This presentation, part of a round table on future directions for Core French in Canada, outlines some changes that can lead to an optimal program across the country.

Facts

- Early core French (K–3 and higher) appears to make no difference to eventual achievement in French proficiency by the end of Grade 8.
- Similar results emerged from a large-scale European study (Munoz, 2006) where no differences were found between Spanish students starting instruction in English at age 8 and age 11. Where there were differences, they were in favour of the older group.
- The accumulated hours of instruction from K-6 could better be distributed over a three year period, beginning in Grade 6.
- Compacting instructional time allows for concentrated longer chunks of instructional time with improved language and affective outcomes.
- A project-based curriculum, with real-life tasks, can lead to more student involvement, better integration of grammar with communicative outcomes and more use of the target language.
- The use of portfolios, particularly the Biography component of the European Language Portfolio, helps students take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Teachers need to make French real through more emphasis on speaking French.