selectively collect students' errors in speaking and writing in order to use the data to inform next steps
- offering ongoing descriptive feedback
- allowing students to demonstrate learning in alternative ways

LITERACY IN THE FSL CLASSROOM

FSL teachers include the teaching of targeted literacy and inquiry skills suited to the FSL curriculum expectations in their lesson planning. Literacy strategies may include: brainstorming; oral reporting; presentation and defence of ideas; debates; critiques; skills demonstrations and fact / opinion differentiation. All students must develop skills in the following three areas: Thinking, Expression, and Reflection.

EXPRESSION:

Students need to use language and images in rich and varied forms as they read, write, listen, speak, view, represent, discuss, and think critically about ideas. Oral communication skills are fundamental to the development of FSL literacy and are essential for thinking and learning. FSL students need to constantly expand the depth and breadth of their vocabulary in order to more freely express themselves in the target language. FSL vocabulary acquisition through the use of anchor charts, reading and writing journals, audio-visual word association activities, thematic and family of words / cognate recognition activities and exercises, builds capacity for rich and varied expression. Teachers draw attention to first language and interdisciplinary vocabulary connections wherever possible in order to encourage students to recognize associations.

Thinking:

Students need to access, manage, create, and evaluate information as they think imaginatively and critically in order to problem-solve and make decisions. **Critical Thinking** includes the skills of questioning, predicting, analysing, synthesizing, examining opinions, identifying values and issues, detecting bias and distinguishing between alternatives (page 48).

Inquiry Skills in FSL are developed when students “are required to reflect on what they have learned; how they have come to know what they have learned and what other resources they may need to consult to reach an informed conclusion. The ability to locate, question and validate information is important to becoming an independent, lifelong learner” (page 50).

Critically literate students are concerned with and able to evaluate a text through the examination of issues related to fairness, equity and social justice (page 49). **In FSL, critically literate students can:**

- determine points of view, context, gaps and absence of voice in oral and written text
- analyze media messages; determine possible motives and underlying messages; biases and perspectives
- interpret music, gestures, nonverbal cues, symbols and other forms of expression in conversation, film and other forms of media.(page 49)

Examples of activities requiring critical literacy include: retelling a narrative from another character’s point of view; recounting a historical or cultural event from an opposing stakeholder’s perspective; identifying and interpreting symbolism and use of other literary devices (e.g. colour, imagery, metaphors, analogies in visual and written texts; extrapolating events based on alternative or substitute events, setting, time period /endings).

The overall expectation – **Intercultural understanding** – found in each strand, provides additional opportunities for FSL students to think critically as they compare and analyse the complex relationships of language and culture.

Reflection:

Students need to apply **metacognitive** knowledge and skills so that they monitor their own thinking and learning, and develop self-advocacy skills, a sense of self-efficacy, and an interest in lifelong learning (pages 47-48).

Examples of reflection include: identifying frequently used listening strategies and describing their effectiveness; describing the effectiveness of previewing vocabulary; identify on-line tools that are most helpful when editing written or oral production; have students use a checklist to monitor their oral participation; keep a reading log with key vocabulary, notes about the characteristics of the genres/theme development/their preferences/challenges when reading. For more information on Metacognition, refer to the Fact Sheet on **Assessment and Evaluation**.

Encouraging Students to Take Risks

FSL teachers create a learning environment that is caring, inclusive, and accepting, where students are encouraged to fully participate and take risks in the target language. Students need to hear, see, use, and reuse French in a variety of meaningful and developmentally appropriate contexts. Routines and patterns provide structure and a sense of safety in the FSL classroom. Students understand their role and are more willing to undertake new challenges when they feel empowered and free to make mistakes without losing respect. Strategies to empower FSL students and encourage risk-taking include:

Listening

- encourage students to: listen for words that they know and les mots amis; to make connections to their past experiences and prior knowledge; to reformulate the main ideas and to form and express an opinion.
- co-construct behavioural expectations for listening and interacting
- provide appropriate opportunities for students to respond or clarify and review/model appropriate responses for agreeing/disagreeing/questioning.

Speaking

- encourage students to: choose precise vocabulary; use graphic organisers to plan and organise their ideas; use their prior knowledge to communicate their message and to ask for feedback from their teacher and/or peers to ensure that their message was understood
- avoid correcting errors that do not target the main focus of the current lesson context
- develop visual signals/gestures to remind students to self-correct
- allow students to present to you and a partner, small group or separate from the entire class to reduce anxiety - use a gradual introduction to audience size
- emphasize the student as a social actor: encourage students to “act” the role (provide puppets, costumes and props to bring students out of themselves and into the part they are to play)
- provide opportunities for spontaneous interaction based on known patterns that have been rehearsed - gradually add more unknown factors (scaffolding)
- co-construct anchor charts and provide thematic visuals to enrich vocabulary and provide sentence starters.

Reading

- encourage students to: use the title, subtitles and images to help them understand; make connections to their personal experiences and use prior knowledge; identify words that they already know and les mots amis; to reformulate the main ideas of the text; to form and express their own opinion and to ask questions for clarification
- establish routines for quiet reading; group/shared reading; readers’ theatre
- provide an alternate, quiet setting, if possible, for students who have difficulty focusing
- provide reading materials in the target language that represent a variety of reading topics, genres/length and range of difficulty - encourage reading for pleasure.

Writing

- encourage students to: choose precise vocabulary; use graphic organizers to plan and organize the message they wish to communicate; use all available resources to support them in their writing and ask for feedback from their teacher and/or peers to improve their writing.
- teach, review, model and guide students through the use of the writing process steps
- provide supports for student writing: online or hard copy dictionaries, thesauri, grammar references, stylistics and literary device references, anchor charts
- provide easy access to models, exemplars and templates for writing.

Collaborative Learning

- assign and alternate roles (with clear expectations) to group members so that all students have opportunities to play all roles (e.g. secretary, scribe, researcher, reporter)
- provide feedback and self/peer evaluation opportunities to check peer interactions (exit cards work well)
- provide/review vocabulary and expressions for appropriate peer interactions (Je crois que.../ Je suis d’accord parce que.../ À mon avis,.../Il faut que...); model appropriate responses
- provide collaborative rather than competitive group activities to encourage supportive, team-building attitudes
- create anchor chart placemats with key vocabulary, sentence starters, team members’ roles/ responsibilities.