

Teaching French as a Second Language in Canada: Teachers' Perspectives

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

CF = Core French

FI = French Immersion

1. Teacher Perceptions of FSL Resources

- Fewer than half of the respondents considered the quality, quantity and appropriateness of commercial materials to be good or excellent. The majority judged these materials to be 'poor' or 'adequate'.
- Teachers were even less satisfied with materials representing Francophone cultures: 80% of the respondents rated these materials as either 'poor' or 'adequate'.
- Perceptions of the usefulness of library resources, computer software and community opportunities were even more unfavourable, with over 50% of all respondents rating these resources as 'poor'.

2. Teacher Perceptions of Additional Resources Available

Although the majority of teachers reported easy access to computers, the Internet, space for lesson preparation and storage space, fewer than half stated that classrooms for FSL teaching or consultants to help them with their teaching were available. Respondents also expressed a need for support staff to provide help for students with learning difficulties and for French-speaking support/administrative staff.

- Fewer than half of the teachers stated that classrooms for FSL teaching or consultants to help with teaching were usually or always available.
- Very few respondents felt that funding for activities, consultants to help students with learning difficulties or special needs, French-speaking supply teachers, French-speaking administrative and support staff, and a French-speaking librarian were available.
- Only 35.6% of CF teachers reported that a classroom dedicated to FSL was available to them (compared to 69.1% of FI teachers). Many CF teachers do not have a classroom dedicated to the teaching of French and must travel from class to class to teach in the classroom of their students.

3. Teacher Perceptions of Stakeholder Support

Most respondents perceived their school administration to be very supportive of their work and teaching goals while the community in which they teach is perceived to be the least supportive.

CF teachers reported less support from parents and students than FI teachers.

- The majority of respondents perceived their school administration to be very supportive.
- Teachers judged the community in which they teach to be the least supportive of all the groups; over 80% of the teachers judged the community to be 'not', 'slightly' or 'somewhat' supportive.
- FI teachers felt better supported than CF teachers. The most remarkable difference between the two programs is in teacher perception of parental support: 55.2% of FI teachers judged parents to be 'very supportive' compared to only 20.2% of CF teachers. FI teachers also have more positive perceptions than CF teachers of student and community support.

4. Manageability of Teaching Conditions

The majority of FSL teachers felt that teaching conditions were slightly or somewhat manageable. Comments in the open-ended question on teaching challenges indicated a great need for help in dealing with diversity in the classroom.

5. Professional Development (PD) of FSL Teachers

Most teachers report participation through discussions with colleagues, reading professional literature and attendance at one workshop each year. It appears that some provinces, instead of providing routine workshops and conferences, have moved into electronic delivery of PD.

Teachers suggest that funding, relevant topics, PD during school hours and French-speaking supply teachers will make PD more accessible to them.

When given free voice to state, in the open-ended question, what the second language associations can do for them, FSL teachers want these associations to provide them with the information or links to access the information and resources that will help them improve teaching and cope with the challenges they face in the classroom. Teachers are looking for the same thing in local workshops, as well as opportunities for discussion and collaboration with colleagues. Interestingly, many of the comments suggested that this take the form of sharing via electronic networking and chat rooms.

- Over 80% of all teachers reported participating in discussions and collaboration with FSL colleagues more than once a year.
- Over 58% of teachers report reading, more than once a year, articles concerning the teaching of French. About 50% reported participating in local workshops more than once a year, and about 27% indicated that they participate more than once a year in activities to upgrade French language skills.
- About 30% of all teachers reported taking a university FSL methodology course either every three years or more often.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The report presents the results of a national survey of the challenges faced by French as a Second Language (FSL) teachers, a project jointly undertaken by the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT), the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) and the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers (CAIT), and funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

Number of Respondents: 1305 FSL teachers, resulting in a response rate of 56.1%.

This is not a "nationally representative" sample in the statistical sense since the sample consists of a large but self-selected group rather than a stratified sample randomly selected from the total population. However, for the most part, it does capture the diversity of teaching contexts in which FSL instructors find themselves and permits us to report on these situations.

Respondents were questioned on their perceptions and opinions regarding:

- Teaching resources;
- Other resources (e.g., classrooms, consultants, French-speaking support staff);
- Support from key stakeholders;
- Teaching conditions; and
- Professional development opportunities.

- The majority of teacher respondents were female (87%) and taught all grades from K–12
- The majority of respondents (55.8%) were CF teachers.
- The majority of participants (55.5%) had more than 10 years of FSL teaching experience.
- The majority of respondents (61.7%) reported English as their first language; 26.6% reported French as their first language; 3.1% reported being bilingual (English and French); and 9.3% reported that neither English nor French was their first language.
- The majority of participants (73.5%) reported having a general provincial/territorial teaching certificate from the province/territory in which they teach. Just under one third (31.6%) reported having a specialist teaching certificate in FSL. Only 2.4% reported teaching with a letter of permission.
- Participants were asked if they had considered leaving FSL teaching in the last twelve months. Almost 40% of participants reported that they had.



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