

FSL for School Administrators FROM AWARENESS to ACTION

From Awareness to Action is a professional learning publication to support school administrators in the strengthening of French as a Second Language.



ISSUE 3 Instructional Leadership within the FSL Context

IN THIS ISSUE
the focus is to offer practical strategies to assist administrators in supporting FSL teachers and programs.

School Administrators as Instructional Leaders in French as a Second Language (FSL)

“School leaders are pivotal to the development of excellent teaching, excellent schools and ultimately, enhanced student achievement and well-being”. (*Ontario Leadership Framework*, 2013) Many school administrators may feel less prepared and confident in supporting FSL educators because of a lack of personal and professional experience with FSL programming. To overcome this, it is helpful to view FSL educators as literacy specialists when engaging in conversations and planning professional learning. Many literacy strategies used in the FSL classroom are similar to those used in the first language and can transfer across languages and curricula; for example, the emphasis on providing students with authentic opportunities to listen and speak in the target language.

WHAT'S MY ROLE?

Practical Leadership Strategies to Support FSL

Dedicate a portion of the school budget to resources for FSL programs that are language appropriate and culturally responsive, reflecting the identities, lived experiences, and abilities of students.

Provide opportunities for collaborative professional learning and participate with FSL educators, demonstrating a learning stance alongside staff.

Model and promote the value of the FSL program by regularly visiting FSL classrooms, engaging with students and staff in French, and being curious about the learning in French. This engagement and visibility promote opportunities for conversations and feedback about instructional practice and student achievement.

Common planning time validates the work of all teachers. When timetabling, administrators may design a timetable that allows FSL educators to have common planning time with other educators. This facilitates ongoing dialogue and fosters collaboration. This approach, combined with the reduction of Core French teacher travel time between classrooms, maximizes time spent on task with students.

Speak French when opportunities present themselves. This demonstrates to staff and students that everyone is a learner. Making mistakes and inviting feedback are a part of developing language proficiency and confidence for students and adults alike.

Recognize and celebrate the efforts of the FSL teacher in creating a classroom environment where the primary language of instruction and student discourse is French. Continue to support a culture of high expectations, where students are actively engaged in the learning.

Including FSL educators in all professional learning, as well as those opportunities related to FSL, allows them to share their knowledge and expertise. This enhances professional dialogue between colleagues and promotes a culture of collaboration.

“Research suggests that leadership is second only to teaching in its impact on student outcomes. Principals and vice-principals play a critical role as school leaders to achieve this impact.”

Ontario Leadership Framework, P.4

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Consider having an FSL educator share a literacy strategy with staff during professional learning to promote and develop opportunities for FSL educator leadership. Ensuring that the FSL voice is part of the school leadership team(s) supports a whole school approach to improving student achievement and well-being.

Collaborative Inquiry for Learning

It is important to promote teacher curiosity and wondering about student learning. Teacher participation in collaborative inquiry can be an effective strategy for improving student learning outcomes and fostering staff relationships and collective efficacy. “By working together, English and French immersion teachers are able to design integrated classroom experiences where the communication skills taught in one language are supported and reinforced in the other.” When FSL and English teachers work together, their strategies complement each other. As school leaders, encouraging this type of collaboration only strengthens staff cohesiveness, establishes a culture of professional risk-taking, and creates momentum for change. (*Capacity Building Series - French Immersion in Ontario Capacity Building Series*)

In dual-track schools, same grade teachers can share planning related to content and skills in similar curriculum areas regardless of the language of instruction. For language teachers, the benefit of planning and sharing together allows for a more effective approach to literacy learning as student skills are identified and addressed through the sharing of literacy strategies. Instruction becomes more purposeful and intentional as language programs are developed in partnership. Teachers of Core French can contribute to these conversations as they are focused on student language development at the early stages of oral language learning. Having staff participate together in literacy learning values the contributions of all teachers, their knowledge and expertise.

Collaboration promotes the development and growth of relationships among staff. “People learn new ways of working together as they provide support to one another during each stage in the process. They bring unique experiences and share their expertise for the benefit of the team as they co-construct understanding and create new knowledge. Together, they problem solve and develop solutions to address their problems of practice to ensure that students’ needs are met. Teachers lead and learn with and from each other.” *Collaborative Inquiry: Helping Relationships, 2017*
collaborative-inquiry-helping-relationships This inclusive approach contributes to the collective efficacy of staff.

By including French teachers in collaborative inquiry with teacher colleagues, school administrators support staff in building relationships, reducing feelings of isolation, and creating a sense of belonging. According to the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association Report of the French as a Second Language Ontario Labour Market Partnership Project 2018, OPSBA FSL OLMP Report 2018 these are often areas with which French teachers struggle.

“Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.”

- Albert Einstein

“It is always so helpful when I am able to get together with other colleagues to share ideas and strategies for student learning. Sharing our knowledge really helps me with my teaching.”

- Year 5 Teacher,
Limestone DSB



One article to read, one quote to consider, one link to click

1. *Capacity Building Series – French Immersion in Ontario: Capacity Building Series - Search French Immersion in Ontario*
2. “Student achievement is most influenced by classroom practice, and classroom practice is most influenced by teacher learning.” Katz and Dack (2013), *Intentional Interruption: Breaking Down Learning Barriers to transform Professional Practice*, pp. 5 – 6.
Reflection question: How can instructional leaders create professional learning communities to support FSL teachers and their professional growth?
3. Ontario CEFR Initiatives – Purpose: to support effective planning, instruction and assessment in French as a Second Language programs. Ontario CEFR Initiatives