



**CANADIAN
PARENTS
FOR FRENCH**
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

The PEI State of French Second- Language in Education : 2016

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Commissioned by Canadian Parents for French PEI

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Introduction

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) is a national network of volunteers that values the French language as an integral part of Canada and promotes and creates French second-language learning opportunities for young Canadians. Canadian Parents for French PEI commissioned this research document. The goal of this study was to examine the delivery of French second-language (FSL) education in the Prince Edward Island (PEI) school system. We have attempted to examine the demographics as well as to understand the strengths and challenges within the current system.

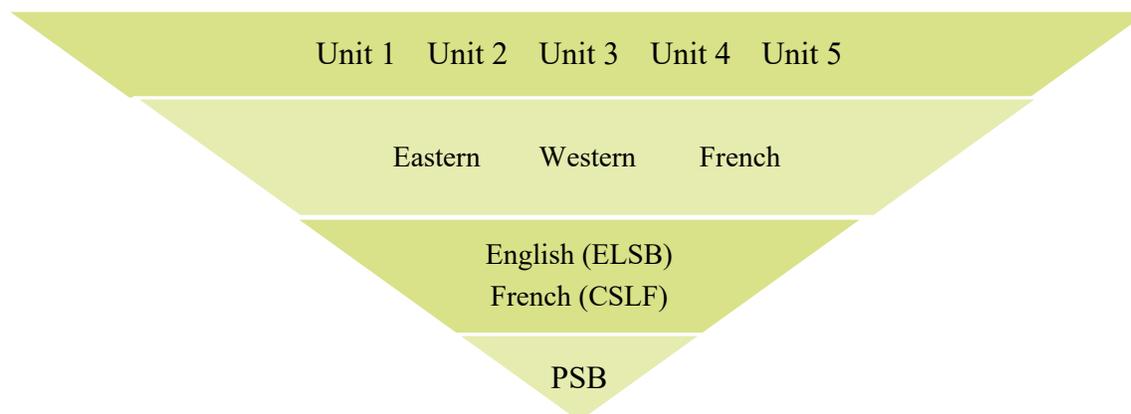
In this report, we:

- Present the methodology for the study, the historical and current context of FSL programming, and examine both French Immersion (FI) and Core French (CF) programs on PEI;
- Share the policy of the DEELC concerning FSL programs;
- Report on the availability of FSL education and distribution across the province;
- Report and examine FSL enrollment, attrition, and trends;
- Explore DELF French competency evaluation in PEI high schools;
- Look at high school graduation requirements including the FSL component in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program;
- Discuss FSL teacher hiring and availability; (NOTE: due to changes in the school system, we have not been able to gather data beyond what was available in the literature review) and;
- Suggest recommendations to overcome obstacles and promote bilingualism within highly effective French Immersion (FI) and Core French (CF) programs.

Prince Edward Island School System

The public school system originated in the Free Education Act of 1852, which authorized the establishment of autonomous school districts based on local communities. Each of the 475 districts was entitled to a one-room school; usually offering grades one through 10. Beginning in 1972, many small school districts were replaced by five regional boards and the process of closing schools and building new, consolidated institutions began. There were 189 schools in the year 1972, by 1994, that number had declined to 70. The five school boards (Units 1 through 5), eventually merged into three school boards, the Eastern, Western, and French boards. In 2012, The Eastern and Western boards combined, resulting in one English school board and one French school board. In the spring of 2016, there was a further change as the Department of Education and Early Learning and Culture (DEELC) dissolved the English Language School Board (ELSB) and integrated it into the Department of Education. The August 2016 *Education Act* replaced the English Language School Board with the Public Schools Branch (PSB). The PSB serves approximately 20, 000 students between kindergarten and Grade 12 in 56 English public schools. Currently all PEI Schools including the six French language schools in the Commission scolaire de langue française (CSLF) are under the umbrella of the DEELC. Because of the creation of the PSB, many of the policies we refer to in this document are currently under review; however we anticipate no major changes in the new policies.

Figure 1 PEI Historical School Districts



At this time, another major shift is being prepared in PEI schools as the PSB is holding an in-depth study including discussions about PEI schools that are over-capacity and the schools that are underutilized. District advisory councils, unions, parent groups, local community councils, principals, the community and school staff are being consulted to plan for restructuring for effective use of school buildings and the possible rezoning of children into different schools. The Families of Schools affected at this time are Charlottetown Rural, Montague, Morell, Kinkora, Westisle and Colonel Gray Families of Schools. This consultation process has affected our ability to gather current information from FSL teachers and administration. A completed teacher and administration survey will be available next year for a follow-up report.

Methodology

The CPF BC/YUKON 2014 *Report on French Immersion and Core French in British Columbia and Yukon: Trends in Enrolment, Popularity, and Attrition Report* inspired this document.

We reviewed the FSL research literature (Karsenti, Collin, Villeneuve, Dumouchel, & Roy, 2008; Lapkin, MacFarlane, & Vandergrift, 2006; Lapkin, Mady, & Arnott, 2009) and the 2014 *Report on French Immersion and Core French in British Columbia and Yukon: Trends in Enrolment, Popularity, and Attrition* (Pan, 2014). We used mixed-methods for data collection, which included document analysis and interviews with professionals involved in FSL education in PEI. We interviewed the then ELSB French Immersion and Core French curriculum consultants in elementary and secondary levels. We also interviewed regional and national contacts about the IB program and DELF testing and gathered input from CPF PEI. The research team's knowledge about FSL education in PEI along with the information from the literature review served as a basis to prepare a survey and interview questions. We relied upon research articles published in the last decade in Canada pertaining to the reality and experience of FSL students and FSL teachers. We also consulted PEI DEELC websites and online/printed documents to access statistics, policy and practice information, enrollment and attrition data, and FSL teacher specifics. We consulted information about FSL education in other provinces and territories for comparison.

History of FSL Education in PEI

Following the adoption of the Official Languages Act of 1969 (Gagnon, 2014), declaring French and English as the two official languages of Canada, the importance of bilingualism in the country was heightened. Prior to the arrival of immersion, there was only Core French to contribute to the development of bilingualism. The beginning of the first FI education program coincided with the Federal Act of 1969, the *Official Languages Act*¹. The Act stated a major change: the right to receive services from the federal government in both official languages, which urged the implementation of a superior and systematic method to teach French in the provinces. The FSL education programs in PEI rely on a curriculum intended to teach French to non-native French speakers in Canada. The premise of FSL education is to promote bilingualism, foster cultural openness, and expand student opportunities post-graduation.

French Immersion came to PEI in June of 1975, ensuing from the request of Ron Elliot, the then superintendent of the Regional School Board (Unit 3). Mr. Elliot instructed Claire Smitheram, a Core French teacher, to investigate the possibility of the FI program coming to PEI. After a lengthy investigation, including a trip to St. Lambert, Quebec (first immersion program in Canada) Ms. Smitheram wrote a proposition to the board for the addition of the first FI program on the Island. Review and adoption of the program followed. The following September, French Immersion was born on PEI and the recognition of teaching French as an official part of the curriculum in the province beyond Core French was established.

What is French Immersion

French Immersion is a form of bilingual education in which a child who does not speak French as his or her first language receives instruction in school in French. In FI, children will learn to understand, speak, read and write by studying most subjects in French such as French Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science and Health. English is also studied in a Language Arts class beginning in Grade 4.

Provincial Education Policy on French Immersion Programs

The current Education Handbook for School Administrators (2015-2016) states:

The purpose of French Immersion programs in Prince Edward Island is to ensure the global development of children as well as to provide opportunities for French language acquisition so that each may take a meaningful place in society. French Immersion programs have the following goals, which are different from the other school programs:

- to encourage the development of oral and written competency in French;
- to raise student awareness of the bilingual nature of the country;
- to promote the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes in all disciplines taught in French; and
- to appreciate the richness and diversity of the Francophone culture and heritage". (p. 37)

¹ Laurendeau, P. P. (2006) Official Languages Act (1969). (02/07/06). In the Canadian *Encyclopedia online*. Retrieved from <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/official-languages-act-1969/>

Notwithstanding this policy we found that during our research, it was difficult and sometimes impossible to find statistical information about the FI program as well as reasons for attrition and written policies on accommodating students in FSL programs (Beck 2004). We experienced differing answers, often unwritten or not shared with the public policies/guidelines/procedures on support and access.

Accessing French Immersion programs

In PEI there is no stated restriction preventing a parent from sending their child(ren) to FI. In the early years of FI, students underwent screening to access their suitability for the program. An assessment is still part of the “getting ready” process for school through the Early Years Evaluation (EYE), which provides parents, teachers, and school principals with important information on children’s early developmental skills. This information helps to support a positive transition to school for children and is meant to identify the individual’s needs and not to screen out participants from FI programs.

The only children found to be poor candidates for Immersion are those with a diminished sense of auditory discrimination or auditory memory (Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition. 2008). Attempts are made to identify these pupils as early as possible. If learning assistance is available in French, these children should be able to remain in Immersion. We were unable to find any written policies relating to learning assistance available in FI.

The main constraint for accessing Immersion is an individual’s location within the province. FI is offered across PEI; however, the Kinkora, Morell, and Souris Family of Schools are in regions of PEI where FI is not offered at all. (See **table 1.0**). Other factors that come into play are teacher availability, classroom availability, and teacher recommendations.

It is the decision of the parent to choose Early French Immersion (EFI) or not; with Late French Immersion (LFI), it is usually the parent and the student together who make the choice.

In **Table 1.0** below, EFI means Early French Immersion which begins in kindergarten, LFI means Late French Immersion which begins in Grade seven, CFI means continuing French Immersion in intermediate and high school grades, and MFI means Middle French Immersion beginning in Grade four (in one school only).

Table 1.0 Distribution of French Immersion in Schools

Families and Schools	Grade	Type program
Bluefield Family of Schools		
Bluefield Senior High School	10 to 12	CFI
East Wiltshire Intermediate School	7 to 9	LFI & CFI
Westwood Elementary	1 to 3	EFI
Eliot River Elementary School	4 to 6	EFI
Gulf Shore Consolidated School	4 to 9	MFI
Englewood School	K to 9	none
Central Queens Elementary School	K to 6	none
Colonel Gray Family of Schools		
Colonel Gray Senior High School	10 to 12	CFI
Birchwood Intermediate School	7 to 9	LFI & CFI
Queen Charlotte Intermediate School	7 to 9	LFI & CFI
Spring Park Elementary School	K to 6	EFI
Parkdale Elementary School	K to 6	none
Prince Street Elementary School	K to 6	none
St. Jean Elementary School	K to 6	none
West Kent Elementary School	K to 6	none
West Royalty Elementary School	K to 6	none
Charlottetown Rural Family of Schools		
Charlottetown Rural Senior High School	10-12	CFI
Stratford Elementary School	4 to 6	EFI
Glen Stewart Primary School	K to 3	EFI
Stonepark Intermediate School	7 to 9	LFI & CFI
Sherwood Elementary School	K to 6	EFI
Donagh Regional School	K to 6	none
L.M. Montgomery Elementary School	K to 6	none
Kensington Family of Schools		
Kensington Intermediate Senior High School	7 to 12	LFI
Queen Elizabeth Elementary School	K to 6	none
Kinkora Family of Schools		
Kinkora Regional High School	9 to 12	none
Amherst Cove Consolidated School	K to 8	none
Somerset Elementary School	K to 8	none
Morell Family of Schools		
Morell Regional High School	9 to 12	none
Morell Consolidated School	K to 8	none
Mt. Stewart Consolidated School	K to 8	none
Montague Family of Schools		
Montague Regional High School	10 to 12	CFI
Montague Consolidated School	K to 6	EFI
Montague Intermediate School	7 to 9	CFI
Georgetown Elementary School	K to 8	none

Belfast Consolidated School	K to 9	none
Cardigan Consolidated School	K to 6	none
Southern Kings Consolidated School	K to 8	none
Vernon River Consolidated School	K to 9	none
Souris		
Souris Regional School	K to 12	none
Three Oaks Family of Schools		
Three Oaks Senior High School	10 to 12	CFI
Elm Street Elementary School	4 to 6	EFI
Greenfield Elementary School	1 to 3	EFI
Parkside Elementary School	K to 6	EFI
Summerside Intermediate School	7 to 9	CFI
Athena Consolidated School	K to 9	none
Miscouche Consolidated School	K to 9	none
Westisle Family of Schools		
Westisle Composite High School	10 to 12	CFI
Bloomfield Elementary School	1 to 6	EFI
M. E. Callaghan Intermediate School	7 to 9	CFI
St. Louis Elementary School	1 to 6	EFI
Tignish Elementary School	1 to 6	EFI
Hernewood Intermediate School	7 to 9	CFI
Ellerslie Elementary School	1 to 3	none
Alberton Elementary School	K to 6	none
O'Leary Elementary School	K to 6	none

As demonstrated in Table 2.0, some regions (Family of Schools) offer fewer FI program than others do.

Table 2.0 Distribution of French Immersion by Family of Schools

Family of schools	FI schools	Total schools	Percentage of total schools
Bluefield	5	7	71.4%
Charlottetown Rural	6	7	66.6%
Colonel Gray	4	9	44.4%
Kensington	1	2	50.0%
Kinkora	0	3	0.0%
Montague	3	8	37.5%
Morell	0	3	0.0%
Souris	0	1	0.0%
Three Oaks	5	7	71.4%
Westisle	5	9	44.4%
Totals	29	56	51.8%

In addition, the availability of EFI and LFI varies. As LFI is the only other entry point (except for the one Middle Immersion), this is an important distinction.

Table 3.0 Distribution of French Immersion schools with Second Entry Point

Family of schools	FI schools	LFI schools	Mid FI schools	2 nd access Percentage
Bluefield	5	1	1	40.0%
Charlottetown Rural	6	1	0	16.6%
Colonel Gray	4	2	0	50.0%
*Kensington	1	1	0	0.0%
Kinkora	0	0	0	0.0%
Montague	3	0	0	0.0%
Morell	0	0	0	0.0%
Souris	0	0	0	0.0%
Three Oaks	5	0	0	0.0%
Westisle	5	0	0	0.0%

*Kensington has LFI only, so only one access point.

Seven out of ten Families of School have French Immersion, out of that only three out of the seven (42.8%) Families of Schools have a second entry point.

Table 4.0 Distribution of French Immersion across Districts

	Western	Eastern	Total schools
Number of schools	21	35	56
Schools with FI	11	18	29
Percentage with FI program	52%	49%	50%
Schools without FI	10	17	27
Percentage without FI program	48%	51%	50%

Before 2015, the schools in the ELSB were divided into two districts. It was therefore possible to compare the distribution of FI programs in the Eastern and the Western sections.

In the Western region, eleven of the 21 schools or 52% of the schools offer FI. In the Eastern region, eighteen of the 35 or 51% of the institutions have an FI program. Thus, cognizant of the disparity of 14 schools between the regions, half of schools in PEI offer FI programs, and there is a slightly greater availability of FI in the Western region.

French Immersion Time on Task

The PEI DEELC has set guidelines (Table 5.0) for time spent in French in the immersion program during the school day and the accumulated class hours over years.

Table 5.0 Class Time in French in French Immersion

Type of FI	Grade	% of Time in French	Minutes / Day	Total hours
Early Immersion	K-3	90-100	285	3330
Early Immersion	4-6	68	204	1803
Continuing Immersion	7-9	50	150	1387
Late immersion	7-8	80	240	1480
Late immersion	9	50	150	462
Middle Immersion	4-6	75	225	1387
FI High School (6 classes over 3 years)	10-12	25	75	660

What is Core French ?

Core French refers to a program offered from Grades 4 to 12 where students take one French language course while all other subjects are taught in English.

In 1990, based on the recommendations of a large-scale research project entitled the *National Core French Study*, the DEELC made a long-term commitment to improving its Core French program for Island students.

While Core French programs have existed for quite some time, their focus has changed significantly in recent years to reflect the advances in our understanding of second language teaching and learning. Consequently, changes have been made to better meet the needs of students. In Core French, the language is no longer treated exclusively as subject matter for analysis and mastery. Rather, students develop their language by "using" it to meet their communication needs in real- life situations.

Beginning in 2013, PEI has been introducing a brand new Core French program from Grade 4 upwards, one year at a time. In the fall of 2016, the new CF program began in Grade 6 with half of the Grade 6 teachers receiving the new resources and the other half to receive them in September of 2017. Mentors, who work intensively (6 to 8 weeks) at a time with classroom teachers, support the new curriculum delivery. The new CF focus is for balanced literacy for CF students to use language in rich, varied ways, with a gradual release of responsibility for their own learning. The new CF format offers longer classes (60 minutes) with greater emphasis on functional, authentic, communicative use of French. The program will rely on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for programming and evaluating language competency and language goal achievement.

The neurolinguistics approach (Netten & Germain, 2012) influences the methodology for the new program. Intensive French uses this same approach. Four PEI schools piloted Intensive French at the Grade 6 level from 2006 to 2012. The DEELC discontinued Intensive French (and Extended French which was the follow up program) due to lack of teachers and resources.

Accessing Core French

Core French is mandatory from Grade 4 to Grade 9 in the PEI curriculum. One school, Gulf Shore, is unique in offering CF beginning in Kindergarten to prepare students for entry into Middle Immersion in

Grade 4. After Grade 6, most students will continue the CF program at the intermediate level while others may elect to enroll in a LFI program offered in some areas of the province

Core French is offered in Grades 10 to 12 where numbers warrant. However, in PEI from Grade 10 to Grade 12 students can choose to exclude French from their learning experience because it is not required to graduate. Prior to 2015, Grade 10 CF was a course option to fulfill one of four language credits for graduation. However, since 2015, with the Minister's Directive 2015-05, Grade 10 Core French has become one option from a multiple of courses offered to fulfil a high school credit requirement.

Provincial Education Policy on Core French

In the *Education Handbook for School Administrators* in 2015-2016, the Department of Education stated:

“The purpose of the Core French Program in PEI is to offer students the opportunity to acquire the skills needed to interact with others and to understand and appreciate a different culture. By learning both official languages, it encourages the growth of communication and prepares students to enter a rapidly growing global society. Finally, second language learning also contributes to the overall development of the student. Goals of a Core French Program are:

- *to develop communicative competence in French;*
- *to foster a positive attitude towards second language learning;*
- *to develop an appreciation of francophones and their culture;*
- *to contribute to the general development of the learner.”* (p. 39)

Clearly, understanding and appreciating a different culture, fostering a positive attitude towards second language programs, and appreciating French culture is a major premise for CF, in addition to the linguistic aptitudes the student will develop.

The time spent in Core French varies according to the grade level (see Table 6.0).

Table 6.0 Class Time in French in Core French

Grade	% of time in French	Hours accumulated	Total hours
4-6	10	270	270 hrs by Grade 6
7-9	11-13	360	630 hrs by Grade 9
10-12	12.5	338	968 hrs by Grade 12

FSL Enrollment Trends

We have examined the enrollment trends in FSL programs in PEI over the last 25 years up to 2015-2016. The statistics in Table 7.0 below show that the overall enrolment in PEI schools has been decreasing (-19%) over the period of time examined but the total percentage enrolled in FSL remained fairly consistent averaging 63% for Core and Immersion together until 2010. It is worth noting that a slow decline in CF numbers was matched by a slow and steady increase in FI numbers, which helped maintain the similar overall FSL enrolment. In the 2010-11 school year Kindergarten entered the public school system and may explain the drastic change in FSL and CF statistics in that year and the following years.

French Immersion enrolment on PEI has experienced growth in all but a few years over the last 25 consecutive years. There are currently 29 of 56 schools in PEI offering FI in dual track schools. We have no single-track FI schools.

Table 7.0 FSL Enrollment

Year	Total Student Population	French Immersion Enrollment	Core French Enrollment	% in FI	% in CF	% in all FSL Programs
1991-1992	24,007	3,511	11,826	14.6	49.3	63.9
1992-1993	23,775	3,065	11,905	12.9	50.1	63.0
1993-1994	23,615	3,476	11,738	14.7	49.7	64.4
1994-1995	23,588	3,462	11,527	14.7	48.9	63.6
1995-1996	23,757	3,385	11,298	14.3	47.6	61.9
1996-1997	23,880	3,431	11,086	14.4	46.4	60.8
1997-1998	23,589	3,228	10,974	13.7	46.5	60.2
1998-1999	23,531	3,472	11,146	14.8	47.4	62.2
1999-2000	23,493	3,475	11,036	14.8	47	61.8
2000-2001	23,907	3,781	10,608	16.4	45.9	62.3
2001-2002	23,751	3,795	10,385	16.6	45.3	61.9
2002-2003	22,817	3,972	10,546	17.4	46.2	63.6
2003-2004	22,417	4,223	10,020	18.8	44.7	63.5
2004-2005	21,865	3,923	9,943	17.9	45.5	63.4
2005-2006	21,251	4,164	9,391	19.6	44.2	63.8
2006-2007	20,660	4,108	8,867	19.9	42.9	62.8
2007-2008	20,119	4,184	8,445	20.8	42	62.8
2008-2009	19,572	4,139	7,980	21.1	40.7	61.8
2009-2010	19,240	4,125	7,966	21.4	41.4	62.8
2010-2011	20,342	4,333	7,250	21.3	35.6	56.9
2011-2012	19,977	4,340	6,810	21.7	34.1	55.8
2012-2013	19,577	4,391	6,627	22.5	33.8	56.3
2013-2014	19,317	4,482	6,657	23.2	34.5	57.7
2014-2015	19,113	4672	6522	24.4	34.1	58.5
2015-2016	18,842	4806	6414	25.5	34	59.5

The numbers in Table 5 demonstrate growth for the FI program in PEI with a steady increase the past 25 years. The percentage of FI enrollment in 1991 was 14.6%. Twenty-five years later, the program enrollment is 25.5%, which shows an overall increase of 10.9% for the enrollment in FI since 1991.

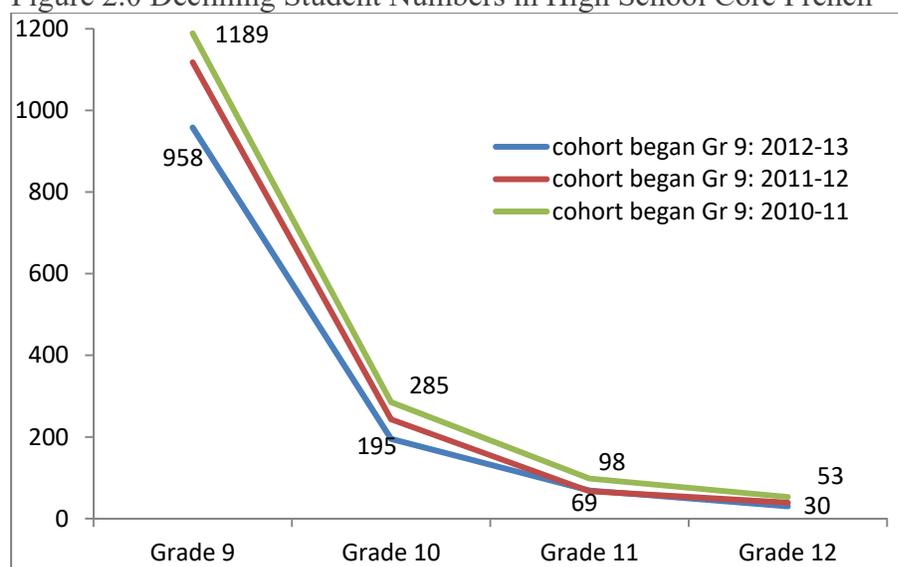
The enrollment statistics for Core French over the last 25 years reveal a slow and steady decline in numbers from 49.3% of students taking CF in 1991 to 34 % of students in CF in 2015 -2016, revealing a loss of 15.3%. In 2010, the addition of Kindergarten heralded an influx of 1337 students. We believe that this caused the marked drop in the percentage of students in CF and FSL as the overall student population increased. Students, who did not enter immersion that year, would not have had CF as part of the prescribed curriculum, with the exception of Gulf Shore School, thus inflating the percentage without CF.

The addition of Kindergarten cannot fully explain the drop in Core French enrollment (10.9%) since the declining rate of CF enrollment translates into -15.3%. Below we examine the choice of CF by students in the high school grades across PEI and find that high school enrollment numbers in Core French are low.

Table 8.0 Core French Enrollment by Grade Level

Grade	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
K	0	0	20	23	32	26	25	19
1	18	19	24	17	18	32	26	25
2	25	18	22	26	17	23	32	26
3	39	24	20	21	79	20	23	32
4	1292	1113	1002	1096	1161	1216	1059	1034
5	1421	1101	1145	1020	1096	1201	1198	1108
6	1509	1220	1124	1138	1023	1097	1201	1271
7	964	1179	989	920	920	839	898	945
8	1083	1283	1144	965	904	960	873	907
9	1041	1373	1189	1118	958	936	963	875
10	336	392	328	285	243	195	222	152
11	161	166	146	129	98	67	69	92
12	91	78	99	56	85	53	39	30
Totals	7980	7966	7232	6791	6602	6564	6522	6414

Figure 2.0 Declining Student Numbers in High School Core French



With the transition from the elementary to intermediate level (see Table 8.0), there is a drop in CF numbers after Grade 6. Students who enter a LFI program in Grade 7 can explain some of this loss. However, in the transition to high school, although each province's situation is unique, PEI's statistics resemble Ontario's (Lapkin, Mady, & Arnott, 2009) with a major drop in CF registration after the

mandatory years of Grade 4 to 9 (See **Table 8.0 and Figure 2.0**). For example, in Figure 2.0 for 2012-2013 there were 958 students registered in Grade 9 CF. The following year, there were 195 students in Grade 10 CF, followed by 69 students in Grade 11 CF in 2014-2015. Finally, there were only 30 students enrolled in CF in Grade 12 from that cohort. This translates into 96.9% of the total population of Core French students gone by the last year of high school in PEI.

According to some individual school statistics there seems to be an opportunity to have a Core French class for as few as three students. Schools confirm that in these cases the participating students are taught in a combined class. We also have identified that some schools have no Core French students enrolled in Grade 10-12. We might then assume that each school chooses the options that they feel are best at that time.

Despite our efforts to collect and display the enrollment and attrition data, it is unclear how the schools and the Department keep tally of the students in programs and specifically about those who transition from one program to another. There was a definite gap in the data available from the sources we looked at, including the DEELC, CPF and The Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC). The DEECD personnel are planning to do a survey in 2017 to determine the rate of attrition, Grade 9 to Grade 10, for the school year 2016 to 2017 along with some exit data.

Nonetheless, regardless of these bleak statistics, expectations are high for the retention of students and improved enrollment post mandatory years with the new CF program. Unfortunately, the data will only be available a few years from now. Research literature suggests that school and community attitude towards Core French in the curriculum might have a more impactful negative effect than student interest on the choice of CF after junior high. As put forward by Lapkin, Mady and Arnott in Ontario:

First, often community attitudes towards the L2 are negative (especially outside large urban centres) and students may bring these attitudes to school with them. This may be exacerbated by the fact that FSL programs are often marginalized in schools. Second, there is widespread dissatisfaction with the outcomes of Core French programs. (p. 7)

International Baccalaureate Program

Two Charlottetown High Schools have offered the IB program in Grade 11 and 12 since 2009. The IB Program has its own curriculum agenda and provides a unique setting in which to learn and prepare for university study. The IB program also requires mandatory language classes. Among different languages, one-second language (L2) option for these students is to take beginner (ab initio) classes. The other L2 option is for those with French proficiency (FI) to take the IB French stream. In the French IB, students can obtain a bilingual diploma upon graduation if they choose to complete an extended essay in French rather than English, in addition to French language classes.

The French language instruction in the French IB includes about 170 hours in French courses over Grade 11 and 12. Students from the IB program also are able to complete the same test (Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française: DELF described below) as Immersion students to evaluate their French competency at graduation. Teachers from the IB program felt that any IB students could successfully challenge the language evaluation that immersion students do, including the harder B level. It was reported that about half of the IB students take the B1 level and the other half take the B2 level with similar success to the immersion students. The IB students have three interactive oral language assessments as well as an individual oral assessment that is formally marked as part of their program and as such, they are already used to the format of the language testing experienced in the DELF.

Students who enter the IB program are no longer considered in the Immersion program if they transferred. We have considered some immersion students as a portion of the attrition statistic at Grade 10.

Language Proficiency Assessment

DELFF

The Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française (DELFF) is an international test delivered worldwide to assess one's French competency in real-life situations based on six competency levels from beginner to mastery: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2. There are listening, reading, writing and speaking components and this test has been available to PEI students prior to graduation since the spring of 2013. In PEI the number of schools participating in DELFF testing has grown from two schools in 2011 to 10 schools in 2016. The cost of the test is covered for students by the province. Core French students who have taken a Grade 12 Core French course may also get special permission to challenge for the DELFF.

Table 10.0 History of DELFF Results in PEI

Year	# of Students A2	# of Students B1	# of Students B2	Success rate %
2016	6	109	153	94
2015	6	132	156	99
2014		144	146	88
2013		171	79	98

In terms of level of proficiency, PEI students write B-1 and B-2 level tests. About half of the 268 students who participated in 2015-16, half chose to write at B-1 and the other half at B-2. According to the education officer with the DELFF Management Center in Canada, Samuel Coeytaux, B-1 is conversational French that will get someone through daily needs, but is considered bare minimum and B-2 is significantly more difficult. Still, according to Coeytaux, B-2 is where an individual starts to master the language and can operate independently.

It was possible to situate how PEI students scored compared to the rest of Canada. Although the statistical values are confidential, according to the educational officer, PEI scored in the top percentile across the country. This concurs with our interview data, which reported PEI scores were excellent. While there is a 90 percent success rate with the exam for students all across the country, the Island score has been at 94 percent, suggesting that students are adequately prepared for the exam through the FI program. Although the statistic is encouraging, the reader ought to keep in mind that there are limitations to the comparison. Due to different demographic conditions, comparing provinces can only provide a limited view of how well FI is doing on the island. It is also worth mentioning that, according to Coeytaux, PEI student participation with the DELFF is high. This could be explained in part by the fact that the cost for students to take the DELFF is paid for by the province. It was not possible to get more data specific to PEI due to confidentiality restrictions.

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) was started in 2000 by the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#). PISA is a test given to 15-year-olds every three years. It measures student performance in reading, math, and science, and provides valuable information

on student achievement at the international level. PISA tests students on their ability to use their knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges, and is not tied to any country's education curriculum. For more information, see [PISA 2012 Results](#), Canada. PISA does not differentiate between French Immersion streams and English streams. We have added this information to this report to be inclusive of all testing done in our public schools.

Provincial Assessment

PEI teachers contribute to the creation of Provincial Common Assessments that are based on curriculum used in Island schools. Assessment results tell us how well Island students are doing from year to year. The information helps improve teaching, select resources, direct professional learning, and develop new programs. Provincial assessments measure literacy and math skills, the foundational skills for future learning. The literacy assessment measures how well your child is able to:

1. Read and understand what is being read
2. Express and organize ideas in writing using age-appropriate spelling and punctuation skills
3. Follow instructions

The mathematics assessment measures a child's knowledge and skills in numeracy and math at specific grade levels. We have chosen for this publication to use the Elementary and Primary Literacy Assessments.

Table 11.0 Primary Literacy Assessment – French Immersion Program (K-3)

Reading Comprehension	2014	2015	2016
Met Expectations	67%	67%	68%
Writing	2014	2015	2016
Met Expectations	46%	52%	65%

Table 12.0 Elementary Literacy Assessment – French Immersion Program (4-6)

Reading Comprehension	2014	2015	2016
Met Expectations	76%	58%	56%
Writing	2014	2015	2016
Met Expectations	47%	39%	39%

Reading

- English - 87% at or approaching the standard (up from 75% last year)
- French Immersion - 60% at or approaching the standard (down from 65% last year)

Writing

- English - 66% at the standard (same as last year)
- French Immersion - 39% at the standard (same as last year)

Graduation Requirements

Overall Requirements

A student in the English, French Immersion or French first language programs who started high school in September 2015, would need the following to graduate from high school with a Prince Edward Island Senior High School Graduation Certificate: (MD2016-03)

Program	Hours per course	Credits needed	Total	Passing mark
French First Language	92.5	25	2312.5	50%
Mandatory 5 French, 3 math, 2 science, 2 social studies, 1 English, 1 career, 1 arts, 7 grade 12 level, literacy assessment				
French Immersion	110	20	2200	50%
Mandatory 6 French (Language Arts 421, 521, 621; Social Studies 421; and one Social Studies 521 and 621) plus the requirement for the English stream				
English	110	20	2200	50%
Mandatory 3 English, 2 Math, 2 science, 2 social studies, 1 PT, 1 career, 1 French or creativity, 5 grade 12 level, literacy assessment				

Staffing for FSL programs

French Second-Language Teachers

Availability of skilled teachers is recognized as essential for any education program to run effectively. In the Canadian research literature from the last decade, attention has highlighted the fact that many FSL teachers are leaving the profession. The French second-language teaching context is challenging; a lack of skills specific to teaching FSL has been identified as a reason teachers leave the profession (Karsenti, et al., 2008). There has also been a lack of qualified FSL teachers to fill the many immersion and core FSL positions across Canada (Karsenti, Collin, Villeneuve, Dumouchel, G. & Roy, 2008; Lapkin, MacFarlane, & Vandergrift, 2006; Lapkin, et al, 2009). We looked at the qualifications required of a FSL teacher in PEI, as well as the hiring, training, and availability of FSL teachers locally. Some of the policies mentioned below are under review; however, it is not expected that there will be major changes after the review of policies for the new [Education Act of 2016](#).

As it stands now, one in three French-language teachers in Ontario said they secured permanent teaching contracts a year after they graduated in publicly funded and private schools, while it took one in three English-language teachers as many as four years to be fully employed, according to the Ontario College of Teachers. The shortage of qualified French-immersion teachers has meant that second-language teachers, in some cases, divide their time between two classrooms, or that when a teacher is sick, a principal has no choice but to put an English-language substitute in front of students. (Globe and Mail article : Quality of French immersion teachers as demand sours in Canada Feb 5, 2017)

Teacher Language Competency Requirements

In PEI there are general hiring guidelines for school leaders to follow and hiring for FSL positions follows a process that is comparable for hiring any teacher with interview questions, professional references, and a rating scale. As well, the ELSB (now PSB) established guidelines specific to hiring for French language positions. These include ensuring that the French proficiency of the teacher is prioritized, arranging language proficiency assessments with DEELC, and if the school leader lacks appropriate French skills for interviewing a candidate, getting French language consultant support to sit on the interview team.

According to the Ministers Directive **NO. MD 2014-02**, teachers of French Immersion are required to meet a superior level of French linguistic competency according to the New Brunswick Oral Language Proficiency test to teach in an immersion classroom and before receiving a permanent contract. Like all teachers, an immersion teacher must also hold a valid teacher's certificate. However, the school board may hire a teacher who is below the required language level if that teacher makes effort (Language Enrichment program) to advance to the superior level within two years. If the teacher does not reach the required level, the teacher will be transferred to another position. A teacher with less than superior results may request to be evaluated for French competency a second time after taking three weeks of intensive training. Occasionally a teacher is hired who lacks sufficient French proficiency and the teacher must work with administration to include French language development in a professional growth plan. A permanent contract is only possible when language proficiency requirements are met.

It is important to note that this language competency component gives rise to two issues of concern:

1. Permanent positions are available but candidates with the French language competency are not always available; and
2. Teachers may meet the language competency requirement but do not demonstrate the ability to maximize student engagement and success in FSL programs.

The same Minister's Directive, **NO. MD 2014-02**, states that teachers of the Core French, Intensive French, or Enhanced French program must attain the advanced level of the New Brunswick oral language proficiency test. Teachers hired to teach in PEI whose maternal language is neither French nor English are required to meet language proficiency requirements in order to become certified.

According to the Minister's Directive No. DM 2010-09 the Levels are reported as:

➤ **Superior Level of the New Brunswick Oral Language Proficiency Test:**

At this level, a person can fluently speak the language required for professional needs.

➤ **Advanced Level of the New Brunswick Oral Language Proficiency Test:**

At this level, a person can speak the language with enough syntactic and lexical accuracy to participate fully in formal and informal conversations on practical, social and professional topics.

School Leaders (Principals, Vice-Principals)

As per Teacher Certification and Standards Regulations Section 18.1, the holder of a valid PEI Academic Teachers Certificate Level 6, with a minimum of seven years of approved teaching experience who has successfully completed an Administrator's Leadership program approved by the Minister may qualify for a PEI School Principal Certificate. A Vice-Principal needs a Level 5 Certificate and 5 years of experience.

Although there are no stated additional qualifications for being a principal or vice principal of a dual track French Immersion School, leadership knowledge about hiring and monitoring FSL teachers is important for quality FSL programs. The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) has published a guide *Leadership for Successful FSL Programs* to help administrators be knowledgeable about hiring, evaluating, and providing continuing professional development for FSL teachers.

Administrators need to recognize unique teacher needs specific to FSL, such as pedagogy for FSL and to stay up to date on recent innovations and professional development in teaching FSL in their content areas. Administrators also need to know how to meet the needs of non-native speaking teachers of French who require ongoing support to maintain or improve their linguistic competency. A school leader who is not proficient in French may nevertheless assess a teacher's planning and assessment for meaningful learning and can also seek assistance to assess a teacher's performance. They can ask sources inside or outside the school for help assessing the authentic use of language by students and teachers.

At this time, we have no statistics on how many Principals and Vice Principals have the additional skills and knowledge regarding teachers in FSL programs.

Availability of French second-language teachers

According to DEELC Human Resources personnel, it can be difficult to get exact numbers of teachers teaching in FSL, as often FSL teachers instruct in more than one subject area and therefore may be recorded in another area. So there may be a teacher teaching a partial CF assignment who is missed in a count, as they come up in a data search as teaching in a different subject area if the bulk of their assignment is elsewhere. At this time we have not been able to access that statistic.

We know that once teachers are hired the DEELC has strategies in place to retain and support teachers. Though seemingly limited in number, our FSL teachers on PEI appear well supported compared to research on FSL teaching conditions across the country (Karsenti et al., 2008; Lapkin et al., 2006). The research literature (Karsenti et al., 2008; Lapkin et al., 2006) identified ways that schools and school boards could improve the working conditions for FSL teachers. Key recommendations were to offer FSL resources, FSL professional development, enhance support by parents and administration. Additionally, providing opportunity for FSL colleagues to collaborate and permitting FSL teachers to teach the same courses two years in a row were suggestions to help and retain FSL teachers.

The DEELC/PSB recruiting and hiring practices which align with these practices include:

- Constant and consistent communication between the DEELC and universities, colleges, consultants who support teachers and administration, along with the literacy coaches in schools.

- A new teacher induction workshop, the use of mentors with new teachers, and coaches who work with teachers.
- Professional learning opportunities with FSL teachers and 10 teachers per year are eligible for a French language-training program through the DEELC.

In the studies referred to above some challenges reported were the availability:

- Of qualified teachers with French proficiency
- Of teachers proficient in the pedagogy of instruction in a second-language classroom
- Of teachers who have knowledge of French culture for FSL contexts
- Substitute teachers with French language proficiency

UPEI FSL Teacher Preparation

The UPEI Bachelor of [Education Degree with a Specialization in French](#) as a second-language program has an intake of 10-15 students annually. The 12-month program runs from May to May. This program is an important source of new FSL teachers for PEI and beyond with pedagogical training specific to FSL teaching.

Further data on teacher availability, support for teachers including administrator support, professional development, and mentoring is not available at this time.

Recommendations

With insights into FSL in PEI from our data collection and the information gleaned from the FSL literature review, we have found key areas where we suggest improvements be made to ensure the overall well-being of FSL education on the Island, as well as to enhance opportunities for bilingualism for Island youth.

Overarching Recommendation

Bilingualism in whatever form or proficiency level should be the right of all Canadians. CPF PEI recommends the investigation into and implementation of a long-term plan for the support and growth of FSL education opportunities on PEI.

This overarching recommendation aligns with Recommendation 1 for the active promotion of bilingualism from the [2015 Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages Report](#), which stated:

That Canadian Heritage, acknowledging that education is an area of shared jurisdiction and pursuant to its responsibilities under subsection 43(1) of the *Official Languages Act* with respect to the learning of English and French in Canada, ensure second language programs are accessible to everyone, everywhere in Canada.

Recommendation # 1 Graduation Requirements

CPF PEI recommends the addition of Core French language credits as a graduation requirement. In the province of Quebec, for example, English is taught at every grade and is mandatory to receive the high school diploma.

This continuation of French will improve our students' and future citizens' bilingualism and ability to communicate in both English and French across our province, our country, and our world.

Encouraging students to continue Core French in Grade ten to twelve should be the minimalist approach taken. With ample improvements, comments like the following from research (Marshall, 2002) about student attitudes toward CF would not exist: “*French...I don’t think when I grow up I’ll need it, what I’ll be doing. Cause you only need it for grade 9 in high school.*” (p. 18-19).

This recommendation aligns with the [2015 Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages Report](#) recommendation three for increased official language proficiency:

That Canadian Heritage work with the provincial and territorial governments and consult with language organizations, school boards, and teachers to establish a specific measureable objective to increase official-language proficiency among Canadians, particularly youth aged 15 to 19, by 2018.

Recommendation # 2 Assessment

CPF PEI recommends that with Core French continued through to the end of Grade 12, CF students participate in DELF testing for French proficiency.

Recommendation # 3 Access

CPF PEI recommends that each Family of Schools should have at least one Early French Immersion program and one Late Immersion program to make it equitable for all students to have access to similar language learning experiences. The lack of availability of French immersion in certain regions of the Island contributes to the marginalization of French on the Island.

If we consider the following from the DEELC policy statement “*to provide opportunities for French language acquisition so that each may take a meaningful place in society,*” each family of schools should have, at least, one FI program.

Recommendation # 4 Access

CPF PEI recommends that a DEELC campaign be introduced to raise awareness of the advantages of learning a second language. Those advantages include cognitive development, diversified world view, respect for other peoples and cultures, enhanced problem solving, greater vocabulary and communication skills, and improved education, travel, and study opportunities (CPF). We recommend the promotional campaign concentrate on Early French Immersion given that a basic finding regarding immersion variants is that students who start earlier (Early French Immersion) will reach a higher level of oral competency in French than students who start in delayed entry programs (Middle French Immersion) or a late entry programs (Late French Immersion) (Dicks 2014).

It is key that the DEELC and education leaders ensure that students, teachers, and administrators understand that having more than one language is a very important literacy skill. Parents and students look to educators for leadership in understanding areas of study and trying to comprehend what skills students will need to be successful in their lives. Whether learning a second language, in this case French, is beneficial is no longer under debate - it is immensely advantageous.

This aligns with the [2015 Senate Standing Committee on Official Language Report](#) recommendation two for the active promotion of bilingualism:

That Canadian Heritage, pursuant to its responsibilities under subsection 43(1) of the Official Languages Act, encourage the public and business community to foster the recognition and use of the two official languages, and that it launch a national awareness campaign to encourage Canadians to learn their official languages.

Recommendation # 5 Teacher Competency and Availability

CPF PEI recommends that there is an increased effort to identify and make available additional support for teachers currently in the system who do not possess the necessary French competency and pedagogical skills for teaching in a second language classroom. Research could be done to inquire about making use of technology and digital or online programs where language learning resources are limited.

Recommendation # 6 Teacher Competency and Availability

CPF PEI recommends that based on our literature review, which reported a FSL teacher shortage in Canada, and based on the increasing interest in accessing FSL education (enrollment statistics) that DEELC vigorously recruit FSL teachers.

Recommendation # 7 Policy

CPF PEI recommends that when reviewing their policies that DEELC and PSB strengthen their FSL education policies using language that is more in line with the current philosophy and beliefs in the value of bilingualism, that the wording has real intention; and that the policies be built around shared values and goals. In addition, the DEELC and PSB policies need to be more readily available and accessible.

Recommendation # 8 Statistics

CPF PEI recommends that the DEELC and PSB identify issues and/or opportunities for collecting data including identifying best practices in the industry/sector that can be modeled. This would include data on attrition statistics and exit survey data.

Future Research

- Update changes to DEELC and PSB Policy changes in reference to FSL support and access
- Collect and make available information on PEI French Teachers, for example: How many are there, how many reach the language competency requirement, what supports are needed (survey results), is there a shortage, if there is a shortage where are the shortages and the availability of specialists
- Update Provincial assessment results
- Clarify what is available for students in regards to curriculum supports/resources (extracurricular activities, exchanges)
- Identify and publicize what is being done to promote FSL education as a good choice for students and parents; promotion of bilingualism.
- Gather statistics on PEI School administrators: how many have FSL education background, what are the challenges of administrators who do not have FSL education background in dual track schools, how do they manage second language experiences
- Update Provincial enrollment statistics
- Update Provincial attrition statistics, additional information on reasons for attrition
- Update graduation criteria to include Canada wide comparisons

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Links

- History of PEI http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/prince-edward-island/#h3_jump_5
- PEI Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture Education Handbook for School Administrators 2015-2016 http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/eelc_edhandbook.pdf
- Application for School principal/VP
https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/forms/eelc_principalvp_cert_2016.pdf
- Provincial Assessment Results 2016
https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/eelc_assessment_results_backgrounder_2016_1.pdf
- Assessment results/individual schools <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/education-early-learning-and-culture/provincial-assessment-results>
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