

# An Examination of Intensive French: A Pedagogical Strategy for the Improvement of French as a Second Language Outcomes in Canada

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**The Canadian  
Association of  
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Teachers**



**L'Association  
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professeurs de  
langues secondes**

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The CASLT promotes the advancement of second language learning and teaching throughout Canada by creating opportunities for professional development, by encouraging research, and by facilitating the sharing of information and the exchange of ideas among second language educators. The CASLT believes that second language learning is an essential component of a formal education and that every second language teacher should have the opportunity to learn and grow in a supportive professional community. The CASLT strives to enhance awareness, appreciation and understanding of the importance of second language learning and teaching throughout Canada and beyond.

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## Table of Contents

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<b>Part A:</b>	<b>Introduction and Executive Summary</b>	<b>_____1</b>
<b>Part B:</b>	<b>Rationale for the Study</b>	<b>_____ 3</b>
	<b>of the Intensive French Program</b>	
<b>Part C:</b>	<b>Description of the Intensive French Program</b>	<b>_____7</b>
	- Brief History of Intensive French	
	- Theoretical Bases	
	- Features of Intensive French	
	- Preliminary Research Results	
<b>Part D:</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>_____ 16</b>
<b>Part E:</b>	<b>Summary of Recommendations</b>	<b>_____ 23</b>
<b>Part F:</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>_____ 28</b>
<b>Appendix A:</b>	<b>Information about Intensive French</b>	
	<b>in Specific Provinces</b>	
	is available on the Association website: <a href="http://www.caslt.org">www.caslt.org</a>	

# Part A

## Introduction and Executive Summary

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During the summer of 2004, the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) obtained funding from Canadian Heritage to examine the Intensive French program as a potential way to significantly improve French as a second language (FSL) outcomes in Canada after a period of relative decline.

Intensive French (IF) may be defined as an enrichment<sup>1</sup> of the Core French program in grades 5 or 6<sup>2</sup>, in which FSL is offered intensively (approximately 70% of the school day) in a concentrated period of time (five months). During the remaining five months, students follow their regular curriculum in a compacted format (Netten & Germain, 2004b). The Intensive French program was piloted in Newfoundland and Labrador from 1998-2001 and is now widely offered in that province as an official alternative to Core French in grade 6. Since 2002, similar programs have been initiated in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. The program will be introduced in Manitoba and possibly in the Northwest Territories in 2005-06.

The possibility that Intensive French could rejuvenate the Core French program, improve the outcomes of its graduates, motivate students to remain in Core French to graduation, and help meet the federal government's targets for 2013 persuaded CASLT to undertake the preparation of this report.

Its timing responds both to high current interest in Intensive French and the federal government's Action Plan to renew FSL teaching and learning. In March 2003, the Canadian government announced its goal of doubling the proportion of secondary school graduates with a functional knowledge of their second official language by 2013.

Although French Immersion (and possibly Extended French) may<sup>3</sup> lead to this level of proficiency and bilingual exchange experiences have also proven successful in improving students' functional knowledge of French, these programs have limited accessibility. Furthermore, since students who will graduate in 2013 are already in grade 4, it is impossible to sufficiently increase their numbers by 2013. Students enrolled in Core French programs will need to be part of any significantly higher proportion of graduates with functional proficiency.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that although some existing Core French programs may produce some graduates with functional proficiency, many do not. Core French programs also have very high attrition rates: a recent study found that only 16.5 % of students who begin in Core French continue in this program to Grade 12 (Canadian Parents for French, 2004). Clearly, Core French will need to be improved if Core French students are to form a significant proportion of functionally proficient high school graduates in 2013.

Intensive French was conceived as a way to revitalize Core French<sup>4</sup>, improve its proficiency outcomes and address attrition. It has already been recognized as a possible strategy to improve Core French and meet the Federal Government's goals in Plan Twenty-Thirteen: Strategies for a National Approach in Second Language Education (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2004) and in the Canadian Parents for French State of Second Language Education in Canada 2004 report.

Members of the CASLT Study Committee who examined the program represented perspectives on FSL education from seven provinces. The Committee's objectives were to explore factors relevant to the Intensive French program, discuss the major issues in its implementation and make appropriate recommendations for further implementation. Three major issues emerged from the study:

### Follow-Up Programs

The main challenge in implementing Intensive French is ensuring that adequate follow-up programs are in place for Intensive French students until the end of high school.

### Program Evaluation

Preliminary research findings indicate that Intensive French has been very successful in the short term. However, it is not only the short term that is important but also the difference that this program can make in the long term, at high school graduation and beyond. More broadly-based research, both short-term and long-term, conducted by research teams from diverse contexts and perspectives is needed to thoroughly evaluate the program across the country, give increased credibility to the results, and facilitate a better understanding of the complexities of Intensive French.

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1 - This enrichment includes changes to curriculum and teaching strategies as well as an increase in time.

2 - One school district in NB is currently experimenting with IF at grade 4.

3 - There is no national definition for functional proficiency and outcomes for FSL programs are not defined in standardized terms.

4 - Intensive French is not intended to replace French Immersion (or Extended French) but rather to offer an opportunity for the 85% of FSL students enrolled in Core French to attain functional bilingualism.

**Student Selection**

In some cases, Intensive French has been offered as an option on a first come, first served basis and in others, all the students in the class in which it was implemented have participated. There have been difficulties with both scenarios. If the program is for all students, how do we make it accessible to everyone? If the program is optional, how do we select the students who will participate?

The report addresses these issues in twenty-three recommendations. The first ten deal with FSL in general to help to situate Intensive French among the current Canadian FSL offerings and to provide additional clarification concerning existing programs; the remaining thirteen deal specifically with Intensive French. Both sets of recommendations address policies and procedures, resources, research, evaluation, communications, and teacher training. Each recommendation is presented with a corresponding action agent.

**Highlights of the recommendations include:**

- Development of a national operational definition of “functional FSL knowledge” tied to FSL program proficiency objectives and supported by measurement tools ;
- Review of the current federal grant formulae for FSL programs to establish criteria beyond hours of instruction ;
- Preparation of information kits for parents, students, and school administrators which demystify FSL programs and their different structures and outcomes ;
- Documentation of existing and potential follow-up possibilities for Intensive French ;
- Identification of research needs to facilitate continued expansion of Intensive French ;
- Development of guidelines for teacher training and professional development.

The general FSL recommendations provide an underlying framework for FSL programs. The recommendations for Intensive French provide a systematic method to pursue continued implementation as research clarifies the solutions to major issues.

The information provided in this report will help to guide further expansion of this program, which has been steadily gaining prominence throughout Canada, and will assist teachers, consultants, administrators, parents, education ministry representatives and others with an interest in FSL in Canada in program decision-making and implementation.

## Part B

### Rationale for the Study of the Intensive French Program

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#### Federal Government Action Plan

The Government of Canada has recently renewed its commitment to linguistic duality. In the 2002 Speech from the Throne, the government announced its intention to re-energize its official languages policy:

*Linguistic duality is at the heart of our collective identity. The government will implement an Action Plan on official languages that will focus on minority-language and second-language education, including the goal of doubling within ten years the number of high school graduates with a working knowledge of both English and French (Government of Canada, 2002).*

Section 3.2.3 of the Action Plan referring to second language instruction states more precisely that the goal is to:

*double the proportion of secondary school graduates with a functional knowledge of their second official language. Today the proportion of bilingual francophones and anglophones in the 15 to 19 age group is around 24%. The objective of the Action Plan is to raise this proportion to 50% by 2013 (Government of Canada, 2003: p.27).*

Both the Speech from the Throne and the proposed Action Plan suggest that there will likely be a greater future demand for bilingualism in the workforce by promising better community access to bilingual public services, the delivery of federal services in both official languages, and the use of both languages in the workplace.

The 2004 Speech from the Throne confirmed the government's continued commitment to linguistic duality and to the goals of the 2003 Action Plan:

*The government ...will modernize Canada's Citizenship Act to reaffirm the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship and our values of multiculturalism, gender equality, and linguistic duality. It is implementing the Official Languages Action Plan and will continue to promote the vitality of official language minority communities (Government of Canada, 2004).*

The release of *Plan Twenty Thirteen: Strategies for a National Approach in Second Language Education*<sup>5</sup> and the *Official Languages Research and Dissemination Program*<sup>6</sup> announced in December 2004 provide evidence of movement and progress linked to the Action Plan.

#### Existing French as a Second Language Program Options

The only way to double the proportion of bilingual graduates is through more effective second language programs. There are currently three basic types of FSL programs available in Canada: French Immersion, Extended French and Core French.<sup>8</sup>

**French Immersion** An FSL program where French is used as the language of instruction for the teaching of other subjects as well as French Language Arts during the entire school day or a significant portion thereof. (Early French Immersion typically begins in kindergarten or grade 1; Middle Immersion typically begins in grade 4 or 5; Late Immersion typically begins in grade 6 or later. Students continue with 2-3 subjects taught in French and French Language Arts in high school.) In Alberta, French Immersion programs are known as Alternative French Language programs.

**Extended French** An FSL program designed to provide additional exposure to French for Core French students (less exposure than in French Immersion). French is the language of instruction for one subject such as social studies (occasionally more than one subject) in addition to French Language Arts. Extended French is mainly offered from middle school through early high school.

**Core French** An FSL program where French is the object of instruction<sup>8</sup> and is taught as a subject in classes which are given for between 20-40 minutes per day. In Manitoba, this program is known as Basic French; in Alberta and British Columbia it is known as FSL.

Table 1 provides details of FSL program offerings and enrolments by province.

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5 - A study by Canadian Heritage, Official Languages Support Branch, provides strategies to reach the goals of the Action Plan.

6 - A joint initiative of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Department of Canadian Heritage to contribute to a better understanding of issues related to the implementation of the 1988 Official Languages Act and, in particular to help achieve the goals of Canadian Heritage's Official Languages Support Programs.

7 - Intensive French was conceived as an enrichment to Core French at the elementary level.

8 - There are some jurisdictions in which French is not the object of instruction but a means to an end in a communicative, project-based program delivered by a specialist as intended by the NCFCS.

**Table 1. French as a Second Language (FSL) Program Options by Province/Territory (2003)**

	YT	BC	AB	NT	NU	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PE	NL
Compulsory grades for FSL	5 - 8	5 - 8*	-	-	-	-	-	4 - 9	K - 11	1 - 10	4 - 9	4 - 9	4 - 9
Core French entry points	K, 4, or 5**	K, 4, or 5**	many 4**	K, 1	N/A	many 7**	K, 1, or 4**	K, 1, or 4**	K or 1**	1**	4**	K, 1, or 4**	K, 1, or 4**
Percentage of Students in CF (2001 - 02) <sup>9</sup>	52.3%	37.9%	N/A	N/A	N/A	40.8%	38.6%	42.5%	63.8%	73.1%	45.7%	45.3%	51.7%
Extended French entry points	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	K, 1, 5, 6	-	9 <sup>10</sup>	7	-	10
Percentage of Students in Extended French (2001 - 02)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.6%	-	-	2.4%	-	0.6%
Intensive French (grade offered)	-	5	5	-	-	6	-	-	-	4 (Moncton) 5	6	-	6
French Immersion entry points	K	K, 6	K, 1, 7	K, 4	-	K	K, 1, 7	K, 1, 4, 5, 7	K, 1, +	1, 6	K, 7	1, 4, 7	K, 7
Percentage of Students in French Immersion (2001 - 02)	6.1%	4.9%	N/A	N/A	-	4.9%	9.2%	5.6%	36.2%	26.5%	8.3%	16.6%	6.2%
Percentage of students by specific immersion entry point	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-	EI - 4.9%	EI - 9.1% LI - 0.1%	N/A	N/A	N/A	EI - 3.7% MI - 0.4% <sup>11</sup> LI - 4.2%	N/A	EI - 4.5% LI - 1.7%

9 - Canadian Parents for French. (2003). *The State of French Language Education in Canada*.

10 - One high school in New Brunswick offers Extended French.

11 - There are only two official entry points for French Immersion in Nova Scotia: kindergarten and grade 7. However, some school boards have undertaken Middle Immersion as special projects without the support of provincial curriculum documents.

Table 2 presents a snapshot of enrolment distribution in these basic programs as a percentage of total French enrolment for 2002-03 according to CPF's *The State of Second Language Education in Canada, 2004*.

**Table 2. French as a Second Language Program Enrolment, 2002-2003**

<b>FSL Program Option</b>	<b>Total Enrolment in Canada 2002-03</b>	
French Immersion	293,698	(14.9%)
Core French	1,643,519	(83.2%)
Extended French (available in ON, NS, NL, NB only)	35,796	(1.8%)
Intensive French (available in SK, NB, NL only) <sup>12</sup>	1,061	(.05%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,974,074</b>	<b>(100%)</b>

As can be seen from Tables 1 and 2, French Immersion and Extended French programs represent only a small proportion of students enrolled in FSL programs in Canada. According to the Action Plan, enrolment in FSL programs has not risen significantly in the last 10 years in most provinces.<sup>13</sup>

### Outcomes of FSL Program Options

Currently, 24% of graduating high school students are bilingual<sup>14</sup>. This information is based on the responses to the 2001 National Census question “Can this person speak English or French well enough to conduct a conversation?” Data for 15-19 year-olds were used to determine this proportion and to establish the goal of the Action Plan to double this proportion. There is no national definition of “functionally proficient” and no sanctioned assessment tool to measure school-based bilingualism.

It is normally assumed that French Immersion students reach functional proficiency by high school graduation. This was tentatively confirmed by a recent pilot administration of the Public Service Commission's French Official Language test in Alberta with small number of grade 12 immersion graduates; most French Immersion students obtained at least Level B (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2004).

A review of research on Early, Middle and Late immersion programs (Wesche, Toews-Janzen & MacFarlane, 1996) indicates that French Immersion programs consistently lead to far stronger French proficiency in all skills than do Core French or Extended French programs. Group comparisons clarified the relationships among these programs in terms of proficiency outcomes; it was found that all Immersion programs reviewed led to a high level of functional French proficiency by the end of high school. A post-secondary follow-up study of two groups of graduates from Ottawa area Immersion programs (Wesche, 1993), found minimal differences between Early and Late immersion students at the end of high school and three years later.

This review of research also included French language outcomes from three alternative FSL programs that were studied in the Ottawa area: Partial (50/50), Early French Immersion (EFI), Compact French, and the Bain Linguistique. Partial (50/50) EFI led to French language results which were better than those of students participating in 75 minutes/day Extended French programs and not as good as Early French Immersion students. Two compact French models were compared with Core French. Compact French presented the grade 7 Core French curriculum in a 10-week, half-day program; the other offered a 5-month 80-minute/day program. The Bain Linguistique modelled more closely on Intensive English, offered a full-year half-day augmented French program (450 instead of 120 hours) in a split grade 5/6 class. In each case, the more intensive formats led to enhanced functional French language outcomes.

The New Brunswick Ministry of Education tests all FSL students at the end of grade 10, the final year in which French is compulsory for all students, using the New Brunswick Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). Recent results indicate that about 20% of Core French students achieve the desired goal of Intermediate level at grade 10 while 80% of Early Immersion students achieve Intermediate plus or higher (D. Macfarlane, personal communication, 2004).

12 - These CPF statistics are for the year 2003-04. Intensive French is currently also offered in NS, AB, and BC.

13 - Statistics presented in the Action Plan represent a national average. Some provinces do report growth, particularly in French Immersion programs

14 - The government Action Plan equates functional knowledge of a second language with bilingualism (Government of Canada, 2003:p. 27)

## **Practical Limitations of French Immersion**

As noted above, Immersion (and perhaps some extended) programs appear to result in functional proficiency by the end of high school.

In the case of Immersion, enrolment has stabilized in most provinces and is experiencing some growth in a few others (CPF, 2004). Immersion resources are expensive and not all school boards are able to consider implementing this program because of the number of students it is necessary to maintain through to grade 12 and the need for teachers with high-level French language proficiency (ideally native-like). Similarly, many parents are unwilling to enrol their children in a program which requires such a substantial time commitment to the study of French. Extended French is offered to only a very small number of students in four provinces (see Table 2).

Early Immersion students who will graduate in 2013 are already in the system in grade 4. Evidently, Immersion can make a small contribution to doubling the proportion of bilingual graduates but some graduates of Core French programs must become bilingual if the goal (increasing from 24% to 50%) is to be reached.

## **Need to Enhance Core French**

In a 2004 survey, CPF interviewed 105 Canadian university students from across Canada to explore their reactions to their Core French (N=99) and Extended French (N=6) experiences in elementary and secondary school (CPF 2004). Students were asked about their language skills.

As would be expected, the students who had completed grade 12 or OAC<sup>15</sup> French were generally more confident in their abilities to survive in a francophone environment than those who had not. The following results were found:

- Over one third of Grade 12/OAC FSL graduates had little confidence in their ability to function beyond the most basic situations in a francophone environment, citing speaking and listening comprehension as the most difficult problems.
- Almost half of those who passed Grade 12/OAC French felt that they could not understand spoken French.
- Most students reported that they would not be able to carry on a conversation beyond a few set phrases, irrespective of the number of years they had studied French.
- Most concluded that the Core French program would not lead to bilingual job possibilities because their French was inadequate or they were not bilingual enough.

## **Attrition from Core French Programs**

Poor outcomes appear to contribute to the high attrition rates in Core French programs. Only 16.5% of Core French students complete their program to grade 12 (CPF, 2004). To document the reasons for attrition, a questionnaire was administered by the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF, 2004) in April 2002 to targeted grade 11 students no longer enrolled in Core French in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island. The purpose of the survey was to identify factors which could contribute to increasing students retention in second language programs and to help develop ways to improve the delivery of Core French.

Overall conclusions indicate that students drop French because :

- they are disillusioned with their lack of progress and their inability to express themselves in French;
- they find the current emphasis on linguistic aspects of the language boring, repetitious and irrelevant; and
- they find the work difficult, and low marks result in a lower grade point average.

Respondents recommend :

- improving methods of teaching with greater emphasis on speaking,
- introducing more relevant themes and vocabulary,
- integrating more hands-on “fun” activities, group work, projects, and
- supplementing school work with trips and exchanges to meet francophones and practice what has been learned.

## **Intensive French: One Possible Solution**

Evidently, Core French needs to be improved. Based on evaluation outcomes to date, Intensive French has the potential to lead to the accomplishment of these goals:

- After a 5-month Intensive French intervention, grade 5 or 6 students are able to communicate as well as regular Core French students in grade 9 or 10 (and sometimes grade 11).
- Comparisons of attrition in regular Core French and Extended French programs in Ontario and Nova Scotia indicate that programs offering more exposure to French are considerably more successful in retaining students to the end of high school (CPF, 2004: p.36). This corroborates the anecdotal evidence that suggests that Intensive French graduates are continuing in French to grade 12 (Personal communication, S. Woolfrey, 2004).

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<sup>15</sup> - Ontario Academic Credit or Grade 13, eliminated in 2003.

## Part C

### Description of the Intensive French Program

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#### Brief History of Intensive French

According to Netten & Germain (2004a), the beginning of Intensive French in Canada can be traced back to the proclamation of Canada's Official Languages Act in 1969. Once this act was passed, parents began to look for more effective ways for their children to learn to communicate in French and English as second languages.

#### Early Intensive French Initiatives

This period witnessed the birth of French Immersion in St. Lambert, Québec (Rebuffot, 1993). In 1974, the Milles-Îles School District undertook an evaluation of its French Immersion classes and compared the results to those of “classes d'accueil” offered to children of immigrants by the Montreal Catholic School Commission (Netten & Germain (2004a). In “classes d'accueil”, children learned oral French intensively for 5 months without the addition of any subject matter, and were then introduced to vocabulary specific to different subjects for another five months. Findings indicated that an intensive period of language study could improve communicative abilities. In one school year of intensive instruction, immigrant children learned enough French to permit them to be mainstreamed into the regular classes of a French language school in the following year.

Given the positive results in “classes d'accueil”, the Milles-Îles School District decided to implement a similar program for teaching FSL to anglophone students. In 1975, two experimental groups were formed, one at the grade 1 level and another at the grade 6 level. The success of this program led to the implementation of a similar intensive program for English in 1976 (Billy, 1980). Results also indicated that age was a factor; 6 year-olds require more time to reach the same results as the 11 year-olds (Billy, 1980).

Until the mid-1980s, Intensive English programs existed in only a small number of schools. However, Québec language laws prohibited the implementation of English Immersion<sup>16</sup> which led to the implementation of Intensive English in other school districts. Its spread has continued; there were more than 175 Intensive English classes in Québec in 2002-2003. After the publication of the Larose Report (2001), which reported on the state of French language education in the English school system in Québec, the Minister of Education in Québec encouraged school districts to increase the number of Intensive English classes (MEQ, 2001).

Intensive French did not enjoy the same kind of growth. French Immersion was growing rapidly by this time and it quickly became the most popular means for anglophone children to develop proficiency in French (Rebuffot, 1993). Since that time, there have only been a few attempts to implement an Intensive French program in Canada. Netten & Germain (2004a) list the following:

- a Montréal experiment in grade 7 which continued for several years around 1975;
- a Coquitlam, BC experiment in grades 9 and 10 which lasted for 15 years;
- an experiment in 1993-94 in which the Carleton Board of Education experimented with block scheduling;
- an Ottawa experiment in 1996-97 called “bain linguistique” and modelled on Québec Intensive English classes which continued for several years.

In all cases, according to Netten and Germain, these experiments were closely associated with a few specific teachers and did not expand further.

#### Current Intensive French Program

The current Intensive French program was begun in Newfoundland and Labrador to address the difficulty of teaching communication skills in Core French and an escalating drop-out rate. An intensive model similar to the one used for ESL in Québec but with some adjustments was piloted in 1998-99 (Netten and Germain (2004a). Its goals were to improve the communication skills of Core French students and to determine the administrative consequences of such a program for the NL Department of Education, the school districts, and the schools. As a consequence of the findings of this experiment, the Intensive French program has been accepted by Newfoundland and Labrador as an official alternative to regular Core French in grade 6 since 2002.

The original Newfoundland and Labrador model has been initiated in five other provinces and will be introduced in Manitoba and possibly the Northwest Territories in 2005-06 (See Table 3). Table 4 provides details about Intensive French programs in other provinces and some of their contextual variations. This table summarizes information provided by committee members concerning the local status of FSL, the fit of Intensive French with other FSL options offered, the benefits of Intensive French, student selection, teacher selection, available resources (physical and human), approximate cost of resources, difficulties caused by implementation, follow-up plans for those who complete Intensive French, future plans for Intensive French, program evaluation plans, and other considerations about the program. Appendix A provides a complete answers provided by Committee members and others.

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<sup>16</sup> - *Subject matter instruction in French is acceptable in English language schools (i.e. in French immersion or “extended French” programs), but subject-matter instruction in English in French-language schools is not permitted.*

**Table 3. National Expansion of Intensive French**

	<b>NL</b>		<b>NB</b>		<b>SK</b>		<b>NS</b>		<b>AB</b>		<b>BC</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	classes	students	classes	students	classes	students	classes	students	classes	students	classes	students	classes	students
1998 1999	4	110											4	110
1999 2000	8	221											8	221
2000 2001	11	267											11	267
2001 2002	13	330											13	330
2002 2003	29	802	4	106	2	28	1	16					36	952
2002 2003	41	1036	8	186	2	35	3	66	2	45			56	1368
2003 2004	37	986	19 <sup>17</sup>	400	3	79	4	92	2	45	4	119	69	1721
2004 2005	143	3752	31	692	7	142	8	174	4	90	4	119	197	4969

17 - There are 18 groups but 19 classes (one group is a class of combined grade 4 and grade 5 students; 12 of the 18 classes are at the grade 5 level, and 6 at the grade 4 level).

**Table 4. Intensive French Program Characteristics by Province**

Province	Grade Offered	Previous FLS	Context	Student Selection	Follow-up Options	Start-up Costs / Class (excludes teacher training)	Difficulties	Purpose for Implementation
NL	6	4 & 5	rural and urban	- depends on context - entire class and first come basis	- Late French Immersion - regular Core French	- \$7,200 (includes some professional development)	- access - accommodating all parents wishing to register their children	- important language learning and personal development benefits - administratively efficient - students with a range of abilities can be accommodated - option for schools unable to offer French Immersion
NS	6	4 & 5	rural where no Early Immersion offered	- entire class	- Late French Immersion - Extended French - Department of Education works with boards where Late Immersion or Extended French not available	- \$5,000	- very few - scheduling but has been resolved	- enhanced opportunity for students in smaller communities to learn French. - valuable professional development for teachers
NB	5	1 to 4	rural and urban	- parental choice - entire class	- committee will propose a variety of strategies	- \$6,000	- parental concerns - administrative problems	- may become the default program for grade 5 - needed to meet NB's goal of 70% attaining bilingual status
NB Moncton	4 (second intensive semester in Grade 5)	1 to 3	rural and urban	- parental choice - entire class	- committee will propose a variety of strategies	- \$6,000	- parental concerns - administrative problems	- all students will succeed if offered over 2 years - may become the default program for grade 5 - needed to meet NB's goal of 70% attaining bilingual status
MB	grade 6 being considered for 2005-06	4 & 5	urban	- parental choice			- parents must be given choice so there must be two grade 6 classes - strong Early French Immersion - lack of qualified staff	

**Table 4. Intensive French Program Characteristics by Province**

Province	Grade Offered	Previous FLS	Context	Student Selection	Follow-up Options	Start-up Costs / Class (excludes teacher training)	Difficulties	Purpose for Implementation
SK	6	-	urban - parents in schools with no prior FSL given option of Intensive French or Core French	- parental choice	- cohort stays together for enriched Core French in elementary grades - SK Learning is committed to developing programming for a class of Grade 9 students entering one designated high school.	- \$5,000	- implementing adequate follow-up - cost of evaluation	- creates another entry point for FSL at the elementary level which otherwise would not exist - offers another option to parents desiring FSL
AB	5	4	rural	- parental choice - first come basis	- still planning - Extended French a possibility	- \$7,000	- compacting the curriculum - purchasing appropriate resources - cost of evaluation and the training of evaluators for oral assessment - transportation to Montreal to access professional development activities	- good option in rural schools where it is more difficult to offer French Immersion - a low risk/high benefit language learning alternative to Core French
BC	5	4	urban - offered in schools where French immersion is not a possibility - multi-ethnic milieu	- first come basis	- 1 hour/day with fluent teachers in grades 6 and 7 - not yet known for grade 8 and beyond	- \$5,000	- staffing - teachers need additional training and support in literacy-based methodology - displacement of existing school staff to hire a bilingual teacher - remaining classes of non-selected Core French students may have high proportion of learning or behavioural difficulties.	- brings a program which may result in functional bilingualism to every neighbourhood school that wants it - value added - no downside for students or parents

## **Theoretical Bases**

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According to Netten & Germain (2004a), Intensive French was developed to address the difficulties of teaching communication in the Core French classroom. They reviewed empirical research about second language learning and identified three findings which appeared relevant:

1. The level of achievement attained in second language is closely related to the amount of time spent learning the language (Carroll, 1975; Swain, 1981).
2. Intense periods of language instruction leads to a higher level of achievement than the same amount of time spread out over a longer period (Lightbown & Spada, 1993).
3. Authentic language use leads to higher levels of communicative competence than exposure to language as an object of study (Swain, 1981; Paradis, 1994).

They concluded that in order to improve the results of the Core French program, it would be necessary to integrate an intensive period of exposure to French, in which French was used as the language of communication.

Five basic principles underlie their conceptualization of Intensive French. The first principle is a synthesis of the empirical research findings above; the last four are based on current theories about language and language learning (Netten & Germain, 2004b p. 285).

### **1. The learning of languages for the purposes of communication is through the development of literacy skills (Netten & Germain, 2000).**

To develop effective communication skills, language must be used as a means of communication rather than presented as an object of study. Listening, speaking, reading, writing, and representing are developed in an integrated way with emphasis on co-constructing a message. The intention is to achieve a level of spontaneous communication by the end of the intensive period. This will enable learners to make more effective use of the time devoted to French instruction following the intensive period (Netten and Germain, 2004b, p. 286).

### **2. Languages are interdependent (Cummins 1979, 2001; de Koninck, Z. & Boucher, E., 1993).**

According to Cummins (1979), even if two languages appear to be very different on the surface, the underlying cognitive processes are identical. This is what explains transfer between languages. For example, the process developed in the learning of reading or writing in a second language does not need to be relearned in the first language. This is what justifies the reduction of time spent on English language arts by 50% (Netten and Germain, 2004b, p. 286).

### **3. Cognitive development is not subject-specific (Vygotsky, 1962, 1985).**

A child's intellectual development is not compartmentalized according to specific subject areas but unified in the brain of the student (Vygotsky, 1985). Many cognitive processes are common to languages and to other subject areas such as the ability to generalize, to make hypotheses, to resolve problems, etc. This is what justifies the compacting of the curriculum by 50% for such subjects as the sciences and the social sciences (Netten and Germain, 2004b, p. 288).

### **4. Interaction increases intellectual development (Vygotsky, 1962, 1985).**

Cognitive development is facilitated by certain types of activities and by social, goal-oriented interaction with others. Through the use of French in interaction, language input is more likely to become internalized "intake" (Swain, 1981, Van Lier, 1988). At the same time, strategies that permit students to interact, such as group work, enable them to profit from the cognitive benefits of social interaction (Netten and Germain, 2004b, p. 290).

### **5. Language learning for communicative purposes requires development of both accuracy and fluency.**

Factual knowledge of French is not accessible quickly enough to be available for use in a conversation. Developing a skill such as speaking requires the development of procedural competence. Students need to use and reuse language forms and structures in real situations in order to develop fluency and accuracy (Netten and Germain, 2004b, p. 291).

## **Features of Intensive French**

Intensive French programs following the model piloted in Newfoundland and Labrador between 1998-2001 by Netten and Germain (and currently also offered in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia) have the following features:

### **The amount of time devoted to regular Core French instruction is increased.**

During the five months allocated to Intensive French, students receive three or four times the number of hours regularly scheduled for FSL. This represents between 60% to 75% of the day (approximately 250 -360 hours). Two hundred and fifty (250) hours are recommended to accommodate the average student but to accommodate weaker students, 300 hours are recommended<sup>18</sup> (Germain & Netten, 2004 p. 407). The percentage devoted to Intensive French varies with the conditions and priorities of each particular school.

### **The increased amount of time devoted to FSL instruction is scheduled in a concentrated period of time.**

Normally, the period of intense study is offered in the first five months of the school year (September to January) with a return to the regular curriculum, including the regular number of hours in core French, in the last five months (February to June). The main reason for offering the Intensive French instruction during the first five months is to facilitate compacting of the curriculum (See also the section entitled The curriculum for other subjects is compacted).

The reverse sequence is possible (regular curriculum from September to January and Intensive French instruction from February to June), but requires careful advanced planning. This schedule has been used when one teacher delivers the intensive French instruction to two classes and another teacher teaches the other subjects to both groups.

Uninterrupted, daily, intense FSL study is recommended (i.e. the FSL intensive part of the day should not be interrupted by mathematics or other subject area classes that are taught in English).

### **The program is offered at the end of the elementary school cycle.**

There are several reasons for choosing to offer Intensive French at the end of the elementary school cycle. Research indicates that students in grade 5 or 6 (between 10 and 12 years of age) are able to learn language implicitly (McLaughlin et al., 1983) and respond well to learning a second language without any of the negative attitudes exhibited at puberty (Preston, 1989).

Students in grades 5 or 6<sup>19</sup> generally stay in the same classroom with the same teacher all day which makes scheduling of the intensive program easier than it would be in a rotation situation<sup>20</sup>.

### **The program includes a specific language learning pedagogy.**

During the intensive period, all activities relate to the learning of the second language; no subjects are taught in French and no content objectives for the other subjects are evaluated through Intensive French. The teaching strategies focus on interaction and group work, helping the students to communicate orally in French.

### **The Intensive French curriculum content is substantive.**

Students are engaged in cognitively demanding activities centred on a theme (e.g. my family, hobbies) and work together to complete projects related to the theme (e.g. doing a survey on music preferred by their classmates and graphing the results). There is focus on form where pertinent; grammar is taught in context as required, usually related to writing activities but also for speaking activities if needed.

### **The curriculum for other subjects is compacted.**

Compacting the curriculum for other subjects to five months requires a review of the learning outcomes for these subjects to identify skills, cognitive processes and content which could be introduced during the Intensive French period activities<sup>21</sup>. This introduction gives the children some awareness and latent knowledge so that skills, cognitive processes, and content for other subjects can be covered more quickly during the second five month period (Netten & Germain, 2004d).

Time for English instruction and other subject instruction may be reduced by up to 50% while time for mathematics is not reduced. Mathematics is taught in English throughout the year.

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18 - NB recommends minimum 270 hours.

19 - IF is being piloted in grade 4 in Moncton during 2004-05.

20 - Students move from one classroom to another for different subjects.

21 - e.g. In the social studies curriculum, reading maps may be a learning outcome. This outcome can be introduced during the IF 5-month period through activities involved in planning a trip.

## **Current Intensive French programs benefit from the centralization of program implementation information, teacher training efforts, and materials development:**

In all provinces where Intensive French is currently operating, the program was introduced and implementation was facilitated by Joan Netten and Claude Germain, the program developers. The committee applauds the efforts of Netten and Germain in developing and implementing this program.

A steering committee, headed by Netten and Germain and consisting of ministry representatives from provinces where Intensive French is in place and provinces considering implementation, meets on a bi-annual basis. Cost are covered by provincial ministries. This committee provides a forum for updated information on program implementation across the country, examines the effects on program integrity of possible program alterations and variations in other contexts, and discusses and shares information on best practices and practical issues such as program promotion, dates for future summer symposia, additions to the teaching guide, etc.

Most prospective Intensive French teachers<sup>22/23</sup> participate in a 5-day training “symposium” at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) in August, prior to teaching Intensive French. This symposium (which costs \$1200 per participant) consists of an introduction to the theoretical foundations of the Intensive French program, workshops on pedagogical strategies appropriate for the intensive period, and an initiation to curriculum compacting.

New teachers participating in the symposium also receive a copy of the *Interprovincial Teaching Guide* (Netten, J., Germain, C., & Anderson, B., 2004).

New teachers are observed by Germain and Netten during their first year of teaching to ensure that they are implementing the pedagogical strategies explained during the symposium and outlined in the *Interprovincial Guide*<sup>24</sup>. Costs are covered by the provincial ministries.

A 2-day Intensive French workshop for second year Intensive French teachers is offered by CASLT (first offered in 2004) following the UQAM symposium to reinforce the pedagogical training received during the preceding summer and to provide additional pedagogical resources for continuing Intensive French teachers.

New Brunswick will offer a summer Institute in Intensive French pedagogical approaches in 2005 for Core French teachers who will be receiving the Intensive French graduates in Grades 6 and 7.

A CASLT organized Intensive French Resource Committee (established in 2004) prepares Intensive French workshops for FSL conferences and teacher curriculum materials.

## **Follow-up programs are needed after the Intensive French program.**

Although Intensive French students acquire a higher level of competence in oral and written French in five months, some type of specialized follow-up is essential to maintain students' motivation to continue studying French, to enable them to build on what they have acquired, and to possibly attain functional bilingualism by graduation.

Follow-up possibilities already available in certain areas include:

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Enriched Core French</b>  | Students in subsequent grades are given more French reading and writing activities, more cognitively complex tasks, and more interesting and complex activities (such as those offered at the end of units in the <i>Interprovincial Teaching Guide</i> ) using the methodological approach of Intensive French. |
| <b>Late French Immersion</b> | Students start a French Immersion program in Grade 7 taking nearly all subjects (in a total immersion program) or many subjects (in a partial immersion program) in the second language.   |
| <b>Extended French</b>       | Students take one subject (possibly two) taught in French in addition to French Language Arts in Grade 7 <sup>25</sup> .   |

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22 - Consultants and administrators also attended these symposia in the past, but plans are underway to provide a separate session for these participants in the future.

23 - NL has been organizing summer professional development sessions since 2002. In 2003, this consisted of a five-day linguistic refresher course in St-Pierre and five days of pedagogical training. In 2004, there were five days of pedagogical training and 3 days for curriculum compacting. New Intensive French teachers in NL in 2004-05 participated in a local training session provided by the NL Department of Education and did not attend the UQAM symposium.

24 - This observation is performed by School District personnel in NL.

25 - In NS, a new grade 7 social studies curriculum (to be taught in French) is being introduced in September 2005 and will be integrated with the French Language Arts curriculum to help Intensive French graduates with limited language skills.

## **Preliminary Research Results**

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### **Research Findings from Newfoundland and Labrador (1998-2001)**

Intensive French was the subject of a three year research project (1998 - 2001) undertaken in two school districts (one rural and one urban) in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). A total of 587 students from 23 classes in both urban and rural areas participated in Intensive French programs in Newfoundland and Labrador from 1998-2001. The following section provides an overview of published results from this project:

#### **Oral Proficiency**

Oral proficiency test results indicate that these Intensive French students achieved oral results comparable to those of grade 9, grade 10, and even grade 11 students in regular Core French classes (Germain, Netten, & Movassat, 2004; Germain & Netten, 2004b). They were able to “show considerable spontaneity in language production and to initiate and sustain general conversation” (Germain, Netten, & Movassat, 2004).

The instrument used to evaluate oral proficiency was the oral interview administered to all students at the end of the secondary Core French program in Newfoundland and Labrador. It follows the protocol developed by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 1986). Each teacher interviewed the students in his/her class (Classroom teachers received training offered by specialists from the NL Ministry of Education). Each interview was recorded. During the first year of the study, an external evaluator also rated 43 student performances. The resulting correlation coefficient was 0.70. Since similar results were obtained in the second year, external evaluations were discontinued in the third year.

#### **Written Production**

Results obtained for written production indicate that students attained an average level of performance similar to that of grade 4 Québec francophone students in fluency and grade 3 francophone students in accuracy (Germain & Netten, 2004b). The instrument used was a written composition in which students follow the steps of the writing process. The protocol for administration, correction and interpretation of the compositions was developed by the Société de gestion du réseau d'instruments pour les commissions scolaires (GRICS) for regular primary level classes in Québec. The instrument was validated with 1200 francophone children from Québec.

#### **Qualitative Results**

Data concerning other results were collected through interviews conducted with representatives of all the groups involved: NL Department of Education personnel, school board administrators and French consultants in the districts involved, all teachers of Intensive French and principals of schools where the program was implemented, and most grade 7 French teachers and principals in the schools receiving the students, as well as several parents and students.

Interview responses concerning results on compressed/compacted subjects indicate:

*En dépit de la compression de certaines matières, notamment les sciences, les sciences sociales, et l'éducation à la santé qui, dans la plupart des cas, ont été réduites de moitié, tous sont d'avis que les résultats d'apprentissage pour la 6e année ont été atteints (Germain et Netten, 2004a).*

Interview responses concerning results on students' first language skills and on province-wide tests in English and mathematics indicate:

*Jusqu'ici, la réaction des enseignants, des directeurs d'école et des parents indique que la compression de l'anglais dans le régime pédagogique du français intensif n'a eu aucun effet négatif sur l'apprentissage de l'anglais langue première (Germain et Netten, 2004a).*

Results of Intensive French students were superior to those of students in regular Core French classes on provincial English reading and mathematics tests (Germain et Netten, 2004a, p. 408). Time for English instruction was reduced by 50% while time for mathematics was not reduced. Mathematics was taught in English throughout the year.

## **Results from Other Provinces**

Since 2002, the program has also been introduced in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Alberta and British Columbia. Although additional research has been conducted, results from these provinces are not yet public.

Joan Netten states that 1143 students have been evaluated in the last three years using a common instrument for oral and written production. According to Netten, oral proficiency is determined using the New Brunswick Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) administered by trained evaluators who are not the students' teachers. The average oral proficiency results for all provinces are relatively similar. At the end of the five-month Intensive French program, on average, students move from Novice Low or Novice Mid to Basic Low or Basic Mid on the OPI scale. (Basic Low or Basic Mid indicates ability to communicate on familiar topics with some spontaneity). These outcomes cannot be compared to the published results from Newfoundland and Labrador because they did not use the same interview scale (personal communication, November, 2004 and March, 2005).

Netten also indicates that all students have been tested in written production with similar results to those achieved in Newfoundland and Labrador: students are able to write a composition similar to that written by grade 3 francophone students in Québec.

## **Long-Term Results from Newfoundland and Labrador**

Netten and Germain have undertaken a second research project, a three-year follow-up study of 824 students in Newfoundland and Labrador in grades 7, 8 and 9, from 2001- 2004. Data are currently being analysed and interpreted (J. Netten, personal communication, 2005).

Preliminary analyses indicate that students continuing in regular Core French for three years after the Intensive French program in grade 6 have maintained (but not increased) oral production, writing production and reading skill levels acquired during the intensive year. Furthermore, participation in Intensive French in grade 6 appears to motivate more students to enrol in Late French Immersion in grade 7 than does participation in Core French (J. Netten, personal communication, 2005).

A departmental program evaluation of the Intensive French program in NL is being conducted this year (2004-05). The Intensive French program in NL is now an official alternative to Core French in grade 6. Its features have evolved somewhat since the original experiment in 1998-2001.

## **Long-Term Results from Other Provinces**

New Brunswick will be testing grade 6 and 7 post- Intensive French students (oral proficiency only) in June 2005 (D. Macfarlane, personal communication, 2005).

## **Part D**

### **Recommendations**

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**The Study Committee is presenting twenty-three recommendations.**

The first ten recommendations deal with Canadian FSL programs in general. They attempt to provide a framework within which Intensive French can be situated as one strategy for improving functional knowledge of French for high school graduates and reducing attrition rates from FSL programs.

The thirteen remaining recommendations for Intensive French provide suggestions for systematic ways to continue implementation of the program as research clarifies certain issues.

The recommendations are grouped in five priority areas:

- 1. Policies and Procedures**
- 2. Resources**
- 3. Research and Evaluation**
- 4. Communications**
- 5. Teacher Training**

The summary of recommendations is presented in a two-dimensional table in Part E.

### **General Recommendations for French as a Second Language Education**

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- 1. That implementation of the Federal Government Action Plan continue in order to ensure that the goals of the 2002 Speech from the Throne remain a government priority.**

**Priority Area: Policy (Action Plan)**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage**

There is already some evidence of movement and progress linked to the implementation of the Action Plan:

- Plan Twenty Thirteen: Strategies for a National Approach in Second Language Education has been released by the Department of Canadian Heritage, Official Languages Support Programs;
- The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage recently issued a joint call for research proposals (December 2004) under the Official Languages Research and Dissemination Program.
- Certain provincial ministries have indicated that they have already obtained funding for proposals linked to the government Action Plan.

- 2. That provincial Ministries of Education and other significant stakeholders be closely involved in the implementation of this Action Plan.**

**Priority Area: Policy (Action Plan)**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage**

It is difficult to relate federal goals to provincial/territorial autonomy in education. Plan Twenty-Thirteen states that:

*There is an ongoing dichotomy of federal versus provincial/territorial roles in educational matters. The question becomes: "How can we set a national strategy while respecting the autonomy of each province and territory (Canadian Heritage, 2004)?"*

There is substantial evidence that many students are dissatisfied with FSL education in Canada. While doubling the number of bilingual high school graduates is a federal government goal, student dissatisfaction with FSL programs is a provincial issue. It appears that the Intensive French program may be one strategy with the potential to address both.

- 3. That the Action Plan include a process for developing a national operational definition of “functional proficiency/ functional knowledge” as a goal for high school graduates.**

**Priority Area: Procedures (Definition)**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education**

The current level of bilingualism among 15-19 year-olds was determined by using census data based on one question: “Can this person speak English or French well enough to conduct a conversation?” There is no operational definition of functional knowledge and there are no tools to measure functional knowledge. If the Action Plan is based on the premise that school-based improvements will facilitate the attainment of the government goals, these goals must be linked to school-based outcomes and must be defined in a measurable way.

- 4. That the Action Plan include a process for developing objectives and standards for the various FSL programs based on the definition of “functional knowledge”.**

**Priority Area: Procedures (Definition, Standards, and Measurement Tools)**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education**

“ According to the Evaluation of the OLE Program, “the federal government should take advantage of the upcoming negotiations with the provincial/ territorial partners to agree on program results and performance indicators” (Government of Canada, 2003: Summary, p.14).

The new provincial and territorial agreements will have to clearly specify the expected results with respect to common objectives. These results and common objectives should be linked to the operational definition of functional knowledge as described above.

- 5. That resources be directed to the development of national FSL evaluation instruments which will be used to implement the operational definition of functional knowledge.**

**Priority Area: Research and Evaluation**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education**

While defining functional knowledge and aligning objectives to that definition are first steps, measurement tools are needed to determine where our FSL programs stand now with respect to functional knowledge and how that may change with the introduction of alternative programs such as Intensive French.

A standardized measure would improve our understanding of the impact of various FSL programs relative to the investments of time, money, and human resources.

In addition such a measure would align French as a second language with other subject areas such as mathematics which have common national measures; this would provide provinces and territories a sound basis for measuring the effectiveness of their programs.

Such an instrument could also be used as the basis for bilingual certification of graduates of FSL programs with currency for post-secondary admission or employment.

- 6. That informational materials for parents, students, educators and administrators outlining the various FSL program alternatives and the expected achievement levels for the most common entry points, intensity levels, and total hours be developed and widely disseminated.**

**Priority Area: Communication**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education / Canadian Parents for French**

A national definition for functional bilingualism and tools to measure school-based proficiency would illustrate the outcomes of the various FSL options. This would also permit parents to make more informed choices which fit the desired profile for their child. These materials would allow for provincial differences in terms of program delivery.

- 7. That the Action Plan highlight FSL program options to be promoted which are likely to reduce the current attrition from FSL programs.**

**Priority Area: Communication**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education / Other Significant Stakeholders**

The Department of Canadian Heritage's Plan Twenty-Three: Strategies for a National Approach in Second Language Education has outlined approaches with the double goal of improving achievement while reducing attrition. Intensive French is one recommended approach.

- 8. That a long-term student tracking program be introduced to document student attrition from FSL programs.**

**Priority Area: Research/Evaluation**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education / Canadian Parents for French**

Research evidence indicates that alternative programs such as Extended French have a positive effect on retention of students in FSL programs (CPF, 2004; p.36). This has not been sufficiently documented for Intensive French to date.

While improvement in French language proficiency is a major objective of Intensive French, retention of students beyond the compulsory grades is another goal. It will be necessary to track student attrition following Intensive French (and in other FSL programs) to determine if student retention is also a benefit.

- 9. That a review of the current federal program grant formulae for FSL programs be conducted with a view to moving beyond mere hours of instruction to encompass issues like intensity of program, achievement expectations, accessibility and retention.**

**Priority Area: Policy (Action Plan)**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage**

Current federal program grant formulae are tied to hours of instruction. According to Plan Twenty-Three:

*A transition to achievement-based funding will establish a “teacher-driven and student-centred” approach emphasizing an essential commitment to investment in students and investment in teachers (p.23).*

Provincial and territorial plans, particularly those targeting funding to meet the Action Plan goals, should lead to the desired results. These results should be measured qualitatively and quantitatively in terms of student achievement, accessibility, satisfaction and retention.

- 10. That Faculties of Education include innovative FSL approaches which significantly improve achievement and reduce attrition from FSL programs in their teacher education programs.**

**Priority Area: Teacher Training**

**Action by: Ministries of Education / Faculties of Education**

French Immersion and Extended French are introduced in many pre-service FSL programs. Intensive French is beginning to be mentioned informally in a few, delivered by professors who are linked to the Intensive French program (personal communication, November Intensive French Steering Committee Meeting, 2004), but there has been no coordinated effort to introduce this program to all new FSL teachers at Faculties of Education.

If Intensive French continues to expand, all FSL teachers will need to understand this program since they will likely meet graduates in follow-up classes (i.e. regular Core French, Enriched Core French, Extended French, or Late French Immersion).

## **Specific Recommendations for Intensive French**

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- 11. That an accepted definition for Intensive French be created which will maintain the program's current flexibility but also assure standards as to the number of hours of instruction, the overall program structure and the need for follow-up programs.**

**Priority Area: Procedures (Definition)**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education / CASLT**

Preliminary research indicates that there may be a threshold number of hours during the intensive period of instruction beyond which additional hours have no proportional influence on outcomes.

Results also indicate that differences in second language achievement among classes offering Intensive French seem to be linked to teaching strategies used in the classroom (Netten, 2001; Germain, Netten, & Movassat, 2004; Germain, Netten & Séguin, 2004).

Effective and appropriate follow-up programs seem to be an essential component for implementation of Intensive French.

A comprehensive definition of the essential conditions and factors will facilitate implementation in new contexts. This definition can be updated as necessary following additional research.

- 12. That additional funding be made available for implementation of Intensive French in all provinces and territories.**

**Priority Area: Policy (Action Plan)**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage**

According to Plan 2013, broad implementation of Intensive French together with effective follow-up programs could have a very high positive impact in the goals of the Action Plan. Intensive French also appears to address many of the problems identified by students as reasons for dropping French.

- 13. That appropriate follow-up programs be made available to students who have completed Intensive French and that these programs be coordinated with existing FSL options to prevent fragmentation.**

**Priority Area: Resources**

**Action by: Provincial Ministries of Education / School Districts**

The greatest challenge is not in implementing Intensive French but in providing adequate follow-up options. Intensive French is not just a 5-month experience but should be a “package-deal” to the end of high school. Mixing graduates of Intensive French with regular Core French students in subsequent grades will not maintain student motivation to continue studying French, enable them to build on what they have acquired or help them to attain functional proficiency by graduation. A planned follow-up program is necessary.

Several recommended follow-up options are already available in many school districts including:

- Late French Immersion
- Extended Core French

Other options such as an Enriched Core French program may be possible but needs to be carefully planned and evaluated. Any follow-up options need to be coordinated with existing FSL offerings to avoid further fragmentation of FSL offerings.

The Ministry of Education in New Brunswick has developed a committee to develop appropriate follow-up options. Representatives from other provinces have been invited to participate in this committee.

- 14. That students who have completed an Intensive French program have access to a variety of non-traditional follow-up experiences including summer bursaries, exchanges and virtual courses.**

**Priority Area: Resources**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education / School Districts / Exchanges Canada / Society for Visits and Exchanges in Canada (SEVEC)**

There are other options which could be used to maintain student motivation and interest following Intensive French including:

- Summer language bursary programs offering courses in oral communication which could be added to distance FSL courses or to regular Core French classes ;
- Special interest courses for high school Core French (such as those being developed in Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Ontario) to meet the expectations and capture the interest of students who would normally drop out of the Core French program ;
- Bilingual exchanges to supplement classroom work ;
- Distance and virtual courses.

**15. That funding be made available to continue the development and adaptation of material resources to support Intensive French programs.**

**Priority Area: Resources**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education / CASLT**

As the Intensive French program expands, provincial or regional organization will be required. Resources will be needed including:

- updated print and media resources ;
- resources for follow-up programs to the end of high school ;
- resources for teacher training of Intensive French teachers ;
- resources for professional development of teachers receiving Intensive French graduates.

**16. That teacher training for Intensive French be offered at the local and provincial levels as well as through the national symposium.**

**Priority Area: Teacher Training**

**Action by: Provincial Ministries of Education / Faculties of Education / School Districts / CASLT**

Most new teachers of Intensive French participate in a six-day “symposium” at UQAM where they learn appropriate teaching strategies and receive a copy of the Interprovincial Teaching Guide. However, in NL, where the program has expanded to 37 classes and become an official alternative program, where it is available, new Intensive French teachers attended a local session, the 2004 Summer Intensive Core French Professional Development Institute, offered by the Department of Education in St. John's.

As the program expands in other provinces, costs for the participation of new teachers in the Montreal “symposium” will be high (approximately \$4,000 per teacher which includes travel to Montreal and living expenses in Montreal). It may therefore be necessary to provide regional “symposia” rather than send new teachers to Montréal.

It is unclear who would deliver this training. In some provinces professional development is provided by Ministries of Education, in others by Faculties of Education or School Districts. To date, there is no interface with provincial Faculties of Education.

Similarly, teacher observation and support in the initial year of teaching as well as continuing professional development for Intensive French teachers and for teachers of program graduates will need to be developed.

**17. That training for Intensive French address both teaching strategies and language skills.**

**Priority Area: Teacher Training**

**Action by: Provincial Ministries of Education / Faculties of Education / School Districts / CASLT**

One of the reasons for training “regular” Core French teachers who are not specialists in FSL as teachers of Intensive French is the concern that there will not be enough qualified teachers to deliver the Intensive French program. There is already an identified shortage of Immersion teachers in Canada (CPF, 2004).

It may be possible to offer Intensive French without FSL specialists, but programs (and funding) will need to be put in place to upgrade the language fluency of Core French teachers, if necessary, as well as training in the methodology of Intensive French. Ongoing language training opportunities and professional development will be needed to maintain this fluency and pedagogy, particularly for teachers located in isolated areas.

Opportunities for professional development are becoming available through federal funding in British Columbia. Nova Scotia is piloting an on-line language up-grading course for Core French teachers.

Newfoundland and Labrador offers a teacher bursary program which provides financial assistance to attend summer language institutes. It also funds one week institutes held in St-Pierre and Miquelon which are organized by School Districts. These and similar efforts need to be more widely publicized and shared.

**18. That funding to support the evaluation of Intensive French programs be made available on both local and provincial levels as well as on a national level.**

**Priority Area: Research/Evaluation**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education**

Research on Intensive French is needed to provide evidence that the program is meeting its local objectives in each context where it is implemented, to compare the outcomes of Intensive French to those of other FSL programs in meeting the goal of functional proficiency, and to determine if it has the potential to replace regular Core French and become the FSL program at grade 6 (or 4 or 5 in certain contexts) for all Core French students.

**19. That a broadly-based national study, involving all provinces which currently offer an Intensive French program, examine such issues as linguistic achievement, impact on other subject area learning, etc. needed to facilitate continued expansion of the Intensive French program.**

**Priority Area: Research/Evaluation**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education / Faculties of Education**

Preliminary findings presented in Part C leave many questions unanswered including:

- How does Intensive French fit with other FSL options?
- What impact does Intensive French have on other FSL options?
- How do Intensive French results compare to those of Core French students who do not participate in the Intensive French program?
- Do results differ in different provinces?
- What are the long-term results of Intensive French (including follow-up options)?  
How do graduates of Intensive French plus appropriate follow-up options compare to graduates of other FSL programs?

A coordinated effort by all provinces which currently offer an Intensive French program is needed to determine what information about this program is required by various stakeholders to ascertain whether the program is accomplishing its goals and objectives, how different program components (e.g. teacher qualifications, material resources, context, etc.) affect outcomes, who should conduct the required research, and which indicators will be considered appropriate to guide the decision to continue, expand or abandon Intensive French programs.

**20. That administrative research be conducted to evaluate such issues as context, staffing, student selection, timetabling, and grade level at which to implement and their impact on Intensive French programs.**

**Priority Area: Research/Evaluation**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education**

What effect, if any does context have on IF outcomes? Is the program more successful in rural or urban areas? Does this differ by province? Does relative size matter? Do other FSL options available matter?

What impact does Intensive French have on staffing? In some small schools implementation causes minimal disruption because the existing class remains intact and the existing classroom teacher becomes the Intensive French teacher; Intensive French becomes the program for the grade in which it is implemented. In other cases, the program is offered to students on a first come first served basis to a maximum number. In some schools where two classes exist, students are randomly assigned to each class and the group to receive intensive French is also randomly selected. Are we aiming for universal implementation? Is universal implementation feasible? What are the effects on outcomes of making the program optional and of making the program mandatory?

Students who do not choose Intensive French may be in classes with a high representation of students with learning or behavioural difficulties. It is unclear if all students regardless of abilities, aptitudes, or motivations are represented in areas where parents choose the program for their children. There have been legal difficulties in areas where the parents were not given a choice. The question remains: what is the best way to select students for the program?

Netten and Germain recommend a 5-month/5-month schedule with the period of intensive French instruction taking place during the first five months. In some cases, however, Intensive French has been taught during the last five months. It is unknown whether and to what extent the results from this timetable are inferior to those of the recommended (first five months) schedule. It is also unclear whether other schedules could be accommodated to facilitate implementation in some contexts<sup>26</sup>.

The program is being offered in grade 5 and grade 6 and more recently in grade 4. Which grade is preferable in which circumstances?

**21. That a long-range evaluation of the follow-up programs for Intensive French be conducted to determine the effectiveness of those programs.**

**Priority Area: Research/ Evaluation**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education**

It is assumed that students who participate in Intensive French and continue with an appropriate follow-up will attain a functional knowledge of French. Several follow-up programs have been suggested. Unless students who participate in Intensive French are evaluated through to the end of high school, it will not be possible to determine which follow-up programs are effective and under which scenarios Intensive French leads to the desired goals.

**22. That an information kit concerning Intensive French be developed for administrators outlining “best practices” regarding such issues as timetabling, grade placement, curriculum compacting, staffing, and parent communication.**

**Priority Area: Communications**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education / CASLT**

Many administrators are unfamiliar with the difficulties of language teaching and/or with Intensive French. A kit based on the collective experience with Intensive French<sup>27</sup> programs in a variety of contexts would facilitate more effective implementation.

Many administrators are not at ease with their ability to supervise second language teachers. This guide could also include a section about “what to look for” in the second language classroom. This kit could be shared at an administrator information session.

**23. That information be made available to students and parents outlining realistic expectations for Intensive French.**

**Priority Area: Communications**

**Action by: Department of Canadian Heritage / Provincial Ministries of Education / Canadian Parents for French**

A national definition for functional proficiency and tools to measure school-based proficiency would clarify the different outcomes of the FSL options. This would permit parents to choose the program which fits the profile they desire for their child.

If the outcomes were related to bilingual employment requirements, it would be possible to determine which FSL programs lead to the functional knowledge required for certain bilingual positions.

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26 - For example Intensive English, which does not include curriculum compacting, is currently offered in several different formats: 5-month/5-month 1week/1week 1day/1day ½ day/ ½ day  
The effects of these delivery variations are being researched (personal communication, Micheline Schink, SPEAQ, 2004).

27 - A two-day Institute concerning Intensive French was recently offered to NL administrators who had not yet introduced the Intensive French program in their schools (personal communication, G. Blackmore, 2005). The aforementioned kit could be used in conjunction with such sessions.

## Part E Summary of Recommendations

	General FSL	Intensive French
Policy (Action Plan)	1. That implementation of the Federal Government Action Plan continue in order to insure that the goals of the 2002 Speech from the Throne remain a government priority.	
Policy (Action Plan)	2. That provincial Ministries of Education and other significant stakeholders be closely involved in the implementation of this Action Plan.	
Policy (Action Plan)	9. That a review of the current federal program grant formulae for FSL programs be conducted with a view to moving beyond mere hours of instruction to encompass issues like intensity of program, achievement expectations, accessibility and retention.	12. That additional funding be made available for implementation of Intensive French in all provinces and territories.
Procedures (Definition)	3. That the Action Plan include a process for developing a national operational definition of “functional proficiency/functional knowledge” as a goal for high school graduates.	
Procedures (Definition)	4. That the Action Plan include a process for developing objectives and standards for the various French as a Second Language programs based on the definition of “functional knowledge”.	11. That an accepted definition for Intensive French be created which will maintain the program's current flexibility but also assure standards as to the number of hours of instruction, the overall program structure and the need for follow-up programs.
Research Evaluation	5. That resources be directed to the development of national FSL evaluation instruments which will be used to implement the operational definition of functional knowledge.	19. That a broadly-based national study involving all provinces which currently offer an Intensive French program examine such issues as linguistic achievement, impact on other subject-area learning, etc., needed to facilitate continued expansion of the Intensive French program.
Research Evaluation		18. That funding to support the evaluation of Intensive French programs be made available on both local and provincial levels as well as on a national level.
Research Evaluation		20. That administrative research be conducted to evaluate such issues as context, staffing, student selection, timetabling, and grade level at which to implement and their impact on Intensive French programs.

## Part E Summary of Recommendations

	General FSL	Intensive French
Research Evaluation		21. That a long-range evaluation of the follow-up programs for Intensive French be conducted to determine the effectiveness of those programs.
Communication	6. That informational materials for parents, students, educators and administrators outlining the various FSL program alternatives and the expected achievement levels for the most common entry points, intensity levels, and total hours be developed and widely disseminated.	22. That an information kit concerning Intensive French be developed for administrators outlining “best practices” re timetabling, grade placement, curriculum compacting, staffing, and parent communication.
Communication	7. That the Action Plan highlight FSL program options to be promoted which are likely to reduce the current attrition from FSL programs.	23. That information be made available to students and parents outlining realistic expectations for Intensive French.
Research Evaluation	8. That a long-term student tracking program be introduced to document student attrition from FSL programs (including Intensive French).	
Teacher Training	10. That Faculties of Education include innovative FSL approaches which significantly improve achievement and reduce attrition from FSL programs in their teacher education programs.	16. That teacher training for Intensive French be offered at the local and provincial level as well as through the national symposium.
Teacher Training		17. That training for Intensive French address both teaching strategies and language skills.
Resources		13. That appropriate follow-up programs be made available to students who have completed Intensive French and that these programs be coordinated with existing FSL options to prevent fragmentation
Resources		14. That students who have completed an Intensive French program have access to a variety of non-traditional follow-up experiences including summer bursaries, exchanges and virtual courses.
Resources		15. That funding be made available to continue the development and adaptation of material resources to support Intensive French programs.

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