Welcoming ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS *into* FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE *Programs*

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

support every child
reach every student

Ontario

Contents

Introduction

Welcoming English Language Learners into French as a Second Language Programs 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 English language learners in FSL programs. It not only describes the benefits of FSL education for English language learners but also addresses the misconception that FSL programs are too difficult for English language learners and reinforces how current FSL teaching strategies can meet the learning needs of these students.

Background

Linguistic and cultural diversity is a key characteristic of many Ontario schools. As we continue to welcome newcomers to Ontario, the number of English language learners – students who are new to English, or to the variety of English used in English-language school boards – is rising. According to recent data, more than 25 per cent of students in Ontario are English language learners, a percentage that includes Canadian-born English language learners (Ontario Ministry of Education, January 2013, p. 1).

English language learners, like all students, must have the opportunity to choose pathways that reflect their individual strengths, needs, and interests. Although French as a second language is a compulsory subject in Ontario, and although research reveals that learning a second or third language provides many benefits, some English language learners continue to be exempted from participating in FSL programs. This is the case even though parents[1] of these students are often very supportive of official-language bilingualism (Mady, 2014, 2015b).

Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario (2014) outlines the ministry's goals for education, including the goal of "ensuring equity". Ensuring equity means that "All children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue

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1. The word *parent(s)* is used in this document to refer to parent(s) and guardian(s). It may also be taken to include caregivers or close family members who are responsible for raising the child.

into adulthood" (p. 3). It is important to note, however, that equity does not mean "treating all students in the same way but, rather, responding to the individual needs of each student and providing the conditions and interventions needed to help him or her succeed" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014b, p. 15). With some students, such as English language learners, focused educational supports are required, and are offered through the English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Literacy Development (ELD) programs (described in the box on page 5). Current research is also making it clear that, *with the right supports*, English language learners can also benefit from participating in FSL programs.

As the number of English language learners in Ontario classrooms steadily increases, it is important to reflect on how to offer these students, along with all other students, the opportunity to benefit from learning French.

"In the context of FSL, research confirms that a prior language learning experience can facilitate and accelerate further language learning. Indeed, many English language learners are motivated and able to excel in French, while in other areas of the curriculum, where their success may depend on their knowledge of English, the achievement gap between themselves and their peers may be much greater."

The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: French as a Second Language (2014), p. 42

Programs to Support English Language Learners

In Ontario schools, English language learners may receive support through one of two distinct programs designed to meet their language learning needs and/or to help them develop the literacy skills they need in order to continue their education and participate fully in life in Ontario:

- **English as a Second Language (ESL) programs** are for students whose first language is other than English or is a variety of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools. Students in these programs have had educational opportunities to develop age-appropriate first-language literacy skills.

- **English Literacy Development (ELD) programs** are for students whose first language is other than English or is a variety of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools. Students in these programs are most often from countries in which their access to education has been limited, and they have had limited opportunities to develop language and literacy skills in any language. Schooling in their countries of origin has been inconsistent, disrupted, or even completely unavailable throughout the years that these children would otherwise have been in school. As a result, they arrive in Ontario schools with significant gaps in their education.

One size does not fit all when it comes to thinking of and planning programs for English language learners. They come from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds and may be Canadian-born or recently arrived from other countries. Some come from countries where, for various reasons, educational opportunities have been lacking in some way. Like all students, however, English language learners bring a wide range of strengths and assets to Ontario schools. When teachers are planning for instruction, each student should be considered on an individual basis.

1. What Do Ministry Policies and Initiatives Say?

Ministry policies and initiatives, which draw on current research and data, affirm that all students have the potential to succeed and that programming decisions and course selection for students should be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the strengths, needs, and interests of the individual student. In their endorsement of principles of inclusiveness and diversity, the following documents promote the ministry's goal of "ensuring equity", mentioned in the Introduction of this document.

One of the guiding principles for FSL outlined in *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12* (2013) is that "**FSL programs are for all students**" (p. 10). Participation in FSL programs should reflect the diversity of the student population, including students with special education needs and students who are English language learners. Current research supports the concept that multilingualism has many benefits, such as facilitating English proficiency, improving career opportunities, and enhancing understanding and appreciation of global diversity. All students deserve equitable access to these potential benefits, regardless of their backgrounds. Decisions about the placement of students in an FSL program or course should be made on a case-by-case basis.

The elementary and secondary FSL curriculum documents[2] specifically address program considerations for English language learners' participation and success in FSL programs. The new Grade 9 Open course, FSF1O, introduced in 2014, addresses the need to provide appropriate curriculum for students who have little or no background in Core French. It is an introductory course for students who have not accumulated the minimum of 600 hours of elementary Core French instruction.

In *English Language Learners – ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12* (2007) a supportive reception and orientation process for new students and their families is recommended. Schools should provide a warm welcome for all English

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2. *The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language – Core French, Grades 4–8; Extended French, Grades 4–8; French Immersion, Grades 1–8* (2013) and *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: French as a Second Language – Core French, Extended French, and French Immersion* (2014).

language learners and their families, and orientation programs should include, among other things, information about courses and about considerations related to course selection, and an explanation of the various programs and activities that the school offers.

School boards must also review the educational background of all English language learners in order to determine their placement and the number of credits that will be granted for their prior learning. Placement decisions should be based on information from a range of sources and should take into account the student's career goals. It is important for school boards to ensure that "all students, including newcomers, receive information about the full range of career possibilities and [that] they have support in exploring various career opportunities and the education pathways that will help them to achieve their career goals" (p. 20). Furthermore, it is recommended that English language learners participate in courses that encourage a high level of student involvement, which means that FSL would be an appropriate choice for many of these students.

The ministry documents discussed above emphasize ways that students can benefit from learning multiple languages. The next section of this document, "What Is the Research Evidence?", consists of a review of current research on the participation of English language learners in French as a second language programs that provides further evidence of the benefits.

"The ability to speak both of Canada's official languages helps prepare students for their role as active and engaged citizens in today's bilingual and multicultural Canada. Moreover, the language learning strategies that students develop in the FSL program can contribute to an interest in learning languages throughout their lives and provide them with the skills to do so. Such abilities benefit the individual; but Canadian society – as well as the global community – also stands to gain from having plurilingual citizens."

The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: French as a Second Language (2014), p. 7

2. What Is the Research Evidence?

Research on the participation of English language learners in FSL programs is clear: English language learners do as well as, or outperform, English-speaking students in FSL. All students stand to make significant cognitive, social, and academic gains through participation in FSL programs.

Three key findings emerge from a review of research on the participation of English language learners in FSL programs. These key findings, and items from research related to them, are outlined in the table below.

Key Findings	Items from Research Related to the Key Findings
English language learners benefit from FSL.	• The learning of one language can enhance the learning of another (Aronin, 2005, and Cenoz, 2003, as cited in Mady, 2013). • "Not only do Allophone students meet with success in studying French, but a more intensive exposure to French can also enhance their English skill development" (Carr, 2007, as cited in Mady & Turnbull, 2012, p. 139). • Because they have a deep understanding of second language learning, FSL teachers "may sometimes be among the best trained to meet ELLs' needs" (Mady, 2012, p.13).
English language learners perform as well as, or better than, English-speaking students in FSL.	• English language learners do as well as, or outperform, English-speaking students in FSL (Mady, 2007, 2014, 2015a). • Allophone students are often more motivated than their English-speaking Canadian-born peers to take FSL, and this motivation helps them to achieve success in FSL (Mady, 2015b).
Mindsets may be based on misconceptions, and may negatively affect access to programs.	• Decision makers sometimes believe it is inappropriate for English language learners to participate in FSL, on the grounds that the first priority for these students should be targeted support in English. Despite decision makers' good intentions, this mindset negatively affects equitable access (Stainback & Stainback, 1992, as cited in Mady, 2013). • Some school principals express concern that learning French may be a burden for allophone students. However, the results of French testing show no significant difference in performance between allophone students and English-speaking students, even when allophone students have received much less French instruction (Mady & Turnbull, 2012).

"Mady (2006) conducted a study of recently arrived EAL [English as Additional Language] students in Ontario, interviewing school administrators and counsellors, and discovered that many excluded these students from enrolling in core French classes. She noted that the rationale used to exclude EAL learners is based on administrative beliefs that she maintains 'may be founded on myths' about language learning (p. 171)."

(Carr, 2009, p. 791)

Questions for Reflection Relating to the Key Research Findings

- Is accurate and relevant information about FSL programs being made available to all parents?
- Do our current procedures and practices reflect an equitable and inclusive approach to FSL education?
- Are there real or perceived barriers in our schools that restrict English language learners' access to FSL programming?
- Do we base our programming decisions for English language learners on the individual student's strengths, needs, and interests?
- Are all students welcomed and respected in our FSL programs?

3. What Strategies Can Be Used to Support English Language Learners in FSL Programs?

FSL educators are well suited to supporting English language learners. The strategies that both FSL and ESL educators use to support student learning are similar and, as such, can provide a smooth transition for English language learners entering FSL programs.

Many strategies that ESL teachers employ when working with English language learners are similar to approaches used in FSL classrooms. English language learners' greater familiarity and practice with language-learning strategies may even contribute to a "levelling of the playing field" for them as they learn French alongside their grade-level peers. What follows are some key strategies that support *all* learners in FSL programs.

Developing Student Profiles

> "The student profile gives detailed, in-depth information about the learning strengths and needs of the individual student. It … [is] a tool for planning precise and personalized assessment and instruction for students who need extra attention and support in particular areas of learning."
>
> *Learning for All* (2013), p. 42

When planning tailored assessment and instruction for English language learners in FSL programs, creating student profiles is a critical first step. It is essential that FSL teachers get to know their students in order to determine which strategies will best support each learner. Each student is unique and has strengths and interests that can be built upon to support learning. *Learning for All* (2013) outlines the details of how

to develop student profiles and provides the following steps for getting to know the individual strengths and needs of all the students in the class and for meeting those strengths and needs through instruction and assessment:

- gather information about the students
- engage students and parents during the course of information gathering
- process and synthesize information in order to develop an understanding of each student's strengths, preferences, needs, interests, and readiness to learn
- select and/or develop, and implement, appropriate and productive combinations of assessment and instructional strategies, activities, groupings, and resources to address the diverse needs of the students in the class

Focusing on Oral Language and Vocabulary Development

> "Oral language is the basis for literacy, thinking, and relating in all languages."
>
> "Conceptual Understandings" for Overall Expectation 1 in the frame "Demonstrating Literacy and Mathematics Behaviours", *The Kindergarten Program* (2016), p.126

Numerous studies on second language learning emphasize that oral skills – both speaking and listening – are the gateway to reading and writing. It is essential that teachers of FSL continue to model and use French as the language of instruction, but they must also recognize that English language learners who enter programs later than their peers will benefit from additional supports. To help English language learners develop oral proficiency, FSL teachers can adopt the following recommended practices:

- simplify vocabulary by employing words that are in everyday use
- give clear, explicit instructions
- make frequent use of a variety of visual supports and use visual, non-verbal cues such as gestures
- repeat the pronunciation of words; some sounds in French are challenging – for example, the nasal sounds (*an*, *en*, *oin*) and the *eu* sounds
- reinforce the use of linking words, such as *premièrement*, *prochaine*, *et*, *parce que*, *mais*, and *aussi*

Differentiating Instruction

FSL teachers know that the use of visual cues, images, diagrams, and hand gestures is critical to student understanding. Various other strategies can also be employed to adapt instruction for students who may need additional support. In the elementary curriculum document for French as a second language (2013c), many suggestions are provided on how to adapt programming in ways that help students clarify meaning and make inferences. Some examples follow:

- utilize graphic organizers
- preview key vocabulary
- visually represent key ideas
- number and label the steps in an activity
- demonstrate procedures and provide related hands-on activities
- use word walls that are both multilingual and graphic

Encouraging Metacognition

Metacognition is defined in *Growing Success* (2010) as "the process of thinking about one's own thought processes" (p. 149) or as "thinking about thinking" (p. 13). As students reflect on the learning strategies that work best for them, they begin to take responsibility for their own learning and develop greater autonomy and confidence as learners. In FSL programs, students are explicitly taught about the process of learning a second language and develop strategies that enable them to take responsibility for their own learning. To help students develop metacognitive skills, FSL teachers can do the following:

- be explicit – explain to students why and how a certain strategy is being used, and ask them to reflect on how well their skills are developing after they practise the strategy
- develop a visual checklist to represent metacognitive strategies that all students can use during self-assessment
- use pre-reading and pre-writing exercises to help students learn new concepts
- ask students to reflect on the process they used, not on the content

Using Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning, where students work in pairs or small groups, can promote the development of French-language skills because it provides time for students to speak French and allows the teacher to provide descriptive feedback. When interacting with their peers in pairs or in small groups, students may feel more willing to take

risks in speaking French. In this way, students build on each other's contributions and support each other as they work toward a common goal. When engaging students in cooperative learning opportunities, FSL teachers can do the following:

- keep the groups small
- change the nature of the groups periodically (e.g., group English language learners with stronger FSL students for some activities, such as those requiring *varied* levels of proficiency, and group English language learners together for tasks requiring *similar* levels of proficiency)
- establish clear routines and timelines for group work
- explicitly teach collaborative skills using simple vocabulary
- visit all groups to ensure comprehension and to model language

Tips for FSL Teachers Welcoming Newcomers

In addition to the strategies noted in this section, it is essential to provide a supportive environment for newcomers. A responsive and friendly classroom is an inviting place where every student feels included. Here are some ways to create a supportive learning environment for newcomers in FSL programs:

- brainstorm with the class ways in which all students can make the classroom a welcoming place
- encourage all students to share information about their own languages and cultures, to raise awareness for everyone
- display multilingual signs in the classroom
- create bulletin-board displays that reflect a variety of ethnocultural backgrounds
- invite English language learners to participate in activities that involve speaking and conversing in French, such as taking part in bilingual school announcements

4. How Does Participation in FSL Programs Support the Vision of the English Language Learner in Ontario?

The vision of the English language learner developed by educators from across the province and outlined in STEP – Steps to English Proficiency: A Guide for Users (2015, p. 8) *"is one of a capable and competent student". The vision comprises a list of elements that recognize the many assets and skills that English language learners possess and emphasizes the importance of offering pathways that reflect their strengths and interests. The table below explains how participation in FSL programs supports English language learners in achieving the elements of this vision.*

Elements of the Vision *English language learners will:*	How Participation in FSL Programs Supports the Vision
"learn English at the same time as the Ontario curriculum"	The FSL curriculum fosters an interest in lifelong language learning. It is founded on seven fundamental concepts that focus on the development of skills, including language learning strategies, that are also necessary for lifelong language learning. As they learn French, students will acquire strategies that will support them in learning English.
"see themselves in the learning environment"	English language learners can see themselves in the learning environment of an FSL classroom, where all the students, including English-speaking students, are learners of a new language.
"feel that their culture and language are valued"	Intercultural awareness is an integral part of the FSL program. FSL teachers encourage the development of students' understanding of, and respect for, diverse cultures.

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Elements of the Vision *English language learners will:*	How Participation in FSL Programs Supports the Vision
"have confidence to express their opinion and know they have a voice"	FSL teachers provide their students with an accepting environment and ample opportunities to speak and interact in French. Students are motivated to express themselves because the teacher listens carefully to what they are trying to communicate rather than merely focusing on linguistic errors.
"meet high expectations when they are involved in setting goals"	Students reflect on their abilities and monitor their own progress, with support from the FSL teacher.
"have opportunities to choose pathways that honour their strengths and interests"	Knowledge of both of Canada's official languages complements many career/life pathways for students.

"Intercultural awareness and understanding are two essential elements of the FSL curriculum as well as key aspects of developing global competence and preparing for global citizenship. Bridging linguistic barriers through French language learning helps students make connections and increases their cultural understanding of diverse French-speaking communities and other societies. *Ontario's Strategy for K-12 International Education* recognizes that English-French bilingualism is an economic and cultural asset both within Canada and beyond."

International Education Officer, Ontario Ministry of Education

5. What Might Welcoming English Language Learners into FSL Programs Look Like?

The following two case studies illustrate a range of supportive strategies for English language learners who are enrolled in FSL programs. They make reference to the STEP framework, specifically the STEP continua, which teachers can use to asses and record evidence of a student's language proficiency progress. The case studies are intended to promote discussion among school staff regarding best practices to support inclusion.

STEP – Steps to English Proficiency

STEP – Steps to English Proficiency is a framework for assessing and monitoring the language acquisition and literacy development of English language learners across the Ontario curriculum.

STEP is one of a number of resources written to assist teachers in supporting a growing demographic of English language learners in Ontario schools. To have English language learners attain high levels of achievement, across the Ontario curriculum, teachers need resources to support programming and a means of assessing and tracking student progress over time.

STEP – Steps to English Proficiency: A Guide for Users (2015), p. 4

CASE STUDY A – LUCIANA

Providing Modifications in a Grade 8 Core French Program

Luciana is a Grade 8 student who has recently moved to Canada from Mexico. When school staff interview her parents with the help of an interpreter, they learn that Luciana attended school full-time in Mexico, is in good health, and is interested in soccer and music. She speaks, reads, and writes Spanish fluently.

After Luciana completes an initial STEP assessment (see the box on page 16 for more information on STEP) of her English-language proficiency, she is identified as being at Step 2 of the Oral continuum and at Step 1 of both the Reading and Writing continua. She is placed in the age-appropriate grade, with her peers, in a class that includes three other English language learners.

During discussions with her family, school staff reinforce that Luciana will follow a similar timetable to that of her peers. A team meeting that includes the itinerant ESL teacher, the homeroom teacher, and the Core French teacher is held to discuss programming. At the meeting, it is decided that Luciana will require accommodations to meet the curriculum expectations in math, and modifications to the grade-level expectations in language and Core French (she will be starting with the Grade 4 FSL curriculum expectations). The Core French teacher recognizes that the overall expectations for Core French are similar from Grades 4 to 8, so he discusses with the team how his assessment will differ for Luciana and how the strategies that are currently in use with the other English language learners in the classroom will help Luciana feel supported in the program. It is determined that the ESL teacher will support the homeroom teacher with programming for Luciana in her other subjects and that Luciana will receive direct support from the ESL teacher, on a weekly basis.

The strategies discussed at the team meeting include the following:
- assigning a buddy to Luciana to support and encourage her participation in the class
- supporting Luciana's creation of a personal dual-language dictionary
- using a word wall that is both multilingual and graphic in the classroom
- using the key visuals that have already been put in place for other English language learners in the classroom
- using modelling to illustrate language use

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- giving clear instructions to Luciana and checking often for comprehension
- simplifying vocabulary and sentence structure
- pre-teaching key vocabulary

The Core French teacher is open to using these strategies as supports for Luciana since he uses them regularly in his classroom. The Core French teacher also coaches soccer at the school, so he looks forward to making connections with Luciana regarding her participation in the school soccer team or in intramurals. The group schedules ongoing team meetings to assess Luciana's progress.

Later, in January, transition-planning meetings are held for all students in preparation for their move to secondary school. A secondary school teacher visits the school to discuss course selection. During this visit, it is determined that Luciana will participate in an ESL class (ESLBO), health and physical education, music, and FSL in her first semester in Grade 9. She will continue studying FSL because she enjoys French and has made great progress in learning it in the three months since her arrival. Since the high school that she will be attending offers FSF1O – an FSL course designed for students who have not yet achieved the required 600 hours of instruction in French – Luciana will enrol in this class. Her level of success in Grade 9 will determine which pathways for French programming she will be able to follow in Grade 10: FSF2O, FSF2P, or FSF2D.

CASE STUDY B – AHMED

Supporting Enrolment in a Grade 1 French Immersion Program

Ahmed is a six-year-old who has recently immigrated to Canada from Syria. His parents are fluent in their first language, Arabic, and are in the beginning phases of learning English. Ahmed is fluent in spoken Arabic and is in the beginning stages of reading and writing in this language. During an orientation session at the school, where information for parents about FSL programs is available in Arabic, Ahmed's parents become very interested in enrolling their son in French Immersion. They see it as a great opportunity for Ahmed to learn both official languages of Canada. However, at the session, they have some questions about the program. The principal encourages the family and shares information about the FSL program – how it begins in Grade 1 and how it benefits all students. As a result of this meeting, Ahmed is enrolled in Grade 1 of an early French Immersion program, where 80 per cent of the program is delivered in French.

During the initial assessment of Ahmed, a staff member who speaks Arabic is made available to assist as an interpreter. Ahmed's parents describe their son as an inquisitive boy who loves art. Ahmed has benefitted from the time his parents have spent reading to him, and he speaks with them in Arabic. The ESL teacher encourages Ahmed's parents to continue reading and talking to Ahmed at home in Arabic as this will support Ahmed's language acquisition in general. The teacher explains how literacy skills can be transferred from one language to another. After Ahmed completes an initial STEP assessment of his English-language proficiency, he is identified as being at Step 1 of the Oral, Reading, and Writing continua. As Ahmed will be entering the French Immersion program in Grade 1, when the program begins, he does not require modifications to the Grade 1 French curriculum.

Following the assessment, a team meeting is held to discuss Ahmed's programming. The meeting includes the French Immersion (homeroom) teacher, the English teacher, the principal, and the ESL teacher. At this meeting, a student profile is developed for Ahmed. The French and English teachers agree to work together to use common verbal and non-verbal (e.g., visual) supports to help Ahmed learn and make connections across both new languages. The French Immersion teacher points out that, for all students in an early French Immersion program, visual and gestural supports and a consistent language for everyday routines are strategies used to reinforce language learning.

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As a team, the teachers decide on a program plan for Ahmed that includes the following strategies:

- giving clear instructions and focusing on key phrases
- creating word walls that are both multilingual and graphic
- supporting the use of a personal visual dictionary
- allowing Ahmed to respond to questioning in a variety of ways, such as with gestures and yes/no responses, since combinations of language use are a natural stage of early second-language acquisition
- providing direct instruction and feedback with the aid of non-verbal cues, such as objects, visuals, videos, and demonstrations
- encouraging Ahmed's parents to continue to support literacy learning in their first language at home

"A substantial body of research suggests that literacy and other skills and knowledge transfer across languages. That is, if you learn something in one language, you either already know it in (i.e., transfer it to) another language or can more easily learn it in another language."

(Goldenberg, Summer 2008, p. 15)

Reflecting on the Case Studies

- What important steps are outlined in the case studies that could be highlighted for school teams to consider?
- When welcoming new students, do schools provide information for parents about FSL programs? How accessible is that information?
- What supports can help families who are experiencing linguistic or cultural barriers to fully understand all the pathway options for their children?
- What additional strategies could be put in place to support Luciana and Ahmed?

Looking to the Future

English language learners are a diverse and growing population in many Ontario schools. As we increase our understanding of the language-learning potential of all students and continue to recognize the importance for all students of being able to communicate in both official languages, it is essential that we reflect on current practices. Are we ensuring equitable access to French as a second language programs? What steps might we take to ensure that decisions about program participation, including participation in FSL programs, are made on a **case-by-case basis**, taking into account the strengths, needs, and interests of the individual student? We can start today by:

- encouraging the **participation** of English language learners in FSL programs;
- disseminating information regarding the **benefits** of FSL programs and dispelling some of the myths and misconceptions surrounding language learning;
- providing **multilingual information for parents** about FSL programs, on school board websites and in brochures;
- **including FSL teachers** on school teams, including transition teams, to ensure that such teams reflect a greater variety of perspectives.

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