

Communicating with Parents and Guardians



Introduction

In communicating with parents and guardians about French instruction, a gap is bridged between home and school. It is important that parents and guardians are aware of what students are learning in French class and why it is beneficial to be able to communicate in more than one language.

As stated in [The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core French, Grades 4-8; Extended French, Grades 4-8; French Immersion, Grades 1-8, \(revised\) 2013](#) and [The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core French, Extended French and French Immersion, Grades 9-12, \(revised\) 2014](#), hereafter referred to as the Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, “By becoming familiar with the FSL curriculum, parents can better appreciate what is being taught in each grade and what their children are expected to learn.” (p.12)

There are many ways to communicate with parents and guardians, both within and outside the school. Several ideas and strategies will be shared in this module. These strategies will differ depending upon whether a teacher is in a French Immersion or Extended French classroom, teaching Core French as an itinerant teacher, teaching Core French within one’s own classroom, or teaching any French as a Second Language program at the secondary level.

[A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2013](#), hereafter referred to as A Framework for FSL, K-12, has many suggestions for keeping parents and guardians informed, including sections entitled Heightening Awareness of FSL Programs and Benefits (p.14) and Parents and Communities as Partners (p.22).

More information about the value of French may be found in the [Importance of French as a Second Language](#) module.

Please note: this module includes suggested Internet resources. Teachers must review their Board’s policies for acceptable use of Internet and ICT as well as preview all Internet resources before sharing them with their students.

Home and School

Newsletters

A newsletter is often the first contact between parents, guardians and the French teacher. Preparing a letter to be sent home in the Fall on the first day of classes sets the stage for further communication and lets parents and guardians know who the teacher is and how he/she may be contacted. Items could include lyrics to a simple song students will be learning in class, ways to help students at home with French, vocabulary being taught this month, links to recipes, websites, reasons why learning a second language is important. More information may be found in the [Brain-based Research on the Benefits of Bilingualism and Second Language Instruction](#) module.

Once the initial letter goes home, updates can be made available on a regular basis. A short update can be included in the classroom teacher’s newsletter. If newsletters are sent home electronically, colour photos and videos may be included, **in accordance with School Board policies.**

“As a part of good teaching practice, teachers should inform parents about what their children are learning and when various topics are to be addressed.” [The Revised FSL Curriculum, 2013](#) (p.13)

Websites

The school website is a good place to include a link for more information about the French program in your school. Some teachers prefer to have their own websites, which may be hyperlinked through the school site. A website could include links to homework help sites, online dictionaries and more. More information may be found in the [Information and Communication Technology](#) module.

Blended learning offers parents a way to see their students' assignments on line. Information about French class can be included here, including videos, photos, links to online dictionaries and more. More information is available at [E-Learning Ontario](#).

Agendas

Notes can be written to parents in students' agendas. Particularly with younger students, these are a practical way to communicate with parents.

Phone Calls

Sometimes the most straightforward way of communication, a phone call, can let parents know immediately about a particular accomplishment, or if there is a problem that needs attention. "FSL educators reach out to parents to build strong relationships and open the lines of communication between home and school." [A Framework for FSL, K-12](#) (p.22)

Meet the Teacher

Many elementary schools have a "Meet the Teacher" evening at the beginning of the school year where parents meet teachers and students show them their desk and their new room in an informal setting.

Schools may use a variety of ways for these events to occur. For example, Core French teachers, this can be an opportunity to meet as many parents as possible. Depending on the size and layout of your school there are a few options for this. Standing in the main hallway where parents and students enter gives an opportunity to greet the students and ask them to introduce their parents.

Itinerant teachers could possibly share time between classrooms. Teachers who have been at the school for several years may wish to try to find the new students and any whom they have not taught before. More information may be found in the [Supporting Itinerant Teachers](#) module.

Meeting parents, even briefly, introduces them to the French teacher and breaks the ice in terms of contacting and maintaining open communication between parents and teachers.

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Bulletin Boards

It is important to display student work, cultural materials, reasons to learn French and other relevant information on bulletin boards where they will be seen when visitors enter the school. Changing the board

frequently allows many classes to display their work. Information about French clubs and other possible links to French can be posted on these boards, including information from [Canadian Parents for French](#).

Recognition Assemblies

Most students in the school study French, some as early as Junior Kindergarten. It is important that students are recognized for their contributions to French class and over the course of a year each class could have a turn at a school assembly. This class can perform a song, poem or skit and students could be recognized for excellence in French class. This not only rewards good behaviour and encourages positive attitudes towards learning French, but it lets parents know what the expectations are, as well as validating this for the entire school body. Show how much fun French class can be! Create media productions to show the class enjoying various activities they do during their French time and links to the presentations could be provided on websites for parents and students to view at home. Encouraging students to share learning and accomplishments at home could initiate discussions about what they are learning to talk about in French class, **in accordance with School Board policies.**



Information Evenings

The implementation of [The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula for elementary](#) and [secondary](#) provides a perfect opportunity to introduce parents to a new way of learning French. Invite parents to an information evening in addition to the "Meet the Teacher" event already experienced. Describe to parents how the revised curriculum will enhance student learning and demonstrate activities toward which teachers and students will be moving. Encourage parents to get involved in cultural activities and perhaps provide a simple activity using basic French to allow them

to experience firsthand the difference in how they may have learned French and how their child is now learning. Show them some websites, the blended learning sites, media presentations, images, YouTube videos shared in class and give them a list of links they can use at home to help their child with French. Give them strategies for where to find help, for example, [Homework Toolbox](#) and invite parents to contact you when there are questions or concerns. Examples of classroom materials can be on display as well during this time.

Cultural Evenings

Inviting parents to the school for a French Café in the spring provides a less formal atmosphere for engagement and communication between home and school. An older class can prepare the café, make a menu, dress up as serving staff and take orders from parents who are encouraged to speak in French. When their children are teaching them how to express their needs they are able to see how much their child has learned over the course of a year. A classroom can be set up with French visuals, posters, tourist office brochures, a media presentation on a screen or interactive white board. Show videos of students' performances in small-group classroom activities. "Intercultural awareness and understanding are key aspects of global citizenship, which encompasses citizenship at all levels, from the local school and community to Canada and the world beyond," [The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula for elementary and secondary](#).

[Les francophones de l'Ontario](#)

[Official Tourist Site of the Gouvernement de Québec](#)

[Ottawa Tourism Official Site](#)

[Tourisme Riel](#)

[Official Website of the France Tourism Development Agency](#)

[The Official Website of France](#)

[Belgian Tourist Office](#)

[Official Website of Switzerland Tourism](#)

French Clubs

An after-school or evening program provides students with the opportunity to use their French in situations with students other than their classmates. Parents and/or members of the community who speak French could be invited to share their language and some of their culture. Parents and guardians wanting to learn some French themselves would be welcome to attend. Their children could share what they have learned in class. Inviting both elementary and secondary students of FSL to come together occasionally may encourage elementary students to see the value in learning French and continue their studies after Grade 9. We are encouraged to, "Explore partnerships with parents and community organizations and within the global community to increase opportunities for students to use and/or be exposed to French." [A Framework for FSL, K-12](#) (p.19)

Parent-Teacher Interviews

Report card times provide further opportunities to meet with parents. Request an interview with students whose parents you would like to speak to. Leave time open in your schedule for parents to request an interview with you. "Although there are three formal reporting periods, communication with parents and students about student achievement should be continuous throughout the year, by means such as parent-teacher or parent-student-teacher conferences, portfolios of student work, student-led conferences, interviews, phone calls, checklists, and informal reports." [The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, elementary](#) (p. 25) and [secondary](#) (p. 29).

Core French teachers will likely teach many students and it is very difficult to meet with all of them. It is important to keep the lines of communication open and let parents know how the teacher can be reached and how to set up an appointment to meet outside the regular parent-teacher interview times if desired. "Effective ways in which parents can support their children's learning include the following: attending parent-teacher interviews, participating in parent workshops and school council activities ..." [The Revised FSL Curriculum, 2013](#) (p.12)

For students requiring an Individual Education Plan, hereafter referred to as IEP, the FSL teacher has a legal responsibility to contribute to his or her section of

the plan. It would also be helpful for the FSL teacher to participate in the parent-teacher interview. “If the student requires either accommodations, modifications, or both, the relevant information, as described in the following paragraphs, must be recorded in his or her IEP.” *The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, elementary* (p. 34) and *secondary* (p. 39).

More information may be found in the *Inclusivity and Students with Special Education Needs* module.

Parents

Parents sometimes have questions about how to help their children with French if they themselves do not speak the language. They can be encouraged to convey a positive attitude to their children about the importance of learning French. Before sending assignments home, teachers should ensure that students are able to do the work independently.

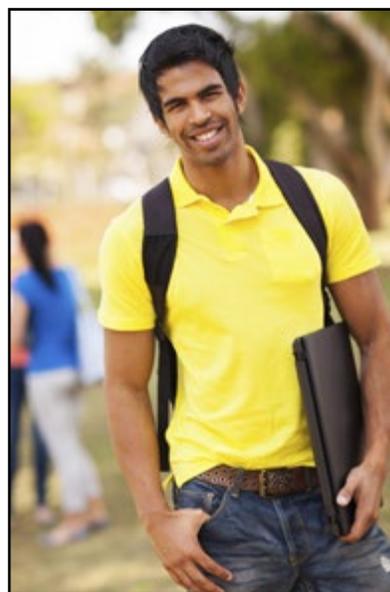
“Parents can also support their children’s FSL learning by exposing them to French through television, movies and cultural events. Children can be highly motivated to study FSL when they see that French is the language used by many people in their daily lives. Moreover, such experiences help nurture an enduring appreciation of French culture in Ontario, throughout Canada and around the world.” *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, K-12, 2013.* (p. 23)

“Parents are the primary educators of their children with respect to learning about values, appropriate behaviour, and cultural, spiritual and personal beliefs and traditions, and they are their children’s first role models. It is therefore important for parents to communicate to their children the value of learning French and for schools and parents to work together to ensure that home and school provide a mutually supportive framework for young people’s education.”

The Revised FSL Curriculum, 2013 (p.12)

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Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools, 2010 (p.53)



Resources

Canadian Parents for French

<http://on.cpf.ca/>

e-Learning Ontario

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/elearning/teacher.html>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2013). A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/FLS.html>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2010). Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/growsuccess.pdf>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2013). The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core, Grades 4–8; Extended, Grades 4–8; Immersion, Grades 1–8, (revised)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/fsl.html>

Ontario Ministry of Education, The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core French, Extended French and French Immersion, Grades 9-12, (revised) 2014

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/fsl.html>

Rainbow District School Board. FSL Homework Toolbox

<http://www.fslhomeworktoolbox.ca>