

Inclusivity and Students With Special Education Needs



Introduction

All Ministry of Education policy documents and resources recognize the importance of respecting diversity, promoting inclusive education, and identifying and eliminating discriminatory biases, and systemic barriers that limit the ability of students to learn, grow, and contribute to society. This includes the teaching of all programs including French as a Second Language. FSL teachers must believe that all students can learn a second language.

The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, elementary (p. 35) and *secondary* (p. 38) state...

Classroom teachers are the key educators of students with special education needs. They have a responsibility to help all students learn, and they work collaboratively with special education teachers, where appropriate, to achieve this goal. Classroom teachers commit to assisting every student to prepare for living with the highest degree of independence possible.

Learning for All: *A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (2013)* describes a set of beliefs, based on research, that should guide program planning for students with special education needs in all disciplines. Teachers planning FSL programs need to pay particular attention to these beliefs, which are as follows:

- All students can succeed;
- Each student has his or her own unique pattern of learning;
- Successful instructional practices are founded

on evidence-based research, tempered by experience;

- Universal design and differentiated instruction are effective and interconnected means of meeting the learning or productivity needs of any group of students;
- Classroom teachers are the key educators for a student's literacy and numeracy development.
- Classroom teachers need the support of the larger community to create a learning environment that supports students with special education needs;
- Fairness is not sameness.

The following quotation from *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2013* addresses the misconception that FSL programs are unsuitable for students with special education needs:

Parents and educators work to provide appropriate support when a student experiences challenges in any subject. With respect to learning FSL, a number of academic researchers state that, under the right circumstances, all children are able to learn two languages.

As explained by Archibald and colleagues (2006), "Students with special needs can learn second languages. As with other subjects, they need accommodation, but there is nothing inherent in the learning of a second language that precludes special

needs students.” (p. 2) For these reasons, some academics have suggested that attention should be paid to creating learning environments where students feel comfortable expressing their ideas in a second language (Gersten & Woodward, 1994). Other language experts have focused on the need for differentiated instruction. (p. 36)

Another Ontario Ministry document that supports the teaching of students with special education needs is [*Growing Success, Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools, 2010*](#). “In planning a program for a student with special education needs, the teacher, with the support of an in-school team and/or a special education teacher, begins by considering the student’s strengths and needs and his or her instructional level.” (p. 71)

Identifying Students With Special Education Needs

Within the FSL classroom, you may find various students that experience challenges in the FSL programs. The FSL teachers should obtain a list of the names of all students requiring additional support and those students on Individual Education Plan (hereafter referred to as an IEP)

There are students who experience difficulty in learning in some or all subjects and may or may not have an IEP. Some may even be considered for exemption from FSL. However, research shows that most can learn a second language with appropriate support, interventions and effective teaching strategies.

Students with identified exceptionalities such as behaviour, communication, intellectual, physical, as well as multiple exceptionalities must have an IEP.

Definitions of all exceptionalities can be found in the IEP Resource Guide (2004)

Becoming familiar with the strengths and needs of each of these students is imperative. Recommendations outlined in the IEP must also be applied in the FSL classroom. The IEP may recommend instructional accommodations, environmental accommodations, assessment accommodations and/or modifications. Teachers should highlight anything that could support the student’s success in the FSL classroom and review the recommendations regularly to ensure they still apply. Additionally, students with special education needs

as well as the other students in the classroom would also benefit from differentiated instruction strategies as referenced below.

Defining Modifications and Accommodations

Accommodation is the term used to refer to the special teaching and assessment strategies, human supports, and/or individualized equipment necessary to enable a student to successfully learn and to demonstrate learning. Accommodations do not alter the provincial curriculum expectations for the grade or course.

Modifications are changes made in the age-appropriate grade-level expectations for a subject or course in order to meet a student’s learning needs. These changes may involve developing expectations that reflect knowledge and skills required in the curriculum for a different grade level and/or increasing or decreasing the number and/or complexity of the regular grade-level curriculum expectations.

[*The Individual Education Plan \(IEP\), A Resource Guide \(2004\)*](#) (p. 25)

For the sake of clarity, the accommodations that the student requires in connection with instruction, assessment, and functioning in the physical environment should be identified and listed separately, as follows:

Instructional Accommodations: changes in teaching strategies, including styles of presentation, methods of organization, or use of technology and multimedia. Some examples include the use of graphic organizers, photocopied notes, or assistive software.

Environmental Accommodations: changes that the student may require in the classroom and/or school environment, such as preferential seating or special lighting.

Assessment Accommodations: changes in assessment procedures that enable the student to demonstrate his or her learning, such as allowing additional time to complete tests or assignments or permitting oral responses to test questions.

The Revised FSL Curriculum, 2013 (pgs. 36-37)

For a more detailed list of examples of accommodations may be found in [The Individual Education Plan \(IEP\), A Resource Guide](#) on page 29.

What is an IEP?

An IEP is a written plan describing the special education program and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the student's strengths and needs – that is, the strengths and needs that affect the student's ability to learn and to demonstrate learning. [IEP Resource Guide \(2004\)](#) (p. 5)

A more detailed definition of the [The Individual Education Plan \(IEP\), A Resource Guide \(2004\)](#) (pgs. 5-6)

English Language Learners

It is also important to check with school administration for the names of any newcomers to Canada who may need support in learning English as a Second Language. These students also require special consideration when planning and assessing FSL programs.

English Language Learners, hereafter referred to as ELLs, are students who are learning English as a second or additional language in English-language schools. They are not to be considered as students with exceptionalities and usually do not have an IEP. Most ELL students have achieved grade level expectations in their native language.

In planning programs for children with linguistic backgrounds other than English, teachers need to recognize the importance of the orientation process, understanding that every learner needs to adjust to the new social environment and language in a unique way and at an individual pace. For example, children who are in an early stage of English-language acquisition may go through a “silent period” during which they closely observe the interactions and physical surroundings of their new learning environment ... When they are ready to participate in paired, small group, or whole-class activities, some students will begin by using a single word or phrase to communicate a thought, while others will speak quite fluently.

The Revised FSL Curriculum, 2013 (p. 39)

Teachers must adapt the instructional program in order to facilitate the success of these students in their classrooms. Several suggestions for appropriate adaptations for FSL may be found in [The Revised FSL Curriculum, 2013](#) (p. 40)

Another Ministry document that may be helpful to teachers supporting ELLs is [Many Roots, Many Voices, 2005](#).

Strategies Necessary for Some but Good for All

The special education teacher has the knowledge and training to work with the students that experience challenges in various programs. They can offer many effective strategies specific to exceptionalities and for struggling students. FSL teachers are encouraged to work collaboratively with the in-school support team to determine the best strategies needed to ensure success.

Differentiation of Instruction

Differentiation is an important consideration when planning instruction as well as assessment and evaluation. Teachers can find a multitude of resources on the Ontario Ministry of Education [EduGAINS](#) site to support the differentiation of content, process, product and assessment.

Intervention for Struggling Readers in French Immersion

Research tells us that:

- identifying children who may be struggling as readers in their earliest years of schooling sets them up to experience success;
- English tests of phonological awareness can be effectively used to identify struggling readers in SK or Grade 1 French immersion programs;
- once identified, instructional interventions in English and in French can be initiated while the gap between strong and weak readers is still relatively small;
- low achieving readers benefit from systematic and explicit instructions phonological awareness.

More information is available in [What Works? Research into Practice Series, Early Identification and Intervention for At-Risk Readers in French Immersion \(2009\)](#)

Creating an Environment for Success

Everyone plays a role in supporting and creating an environment for success.

The role and responsibilities of the principal, classroom teacher, special education teacher, teacher assistant, other professionals, student and parents are outlined in The Individual Education Plan (IEP), [*A Resource Guide \(2004\)*](#) (pgs. 16-19). The FSL teacher is also a part of this team. In the initial stages of IEP development, information must be gathered about the student through a review of the student's record, consultation with the student, parents, school staff, including the Core French teacher and other professionals, observation of the student, review of the student's current work and further assessments if required. The information is consolidated and an IEP is developed collaboratively by those who will be working directly with the student. If modifications are required, each subject, including Core French, will be designated its own page in the IEP. Although the IEP should be developed collaboratively, each teacher then assumes responsibility for making the appropriate accommodations or modifications in their area(s) of responsibility. As the IEP is a living document, updates should be made as needed, in consultation with the Special Education team. The FSL consultant can also support the teachers by suggesting specific strategies for the FSL program.

Exemptions or Transfer From FSL Programs

Please refer to individual school board policy.



Resources

Ontario Ministry of Education (2013). A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, K-12
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/FLS.html>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2004). The Individual Educational Plan (IEP), A Resource Guide
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide/resource/iepresguid.pdf>

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). Learning for All: A guide to effective assessment and instruction for all students, Kindergarten to Grade 12
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/geneeral/elemsec/speced/LearningforAll2011.pdf>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2005). Many Roots, Many Voices
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/manyroots/manyroots.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)
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/fsl.html>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2010). EduGAINS, The Differentiated Instruction Scrapbook
<http://www.edugains.ca/resourcesDI/EducatorsPackages/DIEducatorsPackage2010/2010DIScrapbook.pdf>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2009). Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, What Works? Research into Practice Series, Early Identification and Intervention for At-Risk Readers in French Immersion, Monograph #18
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/at_risk_readers_en.pdf