

The State of FSL in Manitoba

Source: Canadian Parents for French – The State of French Second Language Education – 2004 edition

ENROLMENT

Accessibility

- Manitoba does not have a capping policy and school divisions may limit accessibility by setting minimum and maximum class sizes
- Although all school divisions offer transportation to immersion programs, some charge for the service and most urban divisions do not provide transportation past Grade 6.
- Fees are not charged for participation in school FSL programs but, as some courses are not offered in French, schools may have to pay for students to take these courses in English in another school division.
- Manitoba Education has developed one more course in distance education, which can be used by French immersion and French-first-language programs.
- The expansion of distance education and greater flexibility in course options at the local school level will make it easier for secondary students to earn a French immersion diploma.
- Manitoba education has invited stakeholders to generate proposals for projects and activities that will make FSL programs more accessible to more students, including those in rural areas.
- Enrolment in basic French and middle and late French immersion is being studied. The following actions have taken place:
 - The Bureau de l'éducation française (BEF) created a French Immersion Liaison Officer position to facilitate communication between BEF and French immersion schools
 - There appears to be renewed interest in middle and late immersion. A few urban school divisions have had discussions with staff and parents about middle and late immersion but, although it is acknowledged that more entry points would increase accessibility, nothing concrete has been done.
 - The publication *French Immersion in Manitoba* provides information about learning French, the role of parents, the struggling learner and post-secondary FSL opportunities.

Monitoring Enrolment

- FSL enrolment is now fully integrated in Manitoba's electronic data collection initiative
- Surveys of FSL graduates and school principals, as well as symposia on teaching French as a second language, have been used to identify strategies to increase FSL enrolment and retention.

Remedial Assistance

- The Early Years Numeracy Grant assists school districts to implement early intervention strategies to improve mathematical skills, knowledge and attitudes of kindergarten to Grade 4 students. While the initiative is not specifically targeted to FSL students, it is expected that French immersion students will benefit.
- Curriculum policy states that resources for special needs students should be available to all students, including those in immersion programs, but shortages of qualified staff may make it impossible to provide service, especially in rural areas.
- Provincial funding for special education is allocated to school divisions; however, school division policy may influence the amount of funding schools receive.

QUALITY

FSL Policies and Guidelines

- Provincial FSL policies have existed since 1996 and continue to be informed by research

- *Basic French Guidelines for School Divisions/Districts and Schools* was published in 2004. It is expected that the updated guidelines will enable schools districts to offer stronger and more coherent programming in basic French.

Full Integration of FSL in Main Curriculum

- French is not mandatory at any grade and basic French is offered at the discretion of the school divisions
- The number of hours of instruction is defined for all FSL programs
- The establishment of one basic French entry point at Grade 4 ensures that students receive more hours of instruction in French
- FSL methodology integrates a communicative, experiential approach
- Clearer expectations have been developed for teaching basic French
- The province awards French immersion diplomas in recognition of student achievement. The Manitoba Association of Teachers of French is discussing the possibility of providing a basic French certificate or diploma
- St.Boniface and the universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba offer some post-secondary FSL courses

Qualified Teachers

- Qualifications for FSL teachers are not defined, although some school divisions specify FSL pedagogy courses as hiring requirements
- Although interest in FSL teaching careers is being stimulated, there are no additional spaces for interested applicants in the Faculties of Education at St.Boniface, at the University of Winnipeg or at the University of Manitoba
- FSL stakeholder organizations are meeting to discuss how federal funds can best be accessed and used to increase the supply of qualified FSL teachers. The provincial government has facilitated similar meetings
- CUSB and the Universities of Regina, Alberta and BC are discussing the creation of a Master's Program in Education for Western Canada, which would combine distance education and on-campus courses
- CUSB has developed a six-credit post-baccalaureate diploma for FSL teaching

Resources

- Grants for FSL programs are provided according to funding formulas based on enrolment

Extra-Curricular Activities

- Canadian Heritage and the Bureau d'éducation française (BEF) fund CPF Manitoba to facilitate and publicize a number of extra-curricular activities such as *Concours d'art oratoire, Theatre projects, Improvisation workshops, Cultural Tours and Summer Camps*.
- Exchanges are encouraged through programs such as SEVEC
- Information about French activities is provided by the 233 Allo information center
- Conseil jeunesse provincial encourages FSL students to participate in its activities

ACCOUNTABILITY

Parental Involvement

- The Curriculum Advisory Committee for French-language programs presents information to parents and the Manitoba Education website is updated regularly
- Manitoba Education holds parent consultation conferences to discuss the agenda for kindergarten to secondary years
- Parents are informed and involved in decision-making
- BEF staff provides information about local issues. Their toll-free number ensures east access for parents
- Information regarding curriculum, amalgamation and other issues is available on the Manitoba Education website

Program Review

- Student achievement in FSL is monitored by mandatory testing at Grades 3,4 and 12 and by optional testing at Grade 6.
- Schools submit annual plans to school divisions and to Manitoba Education

CHALLENGES

- The benefits of bilingualism are not well articulated or promoted
- Meaningful French language activities beyond the classroom are not readily available
- The business community needs to be involved in the development of FSL opportunities.