CORE FRENCH • EXTENDED FRENCH • FRENCH IMMERSION

2015

Including STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS *in* FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE *Programs*

A GUIDE FOR ONTARIO SCHOOLS

A Companion Resource to *A Framework for FSL, K–12*

support every child
reach every student

Ontario

Contents

Introduction

Including Students with Special Education Needs in French as a Second Language Programs[1] has been developed as part of the Ministry of Education's ongoing commitment to strengthen French as a second language (FSL) education in Ontario. This document is intended to promote discussion among various stakeholders about issues related to the inclusion of all students, particularly students with special education needs, in FSL programs. It is also intended to serve as a resource for school boards, educators, and other stakeholders as they embrace diversity and work to ensure that schools are places where all students are welcomed and respected, and where all students can succeed.

The foundational belief that all students can learn applies to students across all subject and program areas. Throughout this document, it is emphasized that *decisions about program participation, including participation in FSL programs, should be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the strengths, needs, and interests of the individual student.*

Background

Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario (Ontario 2014a, p. 3) outlines four goals for education in Ontario:

- Achieving excellence
- Ensuring equity
- Promoting well-being
- Enhancing public confidence

These goals are interconnected – success in one leads to success in others. Because of this, ensuring equity in our education system is a foundational step that will help all students in Ontario achieve excellence. A key strategy related to ensuring equity is inclusive education, which is based on the acceptance and inclusion of all students. The fundamental principles of equity and inclusive education have inspired a cultural shift, as barriers are identified and removed and the potential of all students is increasingly recognized and valued. But it is not enough simply to remove barriers.

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1. Hereafter, *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL*.

Achieving Excellence reminds us that "it is particularly important to provide the best possible learning opportunities and supports for students who may be at risk of not succeeding" (p. 8). For this reason, *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL* focuses not only on ways of making FSL programs more available to students with special education needs but also on the supports these students need to succeed.

Key Terms

French as a Second Language Programs

French as a second language (FSL) is taught in English-language school boards. The FSL programs in Ontario are Core French, Extended French, and French Immersion. For more information about each program, refer to *The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language – Core, Grades 4–8; Extended, Grades 4–8; Immersion, Grades 1–8, 2013* (available at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/fsl18-2013curr.pdf) and *The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language – Core, Extended, and Immersion, Grades 9 to 12, 2014* (available at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/fsl912curr2014.pdf).

Students with Special Education Needs

Students with special education needs are students who are receiving special education programs and/or services, including students who have been identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC); those who have not been identified by an IPRC but require an Individual Education Plan (IEP); and those who are receiving special education programs and/or services even though they may not yet have an IEP. For more information, see the Ministry of Education's website, at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html.

Inclusive Education

"Inclusive education is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected." (*Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009*, p. 4. This publication is available on the ministry's website, at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.pdf.)

In 2013, the Ministry of Education released *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12*,[2] demonstrating its commitment to continue to strengthen FSL education in Ontario. *A Framework for FSL* articulates a vision for FSL education in Ontario – namely, that "students in English-language school boards have the confidence and ability to use French effectively in their daily lives" (Ontario 2013b, p. 8). This document describes three goals, identified by the Ministry of Education, that support this vision:

- to increase student confidence, proficiency, and achievement in FSL;
- to increase the percentage of students studying FSL until graduation;
- to increase student, educator, parent, and community engagement in FSL.

A Framework for FSL also outlines guiding principles, strategic focus areas, and a range of actions that can be applied to strengthen FSL programs and attain these goals. One of these guiding principles is that *FSL programs are for all students*. This principle advances a common understanding of the importance and benefits of FSL education. It is realized when FSL classrooms from Kindergarten to Grade 12 reflect the diversity of the student population, including English language learners and students with special education needs.

Embracing the principle that FSL programs are for all students, *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL* builds on *A Framework for FSL*, promoting the inclusiveness of Core French, Extended French, and French Immersion programs. The purpose of *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL* is to increase the participation and engagement in FSL programs of students with special education needs – that is, students receiving special education programs and/or services, who may or may not have been identified as exceptional.

Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL is based on an examination of current research literature, data, policies, and practices, as well as on feedback from various stakeholders, all of which confirm that inclusion in FSL programs is a timely and important topic. Consultations with educators from Ontario's sixty English-language school boards as well as other groups provided input and valuable feedback from a variety of perspectives, including those of stakeholders in FSL, special education, and the Student Success initiative. By reviewing research on the participation of students with special education needs in FSL and providing information and strategies to support this participation, we hope to engage all stakeholders and encourage them to take action that will contribute to enhanced outcomes for all students.

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2. Hereafter, *A Framework for FSL*.

Realizing the Promise of the FSL Framework

Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL complements *A Framework for FSL* and clarifies the foundational principle that FSL programs are for all students. The Ministry of Education is committed to including and supporting all students to ensure equitable access to FSL programs, whether Core French, Extended French, or French Immersion, and the revised curriculum policy documents for FSL released in 2013 (the elementary curriculum) and 2014 (the secondary curriculum) make specific reference to the importance of supporting all students in FSL programs.

The intended audience for *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL* includes educators, resource staff, principals and vice-principals, system administrators, and parents. This document provides information intended to enhance the knowledge and understanding of all stakeholders about the social benefits of, and literacy supports associated with, the study of FSL. It also provides information about the options available to students with special education needs with regard to participation in FSL programs. In addition, it includes examples of actions taken by school boards to ensure that their FSL programs welcome and are respectful of all students. Greater understanding of inclusionary policies and insights into effective practices will enable educators, parents, and other decision makers to overcome incidences of exclusion and ensure that all students have the opportunity to experience the benefits of linguistic duality.

All stakeholders have a role to play in promoting inclusiveness in FSL programs. At the system level, school boards can collect data about participation and achievement in FSL; analyse trends in the participation of students, including students with special education needs, in FSL; ask questions about the inclusiveness of their policies and practices; and propose changes to address emerging areas of need. At the level of the school and the individual student, principals, teachers, parents, and students can all benefit from accurate information about programs, policies, and potential supports. This information, combined with knowledge about the strengths, needs, and pathway goals of individual students, can then be applied in order to make informed, case-by-case decisions that are in the best interests of students.

Alignment with Ministry Policies and Initiatives

The beliefs and principles articulated in *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL* and in *A Framework for FSL* have strong connections to those in several other ministry initiatives. The following documents endorse principles of diversity and inclusiveness and highlight the importance of supporting all students so that they can succeed:

- *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2013*, available at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/frameworkFLS.pdf
- *Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2013*, available at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/LearningforAll2013.pdf
- *The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language – Core, Grades 4–8; Extended, Grades 4–8; Immersion, Grades 1–8, 2013*, available at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/fsl18-2013curr.pdf
- *The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language – Core, Extended, and Immersion French, Grades 9 to 12, 2014*, available at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/fsl912curr2014.pdf
- *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009*, available at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.pdf
- *Creating Pathways to Success: An Education and Career/Life Planning Program for Ontario Schools, 2013*, available at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/cps/CreatingPathwaysSuccess.pdf

The following figure highlights ways in which the preceding documents align with the core beliefs and principles underpinning *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL.* Each segment features a key quotation relevant to the fundamental principle of supporting all students in their unique education journeys.

Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy

Learning for All

All students, parents, and other members of the school community are welcomed and respected.

All students can succeed.

Success comes in many forms.

Teachers … address individual students' needs and ensure sound learning opportunities for every student.

Creating Pathways to Success

The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language

FSL programs are for all students.

FSL Framework

The Organization of This Document

Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL is organized into three sections. Section 1 presents an analysis of research and specific data relevant to the participation in FSL of students with special education needs. Section 2 provides information about relevant legislation and policies, clarifying the basic requirements in Ontario with respect to both FSL education and students with special education needs. Section 3 discusses new ways of thinking about diversity, participation, and engagement, and suggests strategies for aligning educational practices with emerging values to create inclusive environments for all students, including students with special education needs.

1. A Review of Research and Provincial Data

This section presents a review of research findings related to FSL education, with a particular focus on participation in FSL programs, the benefits of studying FSL, and strategies that support students with special education needs, enabling them to participate in these programs and experience their benefits. We also analyse data on the participation of all students, including those with special education needs, in FSL programs in Ontario. Various questions arise from reflecting on these data, and we highlight some questions that boards and schools may wish to consider in the interests of increasing the inclusiveness of FSL programs.

Reviewing Research Findings[3]

To ensure that practices and decision making related to the participation of students with special education needs in FSL are in the best interests of students, it is important to ground these practices and decisions in reliable research. By presenting findings from recent research, we hope that *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL* can serve as a resource for educators seeking to update their practices and to have informed conversations with parents and colleagues about issues related to inclusiveness in FSL programs. Educators, school board staff, parents, and other stakeholders in the educational community may find it useful to draw on the research findings presented here in order to support effective communication, professional learning, and decision making at the board, school, and individual student levels. Reflections from various stakeholders are highlighted throughout the following pages.

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3. This commentary and review of research is based on an unpublished literature review conducted in 2014 by Callie Mady (Nipissing University), Stefanie Muhling (York University and University of Toronto), and Katie Rose (Nipissing University). The literature review was commissioned by Nipissing–Parry Sound Catholic District School Board, with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Education, as part of the commitment to support school boards and educators as they respond to the call for inclusive education in FSL programs.

"Research can help us inform policies and procedures at the board level which will then inform the work at the school level. I also think that research is helpful when helping parents make decisions."

A superintendent of education

Three important findings arise from a review of the literature:

- Students with special education needs benefit from learning French as a second language.
- Specific strategies and supports have been shown to be effective in meeting the needs of students with special education needs.
- Educational policies reflect increasing support for including all students in FSL programs.

The following three subsections provide details related to these findings.

The Benefits of Learning French as a Second Language

Students with special education needs are a diverse group of learners. Many students in this group have no inherent difficulties with learning a second language, as their individual needs are not specifically related to receptive or productive language. In fact, some students in this group have a heightened capacity for many aspects of language learning. Even some students with learning difficulties that relate specifically to language learning can, with the provision of support, experience both academic and social benefits from participation in FSL programs.

Academic benefits include heightened phonological, morphological, and metalinguistic awareness and enhanced ability to use reading strategies. Researchers have found that such awareness and strategies are transferable and applicable across languages. For example, Kruk and Reynolds (2011) compared the reading abilities of French Immersion students (groups of average and at-risk readers) and English students (groups of average and at-risk readers). They determined that at-risk readers benefited from participation in the Immersion program, a finding that they attributed to the transfer of phonological awareness across languages and to increased flexibility in the use of comprehension strategies. Deacon, Wade-Woolley, and Kirby's (2007) longitudinal study also provides robust evidence of the transfer of knowledge across languages, as English morphological awareness contributed to reading comprehension in French, and French morphological awareness subsequently had a positive impact on reading in English. Sauvé (2007)

suggests that students who learn to read in a second language often receive more explicit instruction in reading strategies. She found no significant difference between students with reading disabilities who were enrolled in French Immersion or English programs in a variety of areas (e.g., spelling, arithmetic, reading comprehension, perceived social acceptance, parent and teacher ratings of behaviour). Moreover, data related to the small group of students who had transferred out of French Immersion indicated that the change of program did not improve their learning outcomes.

"As researchers and educators move forward in their work to understand and address the needs of all students in FSL, they may do so with the knowledge that students with special education needs have the potential to gain second language skills and related cognitive skills, while remaining at least on par academically with students with special education needs who do not study FSL. Furthermore students with special education needs who are included in FSL programs may also gain increased confidence and other affective benefits associated with feeling included."

A researcher

Social benefits associated with the participation in FSL of students with special education needs include increased motivation, self-esteem, and confidence, which can be linked to being included with one's peers (Arnett, 2013). Students with special education needs who receive appropriate supports in FSL programs also gain access to the numerous advantages available to all Canadians who have the confidence and ability to communicate in both official languages. These advantages include greater employment options and earning potential, enhanced problem-solving skills, greater creativity, and increased cognitive flexibility and ability to formulate concepts (Alberta Education, 2009).

Effective Strategies and Supports

Research findings offer insight into the effects of removing barriers and providing support for all students in FSL. These findings confirm that all students can be successful when the learning *environment*, learning *goals*, and teaching and learning *strategies* are appropriate for their needs. Arnett (2003, 2008, and 2010) outlines instructional strategies that have been used to create a supportive and inclusive

learning environment in the FSL classroom, including reminding students of the time remaining to complete an activity, minimizing distractions, and providing positive reinforcement. Academic coaching was found to help exceptional students by using positive questioning and active listening to maximize their potential (Harding, 2012). Successful results have also been documented with respect to the use of technology and the promotion of related strategies such as diversified and individualized instructional and assessment practices to increase student engagement (Pellerin, 2013). Another research-based practice, peer tutoring, was found to have positive effects on reading proficiency among FSL students (Bournot-Trites, Lee, & Séror, 2003).

Several researchers who explored aspects of early literacy indicators highlight the importance of early identification of French immersion students who require literacy remediation, given that early identification enhances the effectiveness of remedial instruction for at-risk students (Wise & Chen, 2010; Jared, Cormier, Levy, & Wade-Woolley, 2011; Erdos, Genesee, Savage, & Haigh, 2014; and Bourgoin, 2014). This literature also strongly supports the need for increased assistance for such students within the FSL program. Research identifying and studying ways to support inclusive environments, such as that by Brims (2012), can be used to assess innovations intended to support students with identified literacy-related learning disabilities who are integrated into Core French, Extended French, and French Immersion classrooms. Assistance and strategies that were found to be of potential value in the FSL classroom include the development of phonological and metacognitive awareness, the explicit teaching of reading strategies, assistance in developing and applying reading skills, team teaching, the provision of social support, and the use of assistive technology. Researchers also noted the value of teachers' developing their awareness of ways in which students' home languages influence how they learn French and come to understand the workings of the language. Including such strategies and practices in FSL programs enhances the potential of students with special education needs to benefit from learning FSL.

"Learning another language helps children to become more aware of their own. This awareness can lead to improvements in literacy across the curriculum."

"Languages without Limits" website, at www.languageswithoutlimits.co.uk/why.html

Research also points to the need to provide supports and professional development opportunities for classroom teachers. Professional learning opportunities can enhance the awareness of resource teachers and FSL teachers of the practical applications of research findings related to supporting all students in FSL programs. Moreover, classroom FSL teachers benefit from support and professional development focused on meeting the diverse needs of their students and providing appropriate accommodations for students with special education needs (Lapkin, Mady, & Arnott, 2009; Lapkin, MacFarlane, & Vandergrift, 2006).

More information on strategies and practices that can support all students in FSL classrooms can be found in Section 3 and Appendix A.

Including All Students in FSL Programs

A review of documents from ministries of education across Canada indicates that they all contain general policies that ensure access to education for students with special education needs. However, it would appear that, in practice, such broad policies are not necessarily being applied in FSL education. In light of this finding, it is important to note that current legislation and policies in Ontario do not endorse exemptions for students with special education needs from FSL programs – it is expected that all students in English-language publicly funded schools will have access to FSL programs.

The issue of access is addressed in various policy documents. As we have noted, one of the principles of *A Framework for FSL* is that "FSL programs are for all students" (Ontario, 2013b, p. 9); this document also explicitly deals with access for students with special education needs. In addition, *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* (Ontario, 2009) calls for each school to create and support a positive school climate that fosters and promotes equity, inclusive education, and diversity. The principles identified in this strategy can support crucial conversations about fostering greater engagement and participation in FSL, as stakeholders collaborate to identify and address discriminatory biases and systemic barriers in order to support the achievement and well-being of all students.

"In my role at the university, I ensure that my syllabi for future teachers of FSL include developing an awareness of research. Identifying barriers and solutions to overcome them was part of a recent assignment to help break myths around 'privilege' and FSL."

A university instructor

Based on her research findings, Arnett (2013) has called for greater inclusiveness in FSL. She states that, by allowing exemptions from French for students with special education needs, schools are not only demeaning the value of FSL programs, but they are also inhibiting students from exploring the possibilities that come with learning a second language. Critical examination of potential biases and barriers to inclusion can lead to positive changes and greater student participation and engagement.

Reflecting on Data on FSL Enrolments in Ontario

When developing appropriate practices to address issues relating to inclusion in FSL, it is useful to have access to accurate, up-to-date data on participation in FSL programs. By reflecting on such data, and the questions that arise from them, stakeholders are able to assess the need to create or revise practices and procedures.

This section presents data on the enrolment of students, including students with special education needs, in FSL programs in Ontario. The data are from the 2012–13 school year, as these were the most recent data available at the time of the development of this document. They are consistent with comparable enrolment data from previous years.

Graphs A and B show the participation in FSL programs of students without (Graph A) and with (Graph B) special education needs in Grades 4 through 9. These grades were selected because participation in FSL is mandatory from Grades 4 to 8 for all students in English-language elementary schools, and secondary students must earn at least one FSL credit (which would typically be a Grade 9 course) to obtain an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. Both graphs show a pattern of decreasing participation in FSL, with the most significant decline occurring between Grades 8 and 9. However, as Graph B makes clear, the participation of students with special education needs decreased much more substantially, not only from Grade 4 to

Grade 8 but, most dramatically, between Grades 8 and 9: in Grade 8, over 89 per cent of students with special education needs participated in FSL; in Grade 9, that proportion fell to under 47 per cent.

Participation of Students in FSL Programs, Grades 4–9, 2012–13*
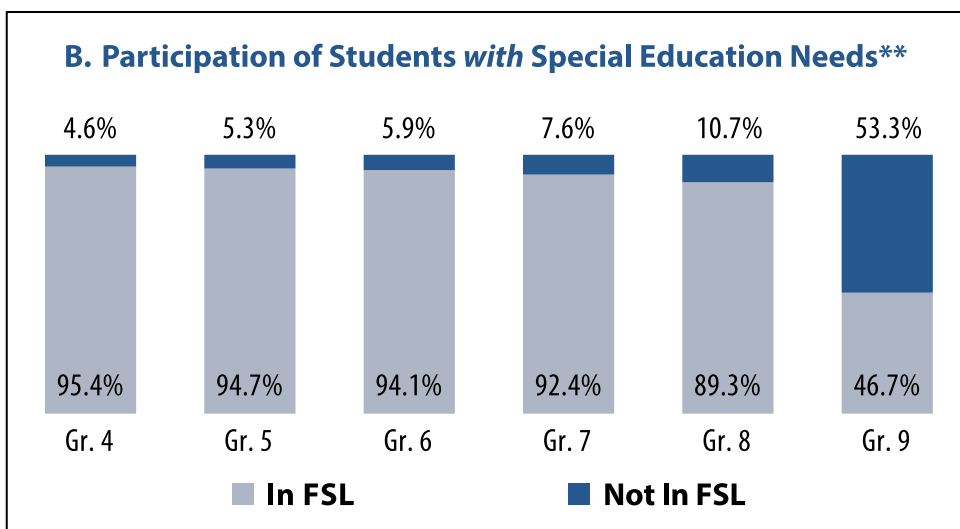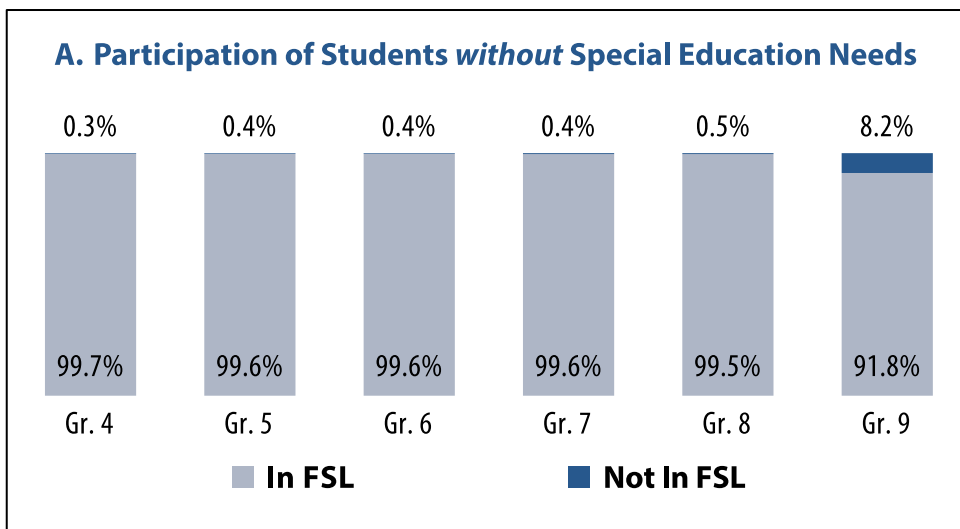
A. Participation of Students *without* Special Education Needs

	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	8.2%
	99.7%	99.6%	99.6%	99.6%	99.5%	91.8%
	Gr. 4	Gr. 5	Gr. 6	Gr. 7	Gr. 8	Gr. 9

In FSL   Not In FSL

B. Participation of Students *with* Special Education Needs**

	4.6%	5.3%	5.9%	7.6%	10.7%	53.3%
	95.4%	94.7%	94.1%	92.4%	89.3%	46.7%
	Gr. 4	Gr. 5	Gr. 6	Gr. 7	Gr. 8	Gr. 9

In FSL   Not In FSL

* Data used in these graphs are specific to the purposes of *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL* and are not strictly comparable to other figures published by the Ministry of Education.
** Calculations related to "students with special education needs" in these graphs are based on the number of students who receive special education programs and/or services.
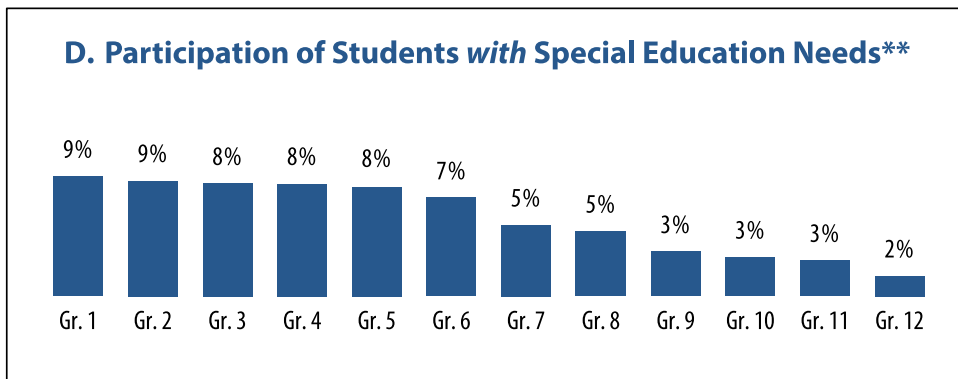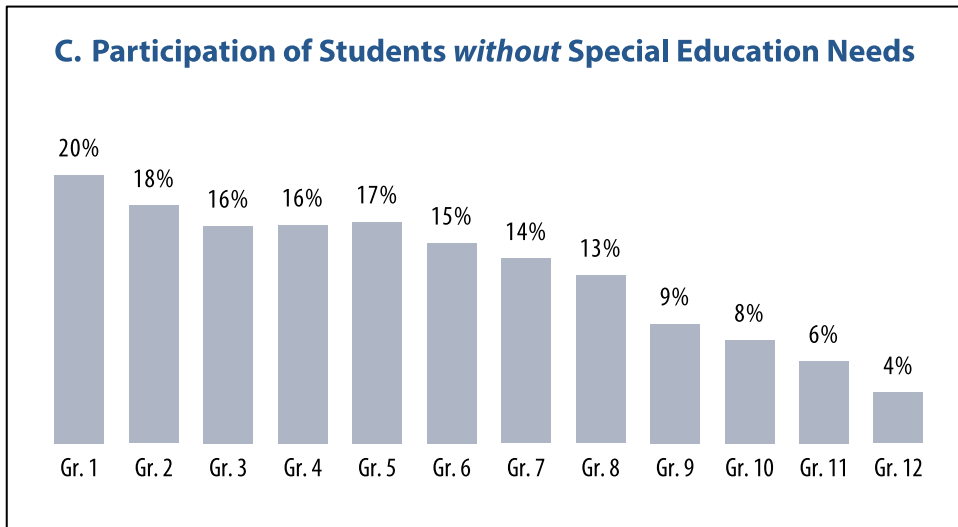
One of the goals of *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL* is to stimulate conversations in schools and school boards about student participation in FSL. To that end, administrators and educators may wish to consider the following list of questions, which are intended to support conversations at the school and board levels regarding the participation of students in FSL programs in Grades 4 to 9 and the decline in participation, particularly for students with special education needs, after Grade 8.

Questions for Reflection Relating to the Data in Graphs A and B

- Are decisions with respect to transfers, exemptions, and/or substitutions made on a case-by-case basis, informed by each student's strengths, needs, and interests? If not, how are such decisions made?
- How is student engagement in FSL reflected in our board/school improvement strategies?
- What are our practices and procedures with respect to transitions for all students, including those with special education needs?
- How many students (in our school/district) are enrolled in FSL in Grade 9? How many are not? Why are these students not enrolled?
- To what extent do the data in these graphs align with our awareness of the benefits of FSL, and our commitment to equity and inclusive education?

Graphs C and D show the participation in French Immersion and Extended French programs of students without (Graph C) and with (Graph D) special education needs in Grades 1 through 12. As in Graphs A and B, the data reveal a difference in participation in FSL across grades. They also reveal a consistent gap in the participation of students with special education needs, which is roughly half the participation rate of students without special education needs.

Participation of Students in French Immersion and Extended French Programs, Grades 1–12, 2012–13*

C. Participation of Students *without* Special Education Needs

Grade	Percentage
Gr. 1	20%
Gr. 2	18%
Gr. 3	16%
Gr. 4	16%
Gr. 5	17%
Gr. 6	15%
Gr. 7	14%
Gr. 8	13%
Gr. 9	9%
Gr. 10	8%
Gr. 11	6%
Gr. 12	4%

D. Participation of Students *with* Special Education Needs**

Grade	Percentage
Gr. 1	9%
Gr. 2	9%
Gr. 3	8%
Gr. 4	8%
Gr. 5	8%
Gr. 6	7%
Gr. 7	5%
Gr. 8	5%
Gr. 9	3%
Gr. 10	3%
Gr. 11	3%
Gr. 12	2%

* Data used in these graphs are specific to the purposes of *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL* and are not strictly comparable to other figures published by the Ministry of Education.
** Calculations related to "students with special education needs" in these graphs are based on the number of students who receive special education programs and/or services.

The trends in Graphs C and D also raise a number of questions that schools and schools board may wish to consider, with the goal of increasing student participation in all FSL programs.

Questions for Reflection Relating to the Data in Graphs C and D

- What local (school/district) data do we have about participation in various FSL programs? Are there data about why students leave the FSL programs at various times (e.g., in the primary years or between Grade 8 and Grade 9)?
- What factors may contribute to the patterns in these data?
- What supports are available for students experiencing difficulties in FSL programs?
- How do we support the belief that students can be successful in and benefit from FSL?
- What training and support are FSL teachers receiving to help them meet the needs of all learners?

School boards and educators may wish to use these questions, and those related to participation in FSL in Grades 4 to 9, as a basis for investigating patterns within their own school or district. Educators are encouraged to critically reflect on relevant policies and practices at the classroom, school, and district levels (e.g., policies/practices related to transition planning, FSL program reviews, resource team meetings, course selection, timetabling), using an equity and inclusive education lens. Such analysis and reflection can be used to promote equity and inclusive education and to support decision making about participation in FSL programs on a case-by-case basis, to serve the best interests of individual students.

2. Policies That Inform Decision Making

This section of *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL* provides information and links to relevant legislation and ministry policies related to FSL, transitions, education and career/life planning, and special education. By outlining actual requirements in these areas, we hope to encourage boards and schools to review their local practices and procedures to ensure that they promote the best possible outcomes for each individual student.

Like all students, students with special education needs have diverse strengths, interests, abilities, and challenges. Not all exceptional students face difficulties in learning a second language; others require specific interventions and supports to enable them to succeed in FSL programs. Because of this diversity, it is important that decisions regarding participation in FSL programs be made on a case-by-case basis, and it is essential that those involved in making these decisions have accurate and up-to-date information about relevant legislation, ministry policies, and related school board procedures. Research suggests that FSL program decisions are sometimes based on practices and traditions that boards and/or schools assume to be grounded in policy when, in fact, relevant policies may have changed over time or proposed policy may never have been formalized.

FSL Policies and Practices

Until 2004, the ministry's Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) No. 58 provided for the possibility of exemptions from the elementary Core French program. Since the revocation of PPM No. 58 in 2004, however, there is no ministry policy outlining exceptions to the inclusion of all students in FSL programs.

The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language – Core, Grades 4–8; Extended, Grades 4–8; Immersion, Grades 1–8, 2013 and *The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language – Core, Extended, and Immersion French, Grades 9 to 12, 2014* are inclusive of all students. These documents state that, "to be effective, instruction must be based on the belief that all students can be successful and that learning French is important and valuable for all students" (Ontario, 2014b, p. 35).

In the section "Planning French as a Second Language Programs for Students with Special Education Needs", the FSL curriculum policy documents outline program and planning considerations to meet the needs of all students.[4] They describe the importance of supporting all learners in FSL and include information about appropriate instructional approaches; the importance of identifying the areas of strength and need in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP); the provision of instructional, environmental, and/or assessment accommodations; and the modification of curriculum expectations, as outlined in the IEP.

In addition, the secondary FSL curriculum includes new courses that are intended to enhance the participation, engagement, and achievement of all students in FSL. The new Grade 9 course in Core French is an introductory course for students with little or no previous knowledge of French. In French Immersion, new applied courses in Grades 9 and 10 provide an additional pathway option for students.

Supporting Successful Transitions: Education and Career/Life Planning

Creating Pathways to Success: An Education and Career/Life Planning Program for Ontario Schools is based on three core beliefs (Ontario, 2013a, p. 9):

- All students can be successful.
- Success comes in many forms.
- There are many pathways to success.

The education and career/life planning program in every school is intended to be inclusive (designed to engage all learners) and holistic (taking the whole student into account). Through this program, students will get to know themselves as learners, explore their opportunities, set goals, and make decisions. The program also supports students throughout the many transitions that they experience, including the one from elementary to secondary school.

As part of the education and career/life planning program, students are required, with teacher support, to document and reflect on their learning, as well as their strengths, interests, and goals, in "All About Me" portfolios (for students in Kindergarten to Grade 6) and Individual Pathways Plans (IPPs – for students in Grades 7 to 12). As students engage in FSL programs, second language learning becomes part of these educational self-portraits. These portfolios and IPPs are useful sources of information when planning for transitions for all students, including students

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4. See the FSL curriculum documents for Grades 1–8 (pp. 30–40) and for Grades 9–12 (pp. 38–43).

with special education needs. Students and parents contemplating decisions about pathways, courses, and the transition between elementary and secondary school – including options for the study of FSL – may find it useful to review IPPs. In addition, the "All About Me" portfolios and IPPs can be used as a source of information when developing transition plans, which are required for all students with an IEP. (For further discussion of IEPs, see "Individual Needs and the IEP" below.) With respect to FSL, decisions can be further informed by access to current, reliable information about the cognitive, social, and academic benefits of second language learning, up-to-date information about FSL courses in different pathways, and information about the potential employment advantages associated with second language proficiency.

For more information about transitions and the education and career/life planning program, see *Creating Pathways to Success*, which can be found on the ministry's website, at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/cps/CreatingPathwaysSuccess.pdf.

Information on the supports that will be available in the classroom to particular students can also inform decisions made during transition planning. It is important that students and parents are aware that all classrooms, including FSL classrooms, are required to provide appropriate supports for students who have special education needs. As noted earlier, to ensure that all students receive the support they need to be successful in FSL, both the elementary and secondary FSL curriculum documents include sections that are intended to support FSL teachers in planning for students who have special education needs, based on accommodations, modifications, or alternative expectations outlined in the IEP. As the curriculum documents also note, FSL teachers "have a responsibility to help all students learn, and they work collaboratively with special education teachers, where appropriate, to achieve this goal" (Ontario, 2013d, p. 35).

In order to support educators in continuing to develop the professional knowledge and skills needed to meet the needs of diverse learners in FSL, other Ministry of Education resources provide further information and strategies related to differentiated instruction, universal lesson design, and the integration of instruction and assessment practices. More information and examples of such strategies can be found on the following websites:

www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/instruction.html

www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/asdsecond.pdf

www.curriculum.org/fsl

www.edugains.ca/newsite/di/index.html

www.edugains.ca/newsite/curriculum/index.html

"I need to learn more about strategies and accommodations to support my students. I also want to collaborate with my special education resource teacher so that he will know more about my program."

An FSL teacher

Course Selection and Credit Requirements

Course selection is a significant aspect of education and career/life planning, and it is important that all stakeholders understand the available options and requirements. *Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2011* sets out the requirements that govern the policies and programs of all publicly funded elementary and secondary English-language schools in Ontario. It outlines (on p. 55) the credit requirements for the completion of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), which include one credit in French as a second language. Up to three FSL credits may be used to meet compulsory credit requirements for the OSSD.

Ontario Schools states that secondary school principals have the discretion to substitute up to three compulsory credits with courses from other subject areas specified in the list of compulsory credit requirements. These substitutions "should be made to promote and enhance student learning or to respond to special needs and interests" (p. 61). It should be noted that there is no policy or program requirement suggesting that such substitutions should be made for FSL in particular. If a substitution for a compulsory credit is deemed necessary or in the best interests of an individual student, there are a variety of options. For example, if a Grade 8 student is planning to enrol in a Grade 9 learning strategies course in the coming school year, the principal could:

- defer a compulsory credit that would have been taken in Grade 9 to a later year, or
- substitute the learning strategies course for a compulsory credit in another subject area (e.g., courses in arts, health and physical education, geography, French as a second language, and information technology that are not prerequisites for a compulsory Grade 10 credit).

For more information on credit requirements and substitutions, see *Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2011*, which can be found on the ministry's website, at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os/ONSchools.pdf.

Special Education Policies and Practices

The Education Act and the regulations made under it mandate the provision of special education programs and services in Ontario's publicly funded schools. School boards must establish policies and practices in accordance with current legislation and Ministry of Education policies. Decision makers at the local level comply with provincial policies in different ways. Their local practices and procedures can have a profound impact on the participation of students, particularly students with special education needs, in FSL programs. Consequently, it is important that decision makers at the local level understand what is and what is not required.

The following section focuses on aspects of program planning for students with special education needs who are enrolled in FSL programs. For details on legislation and policies related to special education – including those related to the identification of exceptional students and determining needs for accommodations, modifications, and/or alternative expectations – readers should consult the ministry website, at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/speced.html.

Individual Needs and the IEP

A key process in program planning for students with special education needs is the development of the Individual Education Plan (IEP). This is a working document that outlines the special education programs and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the student's strengths and needs.[5] It must include all subjects or courses in which the student requires instructional, environmental, and/or assessment accommodations and/or modified or alternative expectations. The development, implementation, and monitoring of an IEP is a collaborative effort that involves the student, parents, and school staff. If a student requires accommodations and/or modified or alternative expectations in FSL, it is important to include the FSL teacher as part of the team creating and implementing that student's IEP.

For detailed information on the development and implementation of IEPs, consult *The Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide* (2004), which can be accessed on the ministry's website, at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide/resource/iepresguid.pdf.

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5. Students with IEPs may or may not have been identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IRPC).

The supports recorded in IEPs may vary from subject to subject. For example, some students with special education needs do not necessarily experience difficulty in second language learning, so the supports needed by a student in FSL may differ from those needed by the same student in another subject. Students who have strengths in oral communication may enjoy the oral focus of learning French, and students who may require literacy remediation in other subjects can benefit from the extra time that is spent on literacy strategies in the FSL classroom. Joy and Murphy (2012) reported that students with special education needs who were beginning FSL studies with their peers "[felt] like all the other students in the class, like they're on a more even playing field with their peers" (p. 112). These students demonstrated greater confidence and lower frustration and anxiety than they had in the past and took pride in their new skills.

The following four case studies[6] illustrate a range of support for students with special education needs who are enrolled in Core French, Extended French, or French Immersion programs in different grades. The unique learning profile of each student is considered by a team of relevant educators, who identify and implement accommodations and/or modifications that are appropriate for the student's individual needs.

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6. Note that these case studies are not IEPs. Sample IEPs can be accessed at www.edugains.ca/ newsite/SpecialEducation/transitions.html.

CASE STUDY A – JODIE

Providing Accommodations in a Grade 2 French Immersion Program

Jodie is a Grade 2 student who is currently enrolled in French Immersion. She has strong relationships with her peers and says that music and drama are her favourite subjects. Jodie's teachers and her parents have been in regular communication about her progress. Jodie's FSL teacher has observed that she understands oral instructions and, with support, is able to communicate effectively. She also observed that Jodie is continuing to experience difficulty in reading fluency and comprehension. Jodie has not been identified with an exceptionality by an IPRC. A team composed of the French teacher, special education resource teacher, and school principal reviewed the relevant assessment data and decided to develop an IEP outlining Jodie's strengths and needs and including a list of accommodations to be applied in her French classes.

The information discussed at the team meeting included the following items:

- Jodie's reading assessments from Grade 1 indicated that she achieved Level 2 in reading fluency and comprehension in French (using the assessment tool GB+).
- Jodie is slowly making gains in her reading but is behind many of her peers; she sometimes experiences difficulty understanding text in other classes (e.g., science and technology).
- Jodie's classroom teachers have focused on the reading strategies of phonemic awareness and using contextual cues.
- The resource teacher will include Jodie in a primary reading intervention program for twenty minutes twice a week, with a focus on improving her reading fluency.
- Jodie's classroom teachers will use the following instructional accommodations:
  - ✦ bilingual voice-to-text software,
  - ✦ scribing, and
  - ✦ extra time for processing instructions and information.

CASE STUDY B – JOSEF

Implementing an IEP in a Grade 6 Core French Program

Josef is a confident Grade 6 student who enjoys using the computer and playing sports and games. His strengths include oral language (speaking), decoding, computer keyboarding, gross motor skills, and kinesthetic/tactile learning. Josef has been identified with a Mild Intellectual Disability, and he spends part of each school day in a special education class. In addition to listing Josef's strengths, which are noted above, his IEP includes areas of need related to reading and writing skills, listening comprehension, and problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

Josef's special education classroom teacher, French teacher, and special education resource teacher, as well as a special education consultant, contributed to the development of his IEP, including some modified expectations for Core French. Josef's Annual Program Goals for French are to complete the Grade 5 expectations for Speaking and Listening, with a focus on using a variety of listening and speaking strategies to communicate information and participate in simple interactions.

Listed below are modifications that have been made to the complexity of the specific curriculum expectations for Reading and Writing as part of Josef's IEP for the first term of the school year:

- *Using Reading Comprehension Strategies:* focus on using pictorial and contextual cues to predict meaning and confirm understanding
- *Writing in a Variety of Forms:* apply some of the structural elements of text to create a greeting card

Josef's IEP lists the following teaching strategies and assessment methods to support his goals:

- daily peer support
- use of a personal word bank and picture dictionary
- the provision of models (i.e., sample greeting cards) and a writing checklist
- simple, structured oral assessments (e.g., daily check-ins)
- weekly anecdotal observations and feedback (e.g., during guided reading)

CASE STUDY C – MARIAM

Providing Accommodations in a Grade 8 Core French Program

Mariam is a Grade 8 student whose strengths include oral language, intellectual curiosity, and number and mathematical skills. Mariam's areas of need include writing skills, self-regulatory skills, problem-solving skills, gross motor skills, and social skills with peers. Mariam has been identified with an exceptionality – autism – and is receiving special education support in a regular classroom, with withdrawal assistance.

With the input of the French teacher in the development and monitoring of her IEP, instructional, environmental, and assessment accommodations were identified to support Mariam's achievement of the Grade 8 Core French expectations (and all subjects identified in the IEP), as shown in the following chart.

Accommodations for Mariam

Instructional Accommodations	Environmental Accommodations	Assessment Accommodations
• Visual individualized daily schedule • Use of a laptop with text-to-speech, speech-to-text, and concept-webbing software • Visual supports to augment auditory information • Organization coaching • Incorporating student's interests whenever possible • Task analysis • Praise, reassurance • Shaping when introducing new behavioural expectations	• Strategic seating • Quiet setting with reduced social interaction for breaks • Sensory equipment	• Individual or quiet setting • Periodic breaks • Videotaping of responses • Use of a laptop with speech-to-text and concept-webbing software

CASE STUDY D – NIALL

Supporting Transition in a Grade 9 Extended French Program

During a meeting prior to his transition from Grade 8 to Grade 9, Niall's Grade 8 teachers met with secondary school staff to review his strengths and needs. Niall's areas of strength include social skills with adults, strong expressive language (speaking) skills in English and French, and the ability to follow routines. Assessment data from teachers and psycho-educational testing indicate difficulties in the areas of reading and writing; Niall was identified with a learning disability in Grade 4. He has been receiving indirect support in a regular classroom setting. At the meeting, Niall's French teacher shared that Niall has been more successful when sharing his ideas and opinions orally, sometimes using a digital recorder.

Discussions with Niall about his educational and personal goals reveal that he particularly enjoys health and physical education and math, in part because the learning activities can be kinesthetic. Niall is thinking about a future career in business. He believes that continuing to learn French would be an asset, although he has some concerns about the reading and writing components of this and other subjects. He has found it helpful to use a computer with grammar and spell checks, to have extra time to complete reading/writing tasks, and to work in a quiet setting, but he still finds reading and writing tasks very challenging.

Niall's IEP includes instructional and assessment accommodations related to the Reading and Writing strands in FSL and other program areas that involve reading and writing tasks. For his first semester in Grade 9, Niall's courses will be Science, French, Health and Physical Education, and Learning Strategies. In his second semester, he will take English, Mathematics, Issues in Canadian Geography (in French), and Information and Communication Technology in Business. The high school resource teacher will set up a meeting with Niall and his parents during the first week of school, at which time they will discuss:

- resources and supports (including technology) available to help Niall with his coursework in his first semester;
- ways for Niall to self-advocate for his learning needs, particularly in his French and Science classes; and
- results of discussions with the guidance counsellor about career goals and community volunteer opportunities.

3. Creating Inclusive Environments Together

This section begins with a discussion of mindsets and ways of thinking about inclusion, achievement, and success. We discuss the importance of open, progressive mindsets and the need to align practices with such beliefs. To support boards and schools in exploring their own practices and beliefs, we provide sample questions that can be used when assessing local practices and the values that underpin them. Finally, we outline a range of actions and strategies that schools and boards may wish to consider to help them create inclusive environments together.
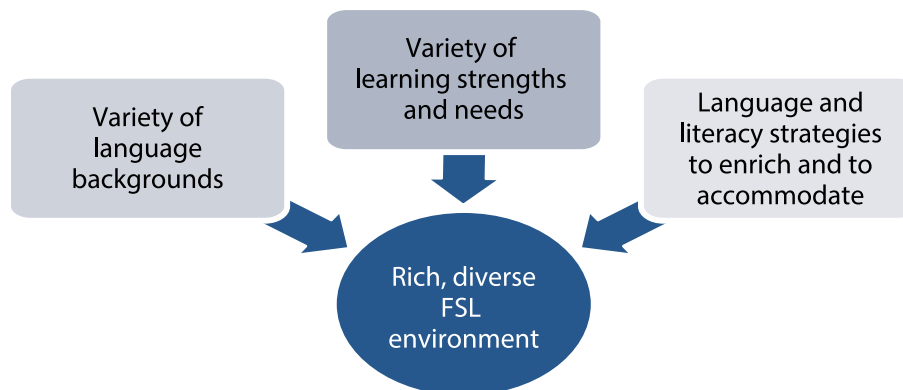
Aligning Practices and Beliefs

In the twenty-first century, educators and other stakeholders in the educational community have been moving away from "either/or" ways of thinking, which polarize program options, towards "both/and" ways of thinking, which promote diversity and positive learning environments. As an example of "either/or" thinking, French Immersion programs were sometimes considered to be "enrichment" programs and therefore unsuitable for, or unable to meet the needs of, some students. This sense of exclusivity distinguished optional Immersion programs from mandatory Core French programs and led to misleading comparisons between optional and mandatory FSL programs. Furthermore, the idea that FSL was not suitable for some students extended beyond the realm of optional programs, leading to practices that exempted students from even mandatory FSL.

In contrast, from a "both/and" perspective, all FSL programs are seen as offering *both* opportunities for enrichment *and* opportunities for support, based on individual students' strengths and needs. Rather than focusing on a perceived need for exclusion, the "both/and" perspective promotes discussion of initiatives to support teachers and resource staff in providing high quality FSL education for all. From this perspective, FSL programs are enriched by including a diverse group of learners, and all students benefit from an explicit focus on second language and literacy strategies. The following diagram illustrates how FSL programs are viewed from a "both/and" perspective.

"Both/And" Thinking

FSL programs are enriched by including a diverse group of learners.
All students benefit from second language education
and a focus on literacy strategies.

Variety of language backgrounds

Variety of learning strengths and needs

Language and literacy strategies to enrich and to accommodate

Rich, diverse FSL environment

Other perspectives/mindsets can also affect decision making about inclusiveness in FSL programs. Based on many years of research on achievement and success, Carol Dweck (2006) has identified two kinds of mindsets – *fixed* and *growth*. In a fixed mindset, people believe that their basic qualities, such as intelligence or talents, are fixed traits. They believe that they are born with certain abilities and that, because of this, their success or failure is pre-determined (*"I can't do French; I'm just not good at learning languages"*). She contrasts this with a growth mindset, in which people believe that their intelligence and abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work – brains and talent are just the starting point (*"French was pretty hard for me at first, but the more I practise, the more I can communicate my ideas in French"*). Dweck and other researchers have applied this theory of mindsets in a variety of settings and have found that a growth mindset leads to a love of learning, a higher degree of perseverance in problem-solving situations, and a higher degree of resilience, as errors and challenges are seen as a natural part of learning.

This theory of mindsets provides a useful tool for examining beliefs about the participation in FSL of students with special education needs. It allows us to identify and analyse values and beliefs that may underlie local/district procedures and policies related to the inclusion of students with special education needs in FSL programs. In the following chart, the statements on the left reflect a fixed mindset. They might be considered "unproductive beliefs", because they perpetuate the status quo, lead to the categorization of students, and may limit the inclusiveness of FSL programs. The statements on the right reframe these beliefs within a growth mindset. By moving towards these more "productive beliefs", we are able to take actions on a case-by-case basis and develop evidence-based practices that reflect a commitment to equity and inclusiveness, that provide more opportunities for all students, and that continue to improve FSL teaching and learning.

Moving Towards Productive Beliefs about Participation in FSL Programs

FIXED MINDSET ------------------->	GROWTH MINDSET
The learning needs of students with special education needs cannot be met in an FSL program.	If a student's learning needs are not met, changes may have to be made to the teaching/learning program.
Having French as the language of instruction offers an additional layer of difficulty that students with special education needs "just don't need".	Language learning is a challenging and rewarding experience with the potential to benefit all students. Students with special education needs may benefit from particular strategies and/or supports to meet their individual needs as second language learners.
FSL programs are better suited to some learners than others. Optional French Immersion programs should be pursued only by certain students.	All students have equitable access to FSL programs. When parents make choices about optional programs, these choices are informed by specific information about each program (and not information that reflects old assumptions about the attributes students need in order to be able to succeed in FSL).
Because FSL teachers do not have the resources or training to support students with special education needs, such students would be better served by exemption from FSL.	Teachers need the support of the larger community to create a learning environment that supports all students. FSL teachers, like all teachers, need appropriate training and resources in order to help them support students with special education needs in their classrooms.
Students with special education needs won't benefit from learning French.	Students with special education needs are included in FSL programs based on their ability to participate in the regular classroom, not based on the subject of instruction. When students with special education needs require additional supports or resources, these are offered in all applicable subject areas, enabling students to benefit from the learning.
Students with special education needs benefit from support only if it is in French, when French is the language of instruction.	If support in the language of instruction is not available, students with special education needs benefit from support in English that meets their cognitive, social, physical, behavioural, and/or emotional learning needs.

Asking Critical Questions: A Whole-System Approach

Engagement of and collaboration among all stakeholders are important elements of ensuring the provision of equitable and inclusive FSL programs. School boards engage in regular reviews of their FSL programs, policies, and procedures. Trustees, supervisory officers, and committees strive to offer the highest quality FSL programs and to meet the needs of their local community. School administrators, teachers, and guidance, Student Success, and special education staff frequently make decisions that affect the participation of individuals or groups in FSL programs. Parents, students, and other members of the school community communicate with each other to make decisions about programs and pathways, as they weigh options and make choices based on individual interests, strengths, and needs. The vision for inclusive education in Ontario welcomes and respects all of these stakeholders. All of these participants have an important voice in supporting the vision for inclusive education, that "every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning" (Ontario, 2009, p. 10).

Stakeholders at all levels are encouraged to consider ways to collaborate with each other and engage in conversations about inclusive education in FSL. The chart below includes examples of questions that tend to be posed, in a variety of situations, when decisions are being made about participation in FSL. The adjacent conversation points suggest ways of addressing these questions to eliminate or reduce barriers to inclusion that may be implied – however unintentionally – by them.

Engaging in Conversations about FSL That Promote Inclusiveness

Questions That Can Limit Inclusiveness	Conversation Points to Promote Inclusiveness
Parents making program decisions	
How can I tell if my child will be successful in French Immersion?	• The differences between programs • The goals of each program • How teachers will assess learning • Supports available for students experiencing difficulties
Schools developing students' transition plans	
Would this student benefit from substituting a learning strategies course for Grade 9 Core French?	• The student's strengths and interests • Supports available for this student in his/her course work • Potential benefits from a learning strategies course • Options for accommodating a learning strategies course, including the range of possible course substitutions
Boards developing policies related to inclusion in FSL programs	
Which students should take FSL?	• Supports and accommodations offered to meet the needs of all learners • The type of information about each program that needs to be available for the community • The benefits of learning FSL

Strategies and Examples of Inclusive Practices

There is a wide range of strategies that schools and boards can consider in order to support all students in FSL programs. *A Framework for FSL* (2013b, pp. 16–17) lists several of these strategies, as follows:

- Promote the inclusiveness of FSL programs, recognizing that all students can learn FSL given the appropriate support
- Apply principles of Universal Design for Learning and differentiated instruction to FSL program planning
- Provide required accommodations and modifications as outlined in a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- Implement the Tiered Approach to prevention and intervention
- Where required for students with special education needs, ensure access to assistive technology as outlined in the student's IEP
- Involve FSL teachers in the planning and implementation of a student's IEP where appropriate
- Include school- and board-level resource teams (e.g., school resource teacher, FSL consultant, senior administration) to support problem solving and decision making
- Support English language learners in transferring literacy skills to strengthen first-language and FSL skills
- Consult with students to determine what would engage them in class and help them learn French
- Engage all students in accepting and respecting the diversity of the school community
- Review practices around substitutions for Core French to support the participation of all students

Appendix B below outlines a sample process for a board-level gap analysis related to inclusive education in FSL, suggesting how actions in various areas might be reviewed. Such a review might then serve as the basis for developing further actions to promote equitable and inclusive practices. The following pages describe more fully some specific examples of strategies to promote inclusive practices in FSL and provide examples of how these strategies might be implemented.

> "Research and data help us as a monitoring tool.
> We can use data to do a gap analysis and plan for our moving forward."
>
> *A principal*

STRATEGY 1

Review practices used to inform parents about all FSL programs, including optional programs.

Staff can review information on board, school, and/or teacher websites as well as other methods of providing information (e.g., parent information nights, school-based interviews). Questions raised in a review might include the following:

- Is accurate and relevant information available to parents about each of the available FSL programs?
- Are the messages inclusive?
- Could the information be updated to include and represent more "productive beliefs" about participation and inclusion in these programs?

When school boards offer choices about FSL programs, the following types of information can be helpful to parents as they make decisions:

- a description of each FSL program available in the board (not just the optional programs);
- a comparison of each FSL program based on the expected degree of French proficiency, the schools and grades in which the programs are offered, and the language of instruction in various subjects (including options with respect to the language of instruction in secondary school courses);
- ways in which parents can support their children at home, particularly if the parents do not speak French;
- how parents register/enrol their children in FSL programs.

Example of Practice: When providing information about programs, focus on the programs themselves rather than on the abilities of the students, as shown in the following graphic.

Providing Information about FSL Programs

BEFORE

Is my child a good candidate for French Immersion?

Good candidates for the program:
• Enjoy language
• Have strong listening and focusing skills
• Have strong communication skills in their mother tongue
• Enjoy new experiences

AFTER
We say *oui!*

Embark on a pathway towards becoming bilingual:

French Immersion
• Provides English and French instruction in various subjects
• Immerses students in language and cultural experiences
• Provides opportunities to develop enhanced proficiency in French

Core French
• Is offered daily as part of the regular English program
• Provides valuable educational experience and builds intercultural understanding
• Provides opportunities to develop functional communication skills in French

Board and school leaders review practices regarding transfers, exemptions, and substitutions within FSL programs.

To promote inclusiveness in FSL programs, boards and schools might assess their procedures and practices with respect to allowing students to transfer out of FSL programs, exempting them from FSL requirements, or allowing other courses to serve as substitutions for FSL courses. They might also consider the underlying beliefs reflected in their practices. Questions might include the following:

- Do these procedures and practices reflect an equitable and inclusive approach to FSL education?
- Are there steps in these procedures that may be perceived as excluding some students or groups?
- Can the language associated with board or school practices in relation to FSL be perceived as excluding some students or groups?

Example of Practice: To foster commitment to equitable and inclusive FSL programs, an Ontario school board superintendent sent out a memorandum informing elementary and secondary principals, FSL teachers, and resource teachers that the superintendent's approval was required for transfer from an FSL program or exemption from an FSL requirement. The memo stated that, prior to recommending such a transfer or exemption, school staff were to share evidence that they had completed the steps of a common procedure for assessing the needs of "students of concern". To enhance awareness among school principals and staff about the importance of inclusiveness in FSL programs, the superintendent and the FSL program coordinator shared research about the benefits of FSL. In addition, they provided information on instructional and assessment strategies, to increase the confidence of school staff in supporting all students. They also ensured that information about FSL programs, benefits, and pathways was shared with the community at parent information sessions.

STRATEGY 3

Seek opportunities for staff collaboration and professional development in order to support all students.

By including FSL teachers on school leadership teams, transition teams, and resource teams, schools can ensure that such teams reflect a greater variety of perspectives.

Example of Practice: A resource teacher wanted to learn more about supporting French Immersion students in her school. She invited other resource teachers from schools offering French Immersion to meet after school to discuss relevant issues. The school board curriculum department supported this initiative by providing release time to enable the group to continue their collaboration. The network, which grew to include the board's special education consultant and its FSL consultant, shared resources, discussed ways to maximize the use of assistive technology, and engaged in problem solving around the needs of specific students. The network members found the discussions so useful that they decided to continue to meet once a month.

These strategies and examples illustrate the engagement of schools and school boards in an ongoing process of reflecting on practice and making strategic changes to support all students. It is important that this process be based on a firm belief in the learning potential of all students, as perceptions of students' abilities can have a significant impact on their participation in FSL programs, their motivation, and their achievement. Genuine respect, high expectations, and deep knowledge of individual students' strengths and learning needs provide the foundation of inclusive FSL programs.

Conclusion

"Education creates opportunities, and it can do so for everyone."

Achieving Excellence, p. 9

The implementation of inclusive FSL programs varies among boards and schools in Ontario, depending on individual and collective beliefs about second language teaching and learning. However, current research and provincial policy both recognize the importance of equity and inclusiveness in FSL education. By promoting informed decision making about participation in FSL programs and providing up-to-date information about supports available in the FSL classroom and options available to students in various FSL programs and pathways, *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL* supports the belief, articulated in *A Framework for FSL*, that FSL programs are for all students. *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL* has highlighted beliefs, values, and mindsets that promote inclusiveness and, at the same time, has outlined practical procedures and strategies that can be applied to help ensure that all students succeed in their educational goals. It encourages all of us, as educational stakeholders, to reflect on our attitudes and values, as part of a process of continuous improvement. Efforts to strengthen FSL education for all students reflect an ongoing commitment to translate what is known about key elements of inclusive and differentiated practice into reality in every classroom.

A Framework for FSL invited all of us to look to a future when "learning French will be widely recognized as a valuable component of every child's education" (Ontario, 2013b, p. 38). *Including Students with Special Education Needs in FSL* supports this vision of the future by highlighting research that points to the benefits of second language learning and the importance of removing potential barriers to access. In Ontario, we recognize the value of our vibrant and increasingly diverse communities. We also recognize that equity and excellence go hand in hand, and we believe that *all* learners benefit from positive, respectful environments that promote continuous learning and high expectations. As we continue to explore and share ways to provide equitable opportunities and support to all learners in FSL programs, we plant the seeds of inclusivity and respect for future generations.

Appendix A
Research-based Strategies to Support Students with Special Education Needs*

Instructional Strategies

- Differentiation of learning content, process, and/or product, depending on students' needs
- Use of memory aids (e.g., sentence starters, visual/auditory cues)
- Multi-sensory instruction and use of visual and manipulative supports
- Use of alternative learning resources (e.g., resources at different levels of complexity)
- Use of graphic organizers
- Teacher modelling
- Academic coaching (e.g., asking questions, scaffolding)
- Adding wait time
- Use of technology, including assistive technology
- Peer tutoring
- Reminding students of time remaining to complete an activity
- Minimizing distractions
- Providing positive reinforcement
- Providing social support

Assessment Strategies

- Early identification of at-risk students
- Use of technology, including assistive technology
- Varying the assessment format (e.g., oral, written, visual)
- Allowing additional time
- Providing an alternative location with fewer distractions
- Providing opportunities for self-assessment and individual goal setting

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* Adapted from a literature review conducted by Mady, Muhling, and Rose (2014).

Intervention Strategies

- Explicit attention to strategies used by students
- Use of literacy strategies that transfer across languages
- Focus on metacognitive awareness
- Focus on phonological awareness
- Team teaching

Appendix B
Bridging the Gap from Policy to Practice

The concept of inclusion can be examined from two points of reference: inclusive education as the removal of barriers or marginalization, and inclusive education based on key goals that build and sustain positive learning environments (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2013). In order to support multiple ways of thinking about inclusion, and to bridge the gap between inclusive policy and inclusive school practice, organizational support from a number of levels is needed.

The following chart outlines a possible approach to a gap analysis that might be conducted by a school board in relation to inclusive FSL programs. It outlines promising practices in five areas and provides key questions that can be used for reflection and discussion.

Promising Practices	What are we doing in this area?	What evidence do we have relating to our activities?	What gaps exist?
Leadership Support School and board leaders are supporters of inclusive education and are knowledgeable about the benefits of FSL. They demonstrate a commitment to reflection on and continuous improvement of policies and practices to promote the inclusiveness of FSL programs.			
Access to Opportunities All students are welcomed and respected in Core French, Extended French, and French Immersion programs. FSL classrooms reflect the full diversity of learners in the community.			
Collaborative Approach Collaborative problem solving is used when students are not succeeding in FSL. Educators, students, and parents share in decisions about participation in FSL programs, and communicate regularly about progress.			
Differentiated Instruction Different modes of instruction and assessment are used to maximize student success in achievement of the FSL curriculum expectations (or individual goals outlined in an IEP).			
Ongoing Professional Learning Ongoing training and collaboration empower FSL teachers with the *skills* to plan appropriate assessment and instruction in an inclusive environment, and the *belief* that all students can contribute to the classroom community in positive ways.			

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