

THE STATE OF  
**FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE**  
EDUCATION IN CANADA 2010  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



# CPF *Canadian Parents for French*

This report could not have been produced without the assistance and advice of many dedicated people, the vast majority of whom volunteered their time and expertise. CPF would like to thank all of those listed on this page for their significant contribution to this report.

David M. Brennick  
President

James Shea  
Executive Director

## CPF ADVISORY GROUP

David M. Brennick  
President  
Canadian Parents for French

James Shea  
Executive Director  
Canadian Parents for French

Debra Pool  
President  
Canadian Parents for French  
British Columbia and Yukon

Robert Rothern  
Executive Director  
Canadian Parents for French  
British Columbia and Yukon

Shannon Nelson  
President  
Canadian Parents for French Alberta

Michael Tryon  
Executive Director  
Canadian Parents for French Alberta

Karen Hamre  
President  
Canadian Parents for French  
Northwest Territories

Linda Bussey  
Executive Director  
Canadian Parents for French  
Northwest Territories

Suzanne Rollo  
President  
Canadian Parents for French Saskatchewan

Karen Pozniak  
Executive Director  
Canadian Parents for French Saskatchewan

Philip Fenez  
President

Canadian Parents for French Manitoba

Catherine Davies  
Executive Director  
Canadian Parents for French Manitoba

Heather Stauble  
President  
Canadian Parents for French Ontario

Betty Gormley  
Executive Director  
Canadian Parents for French Ontario

Martine Delsemme  
President  
Canadian Parents for French Quebec

Lawrence Depoe  
Executive Director  
Canadian Parents for French Quebec

Richard Rice  
President  
Canadian Parents for French  
New Brunswick

Hélène Pelletier  
Executive Director  
Canadian Parents for French  
New Brunswick

Colin Landry  
President  
Canadian Parents for French Nova Scotia

Rebecca Lancaster  
Executive Director  
Canadian Parents for French Nova Scotia

Amanda Wilson  
President  
Canadian Parents for French  
Prince Edward Island

Gail Lecky  
Executive Director

Canadian Parents for French  
Prince Edward Island

Victor Lundrigan  
President  
Canadian Parents for French  
Newfoundland and Labrador

Jarvin Joncas  
Executive Director  
Canadian Parents for French  
Newfoundland and Labrador

## RESEARCH & WRITING

**MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION POLICIES  
ENSURING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO  
THE FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE  
PROGRAM OF CHOICE**

Callie Mady, PhD  
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education,  
Schulich School of Education  
Nipissing University

Glenda Black  
Assistant Professor  
Schulich School of Education  
Nipissing University

Kathryn Fulton  
Concurrent Education Student  
Schulich School of Education  
Nipissing University

**FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE  
ENROLMENT TRENDS**

Doug Hart, PhD  
Institutional Researcher, OISE  
University of Toronto

## ENROLMENT STATISTICS

Joan Hawkins  
Manager, Research & Development  
Canadian Parents for French

Asia Lukaszuk  
Research Assistant

Canadian Parents for French

**ALLOPHONE PARENT AND STUDENT  
ATTITUDES TOWARD AND  
EXPERIENCES IN FRENCH-SECOND-  
LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Callie Mady, PhD,  
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education  
Schulich School of Education  
Nipissing University

**ENGAGING ALLOPHONE PARENTS  
AND STUDENTS IN FRENCH-SECOND-  
LANGUAGE EDUCATION & VOICES OF  
NEW CANADIANS**

Joan Hawkins  
Manager, Research & Development  
Canadian Parents for French

## PRODUCTION

Nicole Chatelain  
Communications Officer  
Canadian Parents for French

## GRAPHIC DESIGN/LAYOUT

Patrick Bisson  
Webmaster/Communications  
Canadian Parents for French

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Joan Hawkins  
Manager, Research & Development  
Canadian Parents for French

## EDITING & TRANSLATION

Ubiquitext, Ottawa

## ADDITIONAL THANKS

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To view this report online, please visit us at [www.cpf.ca](http://www.cpf.ca)

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**PREFACE:**  
**A MESSAGE FROM CPF PRESIDENT**  
**DAVID M. BRENNICK**

As parents, we have the privilege and the responsibility to make the best educational choices for our children – choices which will allow them to pursue personal goals and to make meaningful contributions to Canada’s social and economic development. The members of Canadian Parents for French (CPF) take this responsibility seriously, and feel strongly that all students in Canada should have equitable access to the French-second-language (FSL) program preferred by themselves and their parents.

Unfortunately, we have a long way to go before access to Canada’s world-renowned French immersion and more intensive core French options can be considered equitable. School districts demonstrate great discrepancies in the number and types of FSL programs offered. Some jurisdictions impose enrolment caps on immersion programs, while others levy program and transportation fees. Furthermore, academically-challenged students and new Canadians outside of Quebec whose first language is not English are regularly excluded from French immersion, intensive French and extended French programs.

The National Board of Directors join me in thanking CPF’s volunteer advocates across the country who work long and hard to extend opportunities to learn both of Canada’s official languages to all students in Canada. You represent Canadian citizenship at its very best!



# ENROLMENT CHANGES AT A GLANCE: RATE OF CHANGE 2008-2009<sup>1</sup>

Enrolment Changes at a Glance provides a quick summary (in words and figures) of national trends in French-second-language (FSL) enrolment, as well as trends in each province and territory. A full report is available on our website: [www.cpf.ca](http://www.cpf.ca).

## GROWTH

Growth measures show absolute expansions or contractions with important implications for resourcing. Gains or losses represented by current enrolment are compared to two standards—enrolment in the prior year and average enrolment over the prior three years.

## COVERAGE

Coverage measures show breadth of participation and can be interpreted as indicators of accessibility. Enrolments are expressed as a percentage of eligible enrolment or, in some cases, of total enrolment.

## GROWTH AND COVERAGE TOGETHER

Growth and coverage viewed together can provide a more complete picture of conditions. Declining enrolment with stable coverage suggests that demographic changes are driving enrolment trends. Declining enrolment linked to declining coverage raises questions about provincial/territorial commitment to FSL programs, and about any formal or de facto changes in policy affecting access.

NATIONAL/ PROVINCE/ TERRITORY	ELIGIBLE POPULATION		FRENCH IMMERSION ENROLMENT 2008-9		FRENCH IMMERSION COVERAGE		CORE FRENCH ENROLMENT 2008-9		CORE FRENCH COVERAGE 2008-9		THE BIG PICTURE <sup>2</sup>
	COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEAR	COMPARED TO AVERAGE OF PREVIOUS 3 YEARS	COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEAR	COMPARED TO AVERAGE OF PREVIOUS 3 YEARS	COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEAR	COMPARED TO AVERAGE OF PREVIOUS 3 YEARS	COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEAR	COMPARED TO AVERAGE OF PREVIOUS 3 YEARS	COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEAR	COMPARED TO AVERAGE OF PREVIOUS 3 YEARS	
NTL	DOWN	DOWN	UP	UP	UP	UP	UP	UP	DOWN	DOWN	<p><b>Eligible Student Population</b> Nationally, the eligible student population for FSL programs continued to decline in 2008-9, down by almost 1%. Declining enrolments are general throughout the country with the exception of Nunavut, although the rate of decline varies. The Atlantic provinces experienced above average rates of declining enrolments.</p> <p><b>Core French</b> Nationally, core French enrolments in 2008-9 also continued their decline, and at a rate (2.9%) that exceeded the drop in eligible population. As result, coverage shrank by 2%. Both enrolment and coverage fell in most jurisdictions. Alberta, as in past years, bucked the trend, joined in 2008-9 by Manitoba. However, the rates of increase in Alberta (2 % for enrolment; 2.5% for coverage) have fallen off sharply from those of the past two years. Growth rates in Manitoba are even lower at about 1%.</p> <p><b>French Immersion</b> French immersion enrolments increased nationally by 1.4% in 2008-9. The increase in coverage was higher at 2.3%, reflecting the continuing decline in the eligible student population. It should be noted, however, that nationally, the gain in immersion enrolment represented just over 10% of the loss in number of core French students (a gain of 4631 immersion students compared to 44,722 fewer core French students). Total FSL coverage fell marginally between 2007-8 and 2008-9. French immersion enrolments and coverage increased in the West and central Canada. However, both Quebec and New Brunswick again saw rates of decline in immersion enrolment that outstripped the drop in eligible student population, such that coverage also fell. Immersion enrolments also declined in two smaller jurisdictions – Prince Edward Island and the Northwest Territories. However in both, the eligible student population fell more rapidly such that coverage actually increased.</p>
BC	DOWN	DOWN	UP	UP	UP	UP	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	Eligible enrolment has continued to decline, although only slightly in 2008-9. French immersion programs again register both higher enrolment and higher coverage; both are up substantially from 2007-8. Core French enrolment and coverage, in contrast, continue their decline; both are down modestly.
YK <sup>3</sup>	DOWN	DOWN	UP	UP	UP	UP	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	Because FSL enrolments in Yukon remain small, comparatively small changes in student numbers can cause large percentage changes. Eligible enrolment continued to decline but more slowly than in 2006-7. French immersion enrolment increased by over a quarter (through the addition of 115 students), with a parallel increase in coverage. Core French enrolment and coverage continued to decline, with losses exceeding those in 2006-7.
AB	DOWN	DOWN	UP	UP	UP	UP	UP	UP	UP	UP	Eligible enrolment has again declined, though very modestly in 2008-9. French immersion enrolment and coverage again registered modest gains. Core French in Alberta, in contrast to everywhere else, also registered modest gains in both enrolment and coverage.
NT	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	UP	UP	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	UP	Eligible enrolment has again fallen; the drop in 2008-9 is modest. There has also been a modest decline in French immersion enrolment after gains in the previous year. However, decline in eligible enrolment is proportionally larger such that French Immersion coverage actually increased. The decline in Core French enrolment has continued. In 2008-9 enrolment is down substantially; coverage only modestly due to the decline in eligible enrolment. It should be noted that these changes are based on small student populations.
NU	UP	UP	NO FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM		NO FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM		DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	Nunavut FSL programs are also small. Eligible enrolment is up modestly. Core French enrolment, in contrast, has declined substantially, the second yearly decline since a large percentage increase in 2006-7. Coverage is also down substantially, more so than enrolment, given the increase in the eligible population.
% of change	-0.9	-1.9	1.4	3.9	2.3	2.9	-2.9	-4.0	-2.0	-1.2	
% of change	-0.8	-1.9	5.0	8.9	5.8	10.9	-3.7	-5.5	-3.7	-4.8	
% of change	-1.2	-2.2	24.8	31.6	26.4	37.5	-3.0	-8.5	-1.7	-6.0	
% of change	-0.5	-1.4	2.4	5.4	2.9	6.8	2.0	8.6	2.5	10.1	
% of change	-3.6	-7.2	-2.3	-0.7	1.3	6.9	-6.1	-6.6	-2.7	-0.5	
% of change	2.5	2.1	NO FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM		NO FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM		-5.6	-6.3	-7.9	-8.2	

1. 2007-8 data was used for ON and YK as 2008-9 data was not available;

2. In this column the term "slightly" generally indicates a change of less than 1%; "very modest," 1-2%; "modest," >2% but <5%; "substantial," 5% or more;

3. 2008-9 figures are ministry projections.

## CHART CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

NATIONAL/ PROVINCE/ TERRITORY	ELIGIBLE POPULATION		FRENCH IMMERSION ENROLMENT 2008-9		FRENCH IMMERSION COVERAGE		CORE FRENCH ENROLMENT 2008-9		CORE FRENCH COVERAGE 2008-9		THE BIG PICTURE <sup>2</sup>
	COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEAR	COMPARED TO AVERAGE OF PREVIOUS 3 YEARS	COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEAR	COMPARED TO AVERAGE OF PREVIOUS 3 YEARS	COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEAR	COMPARED TO AVERAGE OF PREVIOUS 3 YEARS	COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEAR	COMPARED TO AVERAGE OF PREVIOUS 3 YEARS	COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEAR	COMPARED TO AVERAGE OF PREVIOUS 3 YEARS	
SK	DOWN	DOWN	UP	UP	UP	UP	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	Eligible enrolment has continued to decline, in 2008-9, very modestly. Immersion enrolment and coverage have increased modestly, continuing a trend. Core French enrolment and coverage have fallen substantially. Last year enrolment fell so little that decline in eligible enrolment actually resulted in an increase in coverage.
% of change	-1.1	-2.7	2.5	5.3	3.7	8.1	-8.0	-9.2	-7.0	-6.7	
MB	DOWN	DOWN	UP	UP	UP	UP	UP	DOWN	UP	DOWN	Eligible enrolment is again down, though only slightly. Immersion enrolment has again increased modestly, as has coverage. Coverage has increased somewhat more due to the drop in eligible enrolment. Core French enrolment is virtually unchanged after declining last year. The fall in eligible enrolment has meant a very slight increase in coverage.
% of change	-0.7	-1.5	1.9	3.7	2.7	5.3	0.1	-3.0	0.8	-1.5	
ON <sup>1</sup>	DOWN	DOWN	UP	UP	UP	UP	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	Eligible enrolment continued downward. French immersion enrolment has grown at almost twice the rate in 2006-7, and coverage has also increased substantially. Core French enrolment has dropped only slightly, a marked improvement over 2006-7. Coverage is also down only slightly.
% of change	-0.9	-1.7	3.0	8.1	3.9	10.0	-1.6	-2.7	-0.7	-1.0	
QC <sup>3</sup>	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	Québec figures used this year are Ministry projections. Eligible enrolment continued to decline, very modestly, in 2008-9. Immersion enrolment has again declined modestly, while coverage declined very modestly, cushioned by the fall in eligible enrolment. Core French enrolment is also down for the second year in a row. The rate of decline exceeds that in the eligible populations such that coverage has also declined, though only slightly.
% of change	-1.1	-2.2	-3.7	-7.9	-1.1	-4.3	-2.5	-5.9	-0.5	-3.0	
NB	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	Eligible enrolment declined very modestly, continuing a trend. Both French immersion and Core French enrolments, however, experienced substantial declines with the result that coverage also fell precipitously. This is the second consecutive year that immersion enrolment has fallen at a faster rate than the eligible population. Core French enrolment fell even more substantially. The drop in core French has been accelerating since 2005-6. The failure to replace the grade 1 intake of last year is the main cause of the substantial drop in 2008-9 in both programs.
% of change	-1.6	-3.2	-9.9	-11.9	-8.5	-9.0	-39.0	-43.2	-38.0	-41.3	
NS	DOWN	DOWN	UP	UP	UP	UP	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	Eligible enrolment continued to slide. French immersion enrolment fell only slightly with the result that coverage increased. The drop in core French enrolment, in contrast, outstripped the decline in eligible population, and coverage was again down.
% of change	-1.7	-4.3	2.5	3.5	4.3	8.1	-4.2	-8.3	-2.5	-4.2	
PE	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	UP	UP	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	Eligible enrolment in 2008-9 declined modestly, continuing a trend. Immersion enrolment has shown a see-saw pattern of change. After a modest increase last year, enrolment declined very slightly in 2008-9, so slightly that the more rapid decline in the eligible population resulted in an increase in coverage. Core French enrolment continued downward. Enrolment fell substantially; coverage somewhat less due to the drop in eligible enrolment.
% of change	-2.7	-5.9	-1.1	-0.3	1.7	5.9	-5.5	-10.6	-2.9	-4.9	
NL	DOWN	DOWN	UP	UP	UP	UP	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	DOWN	Eligible enrolment in Newfoundland and Labrador has continued to decline modestly in 2008-9. In contrast, both immersion enrolment and coverage have increased substantially. Core French enrolment again fell, and more rapidly than the eligible population with the result that coverage was down modestly.
% of change	-2.0	-5.1	6.8	11.5	9.0	17.3	-4.9	-9.2	-2.9	-4.2	

1. 2007-8 data was used for ON and YK as 2008-9 data was not available.

2. In this column the term 'slightly' generally indicates a change of less than 1%; 'very modest,' 1-2%; 'modest,' >2% but <5%; 'substantial,' 5% or more;

3. 2008-9 figures are ministry projections.

## VOICES OF NEW CANADIANS: PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES WITH FRENCH AS A SECOND OFFICIAL LANGUAGE IN CANADA

Allophone students—young people who immigrated to Canada and were unable to speak English or French upon arrival—are often overlooked in French-second-language (FSL)\* promotional and advocacy initiatives. Allophone students are not encouraged, and are sometimes actively discouraged, from enrolling in FSL education despite the impressive performance of those who do<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, no federal or provincial policy explicitly ensures that Allophone students have access to FSL education.

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) commissioned Callie Mady, PhD, to conduct a study of Allophone attitudes toward Canada's linguistic duality and experiences with FSL education in Canada. With advice and support from CPF-ON and CPF-BC & YK who shared their expertise and experiences with multicultural communities, focus groups were conducted in Toronto, Vancouver, and North Bay. CPF branches and chapters recruited 19 parents of Allophone students by inviting parents from their schools and

communities along with those who had participated in Branch outreach initiatives and in the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages' round table on Canadian diversity. North Bay parents were recruited through the local multicultural centre.

In addition, an online survey gathered the attitudes and experiences of 125 Allophone university students from across the country who had immigrated to Canada, who did not speak English or French upon arrival, and who had been educated in Canadian public schools outside Quebec. Allophone students were recruited via advertisements in university campus newspapers, and a small number of students from the University of Ottawa were recruited for a focus group with the assistance of the Director of Immersion Programs. Students received an honorarium of \$25 for their participation.

### ALLOPHONE PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD FSL LEARNING

All Allophone parents interviewed were aware, prior to immigrating, that Canada has two official languages. Despite their surprise that little French was heard in daily life in English-dominated communities, despite the fact that 80% of these parents received no information about French immersion options from the school system, and despite frequent discouragement from educators, Allophone support for linguistic duality and FSL\* education remains high. 60% felt that learning both Canada's official languages would benefit their children, and 40% had enrolled their children in French immersion. This figure provides a striking contrast to national immersion enrolment, which

40% of  
Allophone  
parents  
enrolled  
their  
children in  
French  
immersion.

hovers at about 8%, with provincial enrolment ranging from 6% to 26% outside Quebec. Their commitment to both official languages is further demonstrated by the astonishing 84% of Allophone parents in English-dominated communities who studied FSL themselves. It is perhaps due to their perceptions of the advantages of learning other languages that the vast majority of adult participants sought out opportunities to learn FSL. The fact that 63% of Allophone parents interviewed learned to speak or saw others speaking more than one language in their country of origin may explain their confidence in their children's ability to master multiple languages.

<sup>1</sup> Mady, C. (2007). *Allophone Students in French-Second-Official-Language Programs: A Literature Review*. Canadian Modern Language Review, 63(5). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

\*Although French-second-official-language (FSOL) is the term preferred by many researchers when referring to the experiences of Allophone students (who are learning French as a third or subsequent language, rather than a second language), in this report, we refer to these programs as French-second-language (FSL), in line with the terminology used by ministries of education in Canada.



“And parents, we don’t have to be afraid of, “Oh! Is my daughter, my son’s going to learn the English language at the same time, because if she/he would go there he might mix up the languages. And you know what, I believe this is a myth... So I saw that my kids, they were learning, they were trilingual at this time, and they do not get confused... Now they speak three languages.”  
- Vancouver participant

“We are starting, me and my husband, starting to just kind of going through the courses for the French... I believe it’s a bonus if anybody here knows any other language other than English.” - Toronto Participant

“I only have one job, so I have time to learn night time, you know, courses at night... I’m always interested and I’m waiting for the next one to come. I’m gonna register again for the next lesson.” Vancouver Participant

Unfortunately, educators do not share their confidence.

“...We were inquiring about extended French for our older daughter... when we talked about that to the principal and her home teacher, they were both actually trying to, they were both saying, like, “Oh it’s a very hard program, maybe you should think about it.” Instead of encouraging us and encouraging students to go, to explore their interest, they were actually trying to persuade us to stay there and go with the core English program, which was very disappointing, and it should be otherwise.” - Toronto Participant

“... But the teachers say that is too hard for them... for this year it’s okay. I listen to the teacher. But next year he takes French.” - North Bay Participant

Despite educator concerns, fully 95% of parents who chose immersion for their children were satisfied with the decision and with the program.

“I put my son through the French immersion school...I think I did the right thing for him. Yep. ‘Cause, when he was in school I was also learning at the same time, so I benefited from that... I did it right. For both of us.” - Vancouver Participant

“The French language also help them to find better jobs. And this is a treat. And many other things, as I said, linguistically speaking; it opened up their horizons, and I’m proud of that.” - Vancouver Participant

Parents who had not put their children in immersion expressed regret: 50% of those who had not put their children in immersion would have, had they had information about the program.

“I really felt guilty. It’s almost like he’s missing out and I really felt that I should have known better so he would have a better opportunity. Yeah. Would have been nice. Yeah, especially now, he’s starting to go into the military and he said the other language would have been a big, big bonus. It will open doors for him, whatever he’s doing...I never knew. It’s just sad.” - Vancouver Participant

## ALLOPHONE STUDENTS’ ATTITUDES TOWARD LEARNING BOTH OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Allophone parent commitments to Canada’s official languages and confidence in their children’s ability to learn multiple languages would seem to influence their children. Allophone students presented a number of factors that influenced their decisions to pursue FSL studies in elementary and secondary school. 96% believed that official-language bilingualism would have a positive effect on future employment, 94% stated that they value multilingualism, 79% noted that they were doing well in their French studies, and 59% expressed a desire to learn more about francophone culture.

Allophone students faced roadblocks similar to their parents’ when attempting to enrol in immersion or extended French programs. 33% indicated that the school discouraged their enrolment while fully 42% reported that the school disallowed their enrolment.

“I think it was when my parents wanted to switch me over to immersion in Grade 7, the principal and even the French teacher, she was like “you shouldn’t be here, you don’t have a good enough grasp of English,” She basically told me I was going to fail at it so why would I go into it. And at that point I was like “okay I’m done with this there’s no point.”  
- Allophone University Student



Despite being discouraged, Allophone students demonstrated commitment to pursuing FSL studies. 50% of Allophone student respondents stayed in French beyond the compulsory period and completed the core French curriculum, compared with provincial completion rates ranging from 6% to 15%<sup>2</sup>. Students also expressed satisfaction with their French proficiency in elementary and secondary school. 87% felt that their French was good/adequate enough to continue FSL at a higher level, and about two-thirds felt it was good enough to cope with social situations, to understand mass media in French, and to apply for jobs requiring French.

Allophone students also consider learning both official languages part of their Canadian identity, with three-quarters indicating that knowing both official languages is an important factor in Canadian citizenship.

“...if you’re going to count yourself as being Canadian you should embrace everything that Canada is about, I mean history wise and culturally wise, it’s a bilingual, two-culture country with English and French so I think you have to accept both of them.” - Allophone university student

88% expressed satisfaction with their post-secondary French studies and with their own performance in these courses. 83% reported that their French was good enough to conduct conversations in French, 66% said that they could understand French mass media, and 58% felt confident enough to apply for jobs requiring French.

## CONCLUSION

The interview and questionnaire findings revealed that Allophone adult and university participants are committed to FSL acquisition. Both groups judged the acquisition of languages, FSL in particular, as positive. In fact, the majority of both parent and student participants expressed a desire and took action to study FSL.

Responses show, however, that there is a need to provide immigrant communities with information about educational choices in their regions. Allophone parents’ dissatisfaction with the educational system suggests that schools and school districts should provide more FSL information and support. Respondents also indicated that they received information about education in Canada from cultural centres. Providing cultural centres and other immigrant-serving organizations with information about educational choices is another way to better inform newly arrived parents of their choices.

The full research report can be found on our website: <http://www.cpf.ca/eng/resources-reports-fsl.html>

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Parents for French. (2004.) The State of French-Second-Language Education in Canada 2004. Ottawa: Canadian Parents for French, p. 36.

## VOICES OF NEW CANADIANS: FACT SHEET FOR EDUCATORS



Canadian Parents for French commissioned Callie Mady, PhD, to conduct a study of Allophone attitudes toward Canada's linguistic duality and their experiences with French-second-language (FSL)\* education in Canada. An online survey gathered the attitudes and experiences of 125 Allophone university students from across the country who had immigrated to Canada without English or French as a dominant language and who had been educated in Canadian public schools outside Quebec. In addition, focus groups for 19 Allophone parents were conducted in Toronto, Vancouver, and North Bay.

### **Allophone parents respect official languages and are confident that their children can learn multiple languages:**

60% of Allophone parents felt that learning both of Canada's official languages would benefit their children.

84% of Allophone parents studied FSL themselves.

40% enrolled their children in French immersion, an impressive rate given provincial enrolment rates that range from 6% to 26% outside Quebec.

50% of those who had not put their children in immersion would have done so if they had had information about the program.

63% of Allophone parents interviewed learned to speak or saw others speaking more than one language in their country of origin that may, in part, explain their confidence in their children's ability to master multiple languages.

### **Allophone students reflect their parents' commitment and confidence:**

96% of Allophone students believed that official-language bilingualism would have a positive effect on future employment.

94% stated that they value multilingualism.

Their prior language learning experience also allowed them to judge that having learned one language helps with the learning of another. Allophone parents need information about the Canadian education system and about FSL programs in particular.

### **Allophone parents need information about the Canadian education system and about FSL programs in particular:**

80% of Allophone parents received no information about French immersion options from the school system.

30% of the Allophone parents received no information at all about the Canadian educational system from the school system itself prior to registering their children.

### **Allophone parents and students are sometimes discouraged from choosing FSL education:**

Although schools as well as provincial and federal governments want success for their students, they do not act in a consistent manner to provide FSL learning opportunities to immigrant youth.

33% of Allophone students report that their school discouraged their enrolment.

42% reported that their school had disallowed their enrolment.

### **Allophone parents and students were satisfied with their FSL learning, despite discouragement and the challenges of learning a third or subsequent language:**

Allophone FSL enrolment and retention rates are surprising since the Allophone students receive little encouragement to choose FSL studies.

95% of Allophone parents who had enrolled their children in French immersion expressed satisfaction.

\*Although French-second-official-language (FSOL) is the term preferred by many researchers when referring to the experiences of Allophone students (who are learning French as a third or subsequent language, rather than a second language), in this report, we refer to these programs as French-second-language (FSL), in line with the terminology used by ministries of education in Canada.

87% of Allophone students expressed satisfaction with their French learning in elementary and secondary school and felt that their French was good enough to continue FSL at a higher level.

50% of Allophone student respondents remained in French beyond the compulsory period and completed the core French curriculum—an impressive rate compared with provincial completion rates ranging from 6% to 15%.

88% of students expressed satisfaction with their post-secondary French learning.

### **Educators can support and encourage Allophone parents and students to pursue FSL studies:**

- Provide information about all FSL programs to all parents, including immigrant parents.
- Work with cultural and immigrant-serving organizations to

ensure that information about the school system in Canada and FSL education is available to immigrant parents upon arrival.

- Maintain a broad range of FSL program options and entry points so that Allophone children who miss the early immersion program can access other immersion or extended French options.
- Make teachers and administrators aware of the confidence and language-learning advantages of Allophone students who have already learned a second language.
- Make school personnel aware of the career and citizenship benefits of official-language bilingualism for Allophone students.
- Implement Ministry of Education policies explicitly ensuring access to FSL programs for Allophone students.



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# REVIEW OF MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION: POLICIES AFFECTING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

## THE BENEFITS OF FORMAL MINISTRY POLICIES

In Canada, the regulation and supervision of education reside with the provinces and territories<sup>1</sup> who are proud of their educational systems<sup>2</sup> and carefully guard their constitutional jurisdiction over education<sup>3</sup>. However, the provinces and territories have not used their authority to create many formal policies that would ensure access to French-second-language (FSL)\* education. This absence of direction could lead to inconsistent and inequitable access to FSL education<sup>4</sup> whereas a formal policy process may be the most effective starting point for achieving more equitable access<sup>5</sup>.

Currently in Canadian schools, policies for access to FSL programs range on a continuum from informal to formal. Some Ministries of Education have developed informal policies that Delaney (2002) described as de facto policies or practices that have become legitimized over time: “These policies develop where no official or stated policy is written down and might be referred to as an ‘unofficial policy.’”<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the “spirit” of an informal policy may be interpreted differently from one school to the next, creating further inconsistencies<sup>7</sup>. At the other end of the continuum, Delaney (2002) found that some Ministries of Education have formal policies that were developed through a process that included stakeholder input.

The adoption of formal policies has advantages. The benefits include increasing public awareness and reducing ambiguity with regard to the goals of the school.

Formal policies also provide a framework for school planning, ensuring consistency in operational procedures within and between school communities. In addition, when formal policy-making is grounded in research, it is given greater credibility as it provides evidence to support the policy. When stakeholders believe that the policy responds to needs of the students, they are more likely to support its implementation. Cooper, Fusarelli and Randall (2004) support the notion that legitimizing the policy by expertise and stakeholder participation improves the process. In particular, Delaney (2002) points to the example of how formal policies provide newly appointed school administration with clear direction and stability, which promotes continuity of school programs. At the same time, policies may be perceived as a formalized act, with a pre-agreed objective, “approved or sanctioned by an institutional body or authority.” The weight of the government and support of the stakeholders give focus and reality to policies.

Mady (2007) found that the absence of such policies can lead school administrators to make decisions contrary to research and exclude students from FSL studies. Loreman (2007) noted that without supportive formal policy, administrators have difficulty promoting school reform.

Formally sanctioned provincial policies regarding access to FSL education could provide consistency of access between boards and among schools whereas lack of such policies can give rise to inequities in access. An illustration of current inequitable FSL practices occurs when school boards decide if French immersion parents are charged for bussing. It is therefore feasible for a student in one region to receive bussing free of charge while another student in a neighbouring district cannot access bussing as the family is unable to pay the fees levied by the school board. This varied access to FSL education can lead to inequitable opportunities for children in Canada.

... Absence of direction could lead to inconsistent and inequitable access to FSL education whereas a formal policy process may be the most effective starting point to achieving more equitable access.

<sup>1</sup> Marsh & Willis, 2003;

<sup>2</sup> Levin & Farthing, 2004; Levin, Glaze, & Fullan, 2008;

<sup>3</sup> Levin, 2009;

<sup>4</sup> Mady & Arnett, 2009; Mady & Turnbull, 2010;

<sup>5</sup> Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004;

<sup>6</sup> Delaney, 2002, p. 164.;

<sup>7</sup> Loreman, 2007.

\*Although French-second-official-language (FSOL) is the term preferred by many researchers when referring to the experiences of Allophone students (who are learning French as a third or subsequent language, rather than a second language), in this report, we refer to these programs as French-second-language (FSL), in line with the terminology used by ministries of education in Canada.



## EXISTING FORMAL POLICIES\*\*

The purpose of this study was to examine formal, specific provincial/territorial policies as they pertain to Canadian Parents for French (CPF)'s indicators of equitable access to French-second-language (FSL) programs. More specifically, the study sought to answer the following research question: To what extent do the provinces/territories put formal, specific policies into place in order to provide for equitable access to FSL programs?

In order to answer the above question, a formal policy document review of the Ministries of Education's websites was conducted. The review was then shared with Ministry personnel, which provided an opportunity for them to offer further direction.

The following matrix shows the findings of the study according to CPF's indicators for equitable access to FSL programs compared with the corresponding existence of specific, formal policies.

DO THE PROVINCES/TERRITORIES HAVE POLICIES...	AB	BC	MB	NB	NL	NT	NS	NU	ON	PE	SK	YT
... to ensure that distance education is available to provide FSL learning opportunities to students in small, rural and remote districts?	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
... to ensure that every parent is regularly informed about FSL options and entry points, as well as the French-language proficiency levels that can be expected from each option?	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
... to ensure that a wide range of FSL entry points is maintained at the elementary and secondary levels?	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
... to ensure that Allophone students are encouraged and permitted to enrol in core French, alternate core French, and French immersion programs?	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	P	N	N	N
... to ensure the provision of specialist services for gifted students in core French, alternate core French, and French immersion programs?	N	N	P	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	N
... to ensure the provision of specialist services for academically challenged students in core French, alternate core French, and French immersion programs?	N	N	P	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	N
... to ensure the admission of academically challenged students to alternate core French and French immersion programs?	N	O	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
... to prevent differential program fees for alternate core French and French immersion programs?	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y
... to prevent differential fees for transportation to alternate core French and French immersion programs?	N	O	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
... to prevent the establishment and use of admission criteria?	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
... to prevent capping the numbers in alternate core French and French immersion programs?	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

## LEGEND

Y = yes

N = no

P = issue partially addressed

O = issue addressed but in opposing direction

\*Although French-second-official-language (FSOL) is the term preferred by many researchers when referring to the experiences of Allophone students (who are learning French as a third or subsequent language, rather than a second language), in this report, we refer to these programs as French-second-language (FSL), in line with the terminology used by ministries of education in Canada.

\*\* Quebec has not been included in this research because immigrants to QC are required to study French as their first official language.

## CONCLUSION

The significant finding from the study is the relative absence of specific, formal policies at the provincial/territorial level that would ensure equitable access to French-second-language (FSL) programming according to CPF's criteria. Although absence of formal policies pertaining to access to FSL education does not necessarily equate to absence of commitment or equitable practices, it does provide more opportunities for potential inconsistencies. Conversely, an increase in formal policies that specifically address the above influential factors of equitable access to FSL programming could provide a foundation grounded in research, where applicable, on which administrators could base their decisions.

You will find the full report at [www.cpf.ca](http://www.cpf.ca).

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## CPF ADVOCACY POSITION STATEMENTS



### EQUITABLE ACCESS TO FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

The members of Canadian Parents for French (CPF) believe that every child should have equitable access to the French-second-language program (FSL) of their choice. FSL programs are accessible to all students when:

- There is open enrolment with no admission criteria or enrolment caps so that no child is turned away;
- Transportation is provided at no cost for both urban and rural students;
- Distance learning is available to provide FSL learning for students in small and remote communities;
- No additional fees are charged for FSL programs;
- Programming and specialist services are provided for gifted, special need and Allophone students;
- Every parent is regularly informed about FSL options and entry points, as well as the French-language proficiency levels which can be expected from each option;
- All students receive the information they need to make decisions about continuing to learn French at the secondary and post-secondary levels as well as outside of the education system.

### FULL RANGE OF FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE ENTRY POINTS AND PROGRAM CHOICES

The members of Canadian Parents for French (CPF) believe that students should be offered a variety of secondary and post-secondary French-second-language (FSL) program options designed to meet different aspirations. Students have access to a sufficient variety of FSL programs when:

- There are multiple entry points to FSL programs at the elementary and secondary levels;
- A variety of immersion and core French programs are offered to elementary and secondary students;
- There are sufficient post-secondary opportunities for students to continue FSL studies.

### NATIONAL FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TESTING

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) supports the development and implementation of national, standardized French-second-language (FSL) proficiency tests. CPF commends the Department of Canadian Heritage (CH) for its initiatives in promoting national standards, and encourages CH, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and provincial/territorial Ministries of Education to act quickly and co-operatively on this issue.

CPF, in common with other players in the FSL education stakeholder community, supports the use of FSL proficiency testing to accomplish a variety of objectives. Accordingly, CPF recommends that the instrument (or instruments) chosen should be so designed as to support the following purposes:

- To establish national, comparable standards of French proficiency outcomes for graduates from various elementary and secondary FSL programs. These proficiency outcomes should be used:
  - To assist parents/students to make informed choices when taking FSL education decisions;
  - To ensure that high school graduates are aware of their abilities in French and thus to encourage them to pursue post-secondary studies in French;
  - To ensure that potential employers understand the French-language abilities of candidates;
  - To assist post-secondary institutions to determine the appropriate placement of students in first-year French courses;

- To assist post-secondary institutions to determine which FSL programs merit advanced standing in French studies.
- To allow secondary FSL teachers and students to assess individual student performance and to develop appropriate individualized strategies for improvement;
- To establish national standards for FSL teacher accreditation: entrance assessment to determine whether language upgrading is required, and exit requirement to ensure that proficiency standards have been met;
- To establish national French proficiency standards for FSL teachers;
- To establish national standards for evaluating provincial/territorial performance in meeting the goals of their Official Languages in Education Program action plans;
- To establish a definition of "functional bilingualism" and to articulate national standards against which to evaluate progress toward the goals of the federal Action Plan for Official Languages;
- To ensure that all FSL students be accorded no-cost access to French-proficiency testing.

## **QUALITY FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS**

The members of Canadian Parents for French (CPF) believe that Canadian students deserve high quality, effective French-second-language (FSL) programs. Excellent FSL programming is ensured when:

- Ministries of education and school districts have written FSL policies and guidelines which provide written goals for student French proficiency for all programs and specify sufficient hours of FSL instruction to achieve those goals;
- Graduates receive official recognition of their French proficiency achievements;
- New technologies are used to enhance FSL in the classroom;
- Research into FSL education is supported and used to inform policies, program design and student proficiency expectations;
- There is an adequate supply of quality teaching/learning resources;
- FSL teacher qualifications for all programs specify French-language proficiency, second-language teaching methods and subject competence;
- Mechanisms are in place to ensure a sufficient supply of qualified FSL teachers;
- There are adequate professional activities for FSL teachers to keep up with current pedagogical practices;
- School administrators receive the resources they need in order to effectively plan for and supervise the FSL programs in their schools.

## **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

The members of Canadian Parents for French (CPF) believe that ensuring effective French-second-language (FSL) programming is the shared responsibility of governments, school districts, teachers, school administrators and support staff and parents. Shared responsibility for FSL programming is achieved when:

- Provincial policies and guidelines for FSL programs exist and are communicated directly to parents, teachers and administrators;
- Student French-proficiency achievement in FSL programs and current research findings are reviewed regularly, and policies and curricula are adjusted accordingly;
- A variety of accessible extra-curricular activities are offered so that all students have opportunities to practice and develop their French-language skills beyond the classroom and the curriculum;
- Adequate, sustainable program funding has been secured when funds designated for various FSL programs reflect the amount of time allotted to instruction in French and are used specifically for those programs, and the amount and flow of funds is transparent;
- Information about FSL learning is readily available to parents as their children move through the grades so they can support and encourage their children at all levels;
- Parents and other community stakeholder organizations are informed of FSL issues to be considered and are actively involved in decision-making at the school, school district, ministry and government levels.





The members of Canadian Parents for French believe that every child should have equitable access to the French-second-language (FSL)\* program of his or her choice. Equitable access means that no admission criteria, enrolment caps, or differential program and/or transportation fees are levied; that distance FSL learning as well as programming and specialist services for gifted, special need, and Allophone students are provided; that every parent is informed of all FSL entry points and the proficiency levels associated with each option; and that every student is informed of the need to continue FSL studies at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Equitable access is also dependent on school districts maintaining a range of FSL entry points to accommodate student needs, and on providing distance education options for students in small and remote districts.

We are convinced that ministries of education can best ensure accountability for FSL education in their jurisdictions by developing, implementing, and monitoring compliance with clear, inclusionary policies for FSL studies. A review of policy documents from provincial and territorial ministries of education, however, indicates that policies are in very short supply. Indeed, we found only five policies that address any of these criteria in the whole country!

Without ministry policies, academically challenged and Allophone students will continue to be turned away from or counselled out of immersion programs, students in remote communities will not have access to the elementary-level immersion programs that are a pre-requisite for the secondary-level programs at high school in larger communities, and many parents will continue to lack information about FSL options and entry points.

Allophone experiences with elementary and secondary FSL studies provide a good example of the inconsistent and exclusionary practices that result when school districts and educators are left to address these issues with ad hoc decisions, or to disregard the issues completely. No ministry in Canada has a policy addressing Allophone participation in more intensive FSL programs, but 33% of Allophone students reported that concerned educators discouraged enrolment, while 42% reported that their school had actually disallowed their enrolment. Schools and school districts need factual information about the strong language-acquisition skills and motivation of Allophone students. They also need Ministry policies to inform their decisions.

Government and educators must enhance access to French immersion programs and encourage all youth to master both official languages—the need for an adequate supply of bilingual staff has never been greater. Retirements from the public service and continued growth in the service industry sector have increased the demand for qualified, bilingual employees. In order to maintain its advantageous position in the new knowledge-based economy, Canada must address the current deficit of skilled workers.

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High school French immersion programming is delivered primarily via advanced-level courses geared to university-bound students, despite the fact that general-level students will enter the service sector in greater numbers: 13% of Canadians hold a university degree, while 30% hold diplomas or certificates granted by community colleges. It is time to extend French immersion options to general-level high school courses and to community colleges. Research finds that students of lower academic ability and those requiring remedial or special education are not differentially handicapped in immersion programs. It is time to stop counselling these students out of immersion programs and to require ministries and school districts to provide special education services to immersion students.

The increasingly multicultural Canadian population, and in particular the growing immigrant population, should be seen as a force for positive change. It is time for governments and educators to implement strategies that take advantage of the strong support for and acceptance of multilingualism demonstrated by this population. This would help to ensure that new Canadians are qualified for public service positions from which they may make real contributions to Canada's social and political development.

The Government of Canada has pledged more than \$86 million in additional financial assistance to provincial/territorial action plans in support of FSL programs through the Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction. Since the provincial and territorial action plans have yet to be made available more than 16 months following the signing of the Protocol, it is difficult to assess whether the projects or initiatives are designed to realize accessibility for all. The Government of Canada has agreed to consult with interested associations and groups about the programs provided for in the Protocol and, when possible, to hold these consultations jointly with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), and the provinces and territories. The Protocol specifies that provincial and territorial action plans will describe the consultation process established for initiatives but, in the absence of bilateral agreements, it is not clear what type of commitment provincial and territorial governments will make. Canadian Parents for French is committed to participating in the consultation process at the provincial/territorial level and would welcome such an invitation.

