

Instructional Strategies



Introduction

According to *The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core, Grades 4–8; Extended, Grades 4–8; Immersion, Grades 1–8, (revised) 2013*, hereafter referred to as The Revised FSL Curriculum, 2013, “Instruction in FSL should help students acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes they need in order to achieve the curriculum expectations and to be able to enjoy communication in French throughout their lives.” Furthermore it states, “To be effective, instruction must be based on the belief that all students can be successful and that learning French is important and valuable for all students.” Teachers are encouraged to move towards an action-oriented approach in which students are social actors ... learning, interacting and problem-solving in their second language while developing proficiency in French. In addition, “While the communicative approach centres on communicating in the target language, the action-oriented approach requires students to perform a task in a wider social context.” (p. 31)

As 21st century learners, our students of FSL need to develop critical and creative thinking skills, use information and communication technology efficiently and be confident in their ability to communicate effectively in their second language outside of the classroom in authentic, spontaneous situations. As stated in *The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, elementary* (p. 32) and *secondary* (p. 36) “The teacher sets up learning activities that are based on authentic communicative tasks, such as requesting information or conveying messages.”

- **Goal 1: Increase student confidence, proficiency, and achievement in FSL.**
- **Goal 2: Increase the percentage of students studying FSL until graduation.**
- **Goal 3: Increase student, educator, parent, and community engagement in FSL.**

A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2013 (pgs. 8-9)

Establishing a Positive FSL Environment

When students and teachers feel respected, safe and valued, the FSL experience is greatly enhanced. The risk-taking and engagement that follow lead to increased confidence and ability in as well as enjoyment of the FSL program. Enthusiastic, caring teachers who foster the same qualities in their students have fewer classroom management problems and a much livelier, more involved classroom community.

As we learn in *The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, elementary* (p. 32) and *secondary* (p. 36) “Teachers can provide a learning environment that encourages all students to take risks – to speak and write French without being afraid of making mistakes, since making mistakes is part of learning a new language.” The curriculum encourages teachers to base their FSL programs in meaningful, age-appropriate and cognitively stimulating tasks and projects to motivate students of FSL. Students are more likely to engage in learning

when they have a certain degree of choice and can express preferences for the themes and activities in lessons. Being involved in controlling the learning process puts students at the centre of their own learning and is critical in developing their engagement, motivation and success.

Possible options to support this are:

- incorporating getting to know each other surveys and other cooperative learning activities to foster connections amongst students;
- using ongoing interactive activities to promote a caring classroom culture;
- co-creating appropriate behaviour expectations and explicit learning strategies;
- co-creating a list of topics of interest to be incorporated in program planning;
- providing lots of scaffolding and ongoing positive encouragement to foster confidence in oral interaction;
- posting a word wall with examples of positive messages to provide students the means to praise and encourage each other;
- focusing on proficiency and effort rather than perfection ... always emphasizing the “can do”;
- offering clear, appropriate assessment criteria and feedback, again, incorporating student suggestions;
- offering collaborative learning opportunities for students;
- incorporating cultural and multicultural literature, events and learning to promote appreciation and understanding of diverse cultures, interests and traditions.



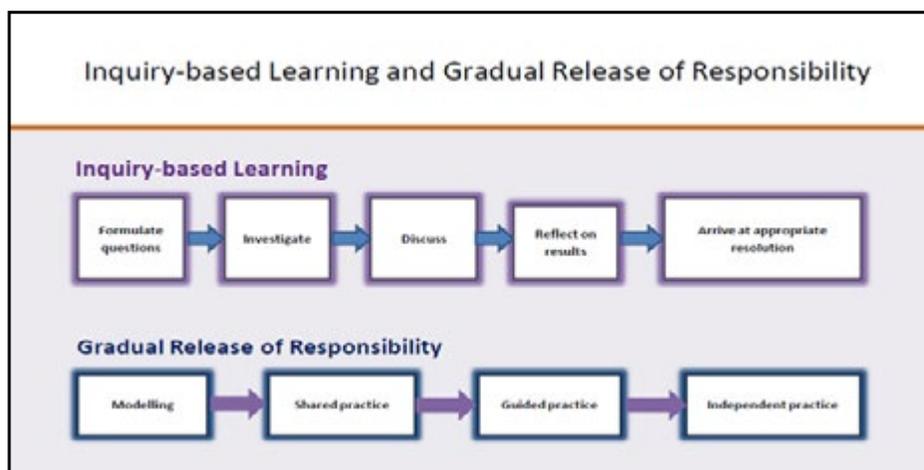
Knowing FSL Learners

The importance of knowing our students cannot be emphasized enough. Understanding and accommodating their needs, interests, abilities, styles of learning and multiple intelligences will ensure that everyone feels included, valued and respected. As stated in [*The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, elementary*](#) (p. 32) and [*secondary*](#) (p. 36) “Learning activities that are based on students’ interests, needs and desire to communicate will achieve the best results in a classroom.” It is recommended that students have multiple, ongoing opportunities to express their interests and get to know everyone in the class through a variety of interactive, engaging activities that encourage mutual respect and appreciation.

Possible options to support this are:

- using multiple intelligence/learning styles surveys and activities;
- providing getting to know each other surveys and activities (interactive, individual, partner, small group and whole class);
- incorporating cooperative learning strategies such as think/pair/share, circle activities, partner and small group activities;
- offering ongoing opportunities to work with different partners and groups (varying groupings frequently);
- co-creating a list of topics in which students are interested and using them to inform planning;
- offering choice in tasks;
- incorporating variety in learning tasks by integrating music, movement, drama, nature, cultural awareness and cross-curricular integration;
- differentiating instruction based on learning style, ability, interest;
- incorporating Differentiated Instruction, Universal Design for Learning and Tiered Intervention to meet the needs of ALL learners. More information may be found in [*Learning for All, A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, 2013.*](#)

Gradual release of responsibility and inquiry-based learning



Curriculum Services Canada, Prologue Web Conference, April 2013

The inquiry-based learning model is a student-centered learning experience based on student interest and exploration. In a document created by Curriculum Services Canada we learn that “Inquiry-based learning ... focuses on and grows out of the interests of the students ... During an inquiry process, teachers and students questions, investigate, discuss and reflect on results to arrive at appropriate resolutions ... In this way, acquiring and using language in authentic and functional ways deepens the students’ knowledge and contributes to their gradual proficiency in French.”

Prologue, Building Language Skills through a Cross-Curricular Approach (pgs. 3-4)

The gradual release of responsibility model is a teacher-led approach, especially when new language acquisition is occurring, however, student participation and oral interaction occur continually, from teacher modeling, through the shared and guided learning to independent activities. A teacher can model a manageable chunk of language and students can then practice using the new vocabulary and/or structure in a variety of engaging situations, reinforcing their acquisition in the context of authentic communication. These interactions, when frequent and engaging, allow for the embedding of new language and/or structures, which leads to successful spontaneous oral interaction. Oral interaction is the foundation for language acquisition and learning in the second language and in turn informs the students’ ability to read and write in their second language successfully. More information may be found in the *Oral Language Development* module.

“Learning requires the explicit, conscious introduction of information; acquisition requires the creation of situations that allow knowledge to be internalized subconsciously.”

Curriculum Services Canada, Prologue Web Conference, April 2013

Strategies to support these models are:

- incorporating modeled, shared, guided and independent instruction and practice across all 4 strands;
- using these stages of gradual release in a learning block or as an iterative process – it is not necessary to time or plan one stage after another for a specified amount of time. A teacher should model at any time deemed necessary and shared and guided practice often take place simultaneously. Repetition may be necessary to ensure understanding of new concepts and learning;
- providing inquiry-based tasks which can be developed around whole class interest or varied according to several interests with integration of language acquisition of common vocabulary and/or structures. This is a wonderful opportunity for students to apply what they have learned to new situations.

Effective Pedagogical Strategies

“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 the learning how they will respond to students who are not making progress.”

The Revised FSL Curriculum, 2013

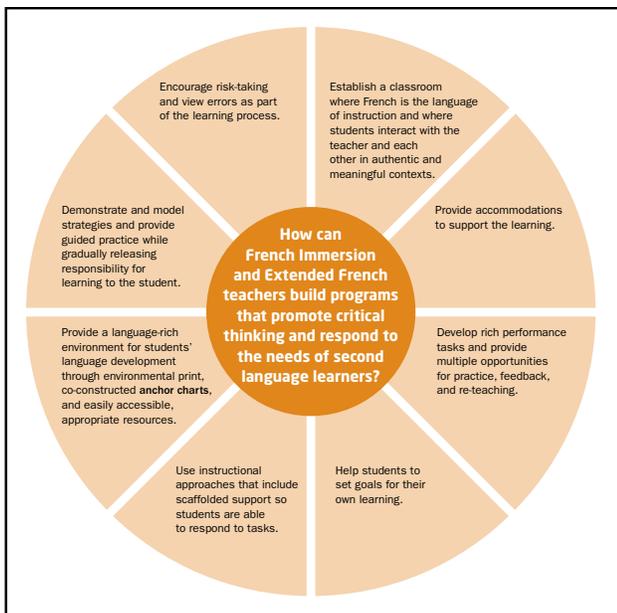
The following instructional strategies have great value in the FSL classroom. Strategies are most effective when they fit well with the teacher’s comfort level and teaching style as well as when they are centred on the students’ various learning styles and needs. Curriculum Services Canada’s *Prologue* resources, *Acquisition of Oral Language as a Foundation for Literacy*, 2012 (p. 6) and *Building Language Skills through a Cross-Curricular Approach*, 2012 (p. 6) provide concise, yet comprehensive compilations of effective FSL instructional strategies.

Some effective pedagogical strategies include:

- encouraging risk-taking and viewing errors as part of the learning process;
- using instructional approaches that include scaffolded support so that students are able to respond to tasks;
- providing accommodations to support learning;
- developing rich performance tasks and providing multiple opportunities for practice, feedback and re-teaching;
- using both class and personal anchor charts as visual resources to support learning;
- asking questions that promote critical thinking to allow students to express thinking, opinions and to make judgments;
- making connections to students’ prior knowledge and experience.

French as the Language of Communication

Establishing French as the language of communication is of the utmost importance in an FSL classroom. This means that all oral communication (teacher-student, student-teacher and student-student) occurs in French. *The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, elementary* (p. 33) and *secondary* (p. 37) state “... it is essential that French be the language of communication in class so that students have constant exposure to correct models of the language and many opportunities to speak in French.” Well-supported oral communication leads to student confidence and risk taking which greatly improves spontaneous authentic oral interaction. Explicitly taught oral communication strategies are useful for planning, teaching and assessment purposes.



Prologue, *Building Language Skills through a Cross-Curricular Approach*, 2012 (p.6)

Some strategies for ensuring that French is the language of communication are:

- explicitly teaching listening strategies by providing opportunities for students to: hear a variety of language modelled and use it in pairs and in small group and whole class situations;
- following a three stage teaching/learning model:
 - Purposeful Introduction of Language;
 - On-going Modelling and Practice of Language and;
 - Application and Consolidation of Language.
- co-creating anchor charts containing oral communication strategies to serve as visual reminders (on chart paper to post in class or attach to cart and provide personal copies for individual student reference). The charts may include:
 - questioning (for clarity, comprehension checks, logical follow up questions);
 - repetition;
 - use of gestures, actions, visual supports;
 - circumlocution (talking around a word when the word is forgotten or not known);
 - risk taking;
 - use of words in question when responding.

A comprehensive list of instructional strategies is also provided in [*The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, elementary*](#) (p. 33) and [*secondary*](#) (p. 37).



The table below offers some strategies to verify comprehension and ensure successful oral interaction.

Comprehension Check Strategies

Check for Understanding Strategy	Description
3□2□1/ Fist to Five/ Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down	Students communicate their level of understanding to teacher using their fingers.
Dot matrix	Students indicate with dots their understanding of concept at beginning of class (unit, week, etc.) and again at the end.
Clickers	Electronic surveying devices that give instant feedback and data.
Entrance/Exit ticket	Each student will be given a ticket to complete before leaving the room answering: What is the most important thing I learned today? What questions do I still have? These tickets can be given to the teacher when exiting the room or upon entering the next day. The teacher uses this information to inform instructional planning.
Entrance/Exit ticket	Each student will be given a ticket to complete before leaving the room answering: What is the most important thing I learned today? What questions do I still have? These tickets can be given to the teacher when exiting the room or upon entering the next day. The teacher uses this information to inform instructional planning.
Give One, Get One	Cooperative activity where the students write a response to a prompt, meet with another student and share ideas so that each leaves with something to add to his/her list.
Interlocking Paper Plates	Dual-colour plates used for students to provide feedback to teacher by sliding the two colour sections to show level of understanding.

Curriculum Services Canada, Prologue Web Conference, April 2013

Action-oriented Approach

Action-oriented tasks provide ongoing opportunities for authentic oral interaction among the students, while they are engaged in working together to accomplish a task, solve a problem or be involved in spontaneous oral communication with a purpose or goal in mind. The students are seen as 'social actors' where they are not only learning a second language, but learning IN their second language. [*The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, elementary*](#) (p. 31) and [*secondary*](#) (p. 35) state "While the communicative approach centres on communicating in the target language, the action-oriented approach requires students to perform a task in a wider social context."

Some examples of the action-oriented approach are:

- co-creating problems to solve or tasks to accomplish in authentic situations – for example, being overcharged for an item in a store, making arrangements to meet friends at the cinema, deciding what to make or order for supper with your family, giving/asking for directions and other appropriate tasks;
- using various authentic texts to engage students in spontaneous, real-life oral interaction (including, but not limited to: maps, menus, job application forms, fiction at appropriate reading levels, shopping flyers, catalogues, magazines, podcasts, twitter, web sites, blogs);
- basing learning tasks on students' needs, real-life interests and experiences;
- incorporating information and communication technology;
- providing many visual prompts and anchor charts for support;
- scaffolding new language appropriately so that students can apply their knowledge and skills in a relevant context which requires oral interaction.

Cooperative Learning Strategies

Invaluable benefits of cooperative learning/teaching strategies include increased student talk time, confidence in oral interaction and improved social skills and self-esteem. While engaged in cooperative learning

activities all students are involved in oral interaction that is chunked, targeted and purposeful which leads to more spontaneity and confidence in their second language ability. Cooperative learning strategies also allow for differentiated instruction, as students are able to enter at the appropriate level of their ability and be engaged and enjoying oral language opportunities that can also be extended to reading and writing activities. It is important to prepare students for success in these activities by co-creating norms for behaviour. Modelling by the teacher (with a co-teacher or a student, or by two or more capable students) ensures that students understand what they are to do and how to carry out the activity. Cooperative learning strategies work very well with the action-oriented approach as this approach "requires students of varying levels to work together in small groups or teams to solve a problem, complete a project, or achieve a common goal." [*A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6, Volume 1, 2006*](#) (p. 96)

The following are some examples of cooperative/ collaborative learning activities:

- **Mix and Mingle:** students practise a targeted, purposeful oral interaction with several students while moving around the classroom – included in the oral exchanges are manners, respectful, interested greetings, farewells and conversational skills.
- **Inner – Outer Circle:** students engage in various oral interactions (spontaneous or following a model) with various partners as they move around the circle. Half the students are in a circle facing outwards and remain in their position, while the other half of the class is in a circle facing partners in the inner circle, but take turns moving along, allowing for multiple opportunities to speak with several partners.
- **Conversation Buddies:** an older class is taught oral communication strategies and practises conversation (small, chunked, authentic, purposeful talk) with partners from a younger class. This can be extended to Amis d'apprentissage where older students not only converse with younger students, but support their reading and writing.

- **Gallery Walk:** students walk around the class to view and discuss images, questions, conversation starters, student work with partners or small groups. Everyone may see all examples, or a chosen number of examples, engaging in purposeful, scaffolded oral communication.

Three Part Lesson, Learning Goals and Success Criteria

Other valuable pedagogical strategies include the use of the 3 part lesson which comprises a short, engaging Minds On introduction, Action, the learning component and Consolidation to review and share student learning and comprehension. This allows for introducing and scaffolding language learning, multiple opportunities for students to practise and apply their learned skills and to consolidate what they've learned and reflect on their learning and their next steps. More information is available in the [Program Planning and Delivery](#) module.

The use of clearly stated, co-created and concise learning goals and success criteria is invaluable as an instructional strategy. Students who understand what they are learning and how to be successful are much more likely to be engaged and to participate with enthusiasm and frequency. Learning goals should be curriculum related and include positive **can-do** statements that encourage students to believe in their ability to be successful. As mentioned earlier, there is a difference between success criteria and learning skills and this should be made explicit to students. As a general rule, success criteria, which are co-created with students, are criteria that the teacher can evaluate with the curriculum achievement charts in mind. Learning skills on the other hand, can be used in many different learning situations and refer to norms of appropriate behaviour and skills students can employ to be successful in various learning situations. These are also most effective when created with the students and are modeled and referenced on an ongoing basis.

Collaborative Inquiry and Learning in the FSL Classroom

Collaboration enhances not only student engagement but higher order thinking through rich, purposeful talk. Collaborative work requires the students to engage in discussion, which, according to [The Revised](#)

[2013-2014 FSL Curricula, elementary](#) (p. 32) and [secondary](#) (p. 36) "... involves a purposeful and extended exchange of ideas that provides a focus for inquiry or problem solving, often leading to new understanding." (p.32)

Some effective examples are:

- using rich images to provoke rich discussion including critical and creative thinking;
- incorporating varied groupings and differentiation in presentation, product, process and linguistic complexity;
- providing visual support and prompts;
- integrating student interest, abilities and needs;
- posing well-supported questions – use of questioning as prompts;
- offering multiple opportunities to practise listening strategies.

As outlined in [The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, elementary](#) (p. 32) and [secondary](#) (p. 36) "Instruction should include a balance of direct, explicit instruction; teacher modelling; shared and guided instruction and opportunities for students to practise, apply skills and strategies and make choices." This blend; along with ongoing opportunities to engage in meaningful oral interaction will build student confidence, proficiency and love of language learning.



Resources

Curriculum Services Canada (2012). Transforming FSL: Connecting, Engaging, Learning Together

<http://www.curriculum.org/projects/professional-learning-for-french-as-a-second-language>

(Includes resources such as “Samples of Student Oral and Written Production Based on CEFR Levels”, “CEFR-inspired Classroom Practices”, “Exploring the CEFR”, “A Guide to Reflective Practice for Core French Teachers”, “Prologue: A Publication for Professional Conversations”, “On est capable!”)

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 (2006). A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6, Volume 1

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/LearningforAll2013.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/general/elemsec/speced/learning.html>

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>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2011). Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, Capacity Building Series monographs. “French Immersion in Ontario: Two Languages...A Shared Approach” (April 2011, Secretariat Special Edition #9

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/CBS_FrenchImmersion.pdf

Ontario Ministry of Education (2012). Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, Capacity Building Series monographs. “Teaching and Learning in the Core French Classroom” 2012, Special Edition #26

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/capacityBuilding.html>