LEADERSHIP FOR SUCCESSFUL FSL PROGRAMS

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Association canadienne des
professeurs de langues secondes

L2
CASLT/ACPLS

Canadian Association of
Second Language Teachers

The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers introduces this six part series of folios intended for school principals and vice-principals, school based teacher leaders, and administrative staff. The six themes of the series summarize key points of best practices in teaching and learning from research and literature related to FSL programs (Core French, French Immersion, Intensive French and Extended French).

Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT)

Acknowledgements
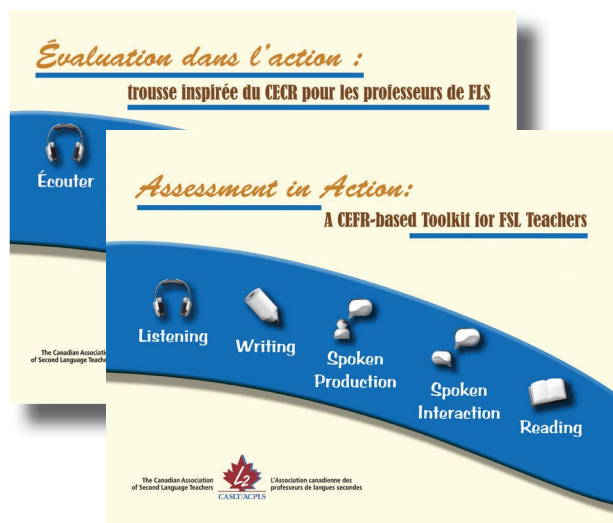
Other Publications from CASLT:

Assessment in Action: A CEFR-based Toolkit for FSL Teachers

Based on the Common European Framework of Reference for languages, Assessment in Action is a set of adaptable tasks that the teachers can use in the classroom to support assessment as, of and for learning at their students' level in the language being taught. The tasks are designed for FSL classrooms but can be adapted for other languages. Assessment in Action is built around five activity types: Spoken interaction; Spoken production; Listening; Reading; and Writing. It covers the first two levels of the CEFR, i.e. (A) Basic user and (B) Independent user. These levels are split into sub-levels – from A1.1 to B2. Each activity type is based on a "Can-do" statement, which describes an activity that the student can do in the target language. Assessment in Action is published in two volumes: Level A and Level B.

Price per volume: $30.00 (general) and $18.00 (CASLT members).

The Canadian Language Portfolio for Teachers.

A "must have" for all second language teachers or students in Education that foresee a carreer teaching in FSL, French Immersion or Intensive French. Based on the Common European Framework of Reference created by the Council of Europe, this tool allows the user to ascertain objectively the level of his/her competencies in French, to set up a course of action tailored to his/her own needs and to monitor the evolution of these competencies.

Price: 40,00 (general) and 24,00 (CASLT members).
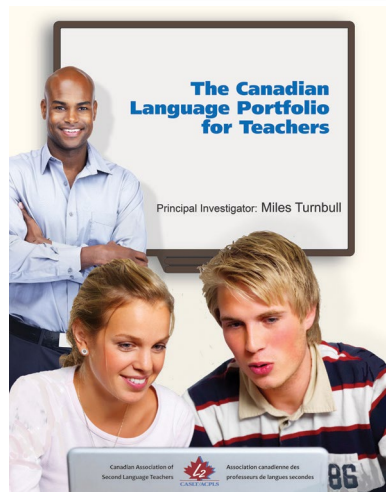
For further details regarding the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers' other products and services, visit CASLT's website at www.caslt.org.

Folio 1: Recruiting and Retaining FSL Teachers

Critical to any successful program is the availability of qualified teachers. Those staffing second language programs have a particularly challenging task. In the case of second language programs, one requires teachers not only with a strong pedagogical background in second language methodology, but also with fluency in the target language. The ideal candidate, therefore, needs to possess an amalgam of both skill sets. Research indicates that the lack of professional development specifically for language teachers is a key factor why qualified teachers leave the profession (Karsenti et al., 2008). Once hired, appropriate and consistent in-service opportunities for language teachers' professional growth would assure their retention.

Key concepts 🔑🔑🔑🔑🔑

🔑 A complex balance of competencies

While native or native-like fluency is highly prized, it should not overshadow a strong second language methodology and a solid understanding of the target culture as criteria for hiring. Being fluent in a language does not necessarily mean one is capable of teaching it. This notwithstanding, a portion of the candidate's interview should be conducted in the target teaching language to determine linguistic competence. If necessary, this could be done with the help of colleagues fluent in the target language.

🔑 Linguistic models for students

Students of all FSL programs benefit from linguistic models and should have the opportunity to interact with speakers of the language "outside" the classroom as much as possible. In an optimal French Immersion language program, for example, teacher-librarians, learning assistance teachers, teacher assistants, the vice principal and the principal would demonstrate willingness and ability to interact with the students in French. Linguistic experiences for the students are also maximized when teachers on call (supply teachers) speak French. School leaders should strive to attain as many of these needs as possible, even if, in the case of support staff, the fluency in French is at a minimal level.

🔑 Teachers' linguistic needs

FSL teachers for whom French is not their home language need ongoing opportunities to continue to develop their own confidence with the language. A relatively new phenomenon has been developing, that is, French Immersion students choose to pursue a teaching career and become French teachers.   While this corps of teachers may be familiar with methodology, having been exposed to it as a student and then possibly having studied it during their teacher education program, the challenge for these teachers often is to continue to perfect the language themselves. Leaders can support teachers by facilitating opportunities for work-related social settings after school, where teachers can interact "en français", and by encouraging participation in summer intensive PD opportunities offered in most provinces. Consult the LangCanada.ca website and provincial Ministries of Education for descriptions of the courses and funding available.

🔑 School-based support needed

Among the challenges is the shortage of trained L2 teachers relative to the need, the difficulty in retaining teachers particularly in smaller, more isolated communities, the hurdles sometimes placed by provincial certification boards and the shortage of PD opportunities to retain those teachers once hired. Leaders can help teachers increase their job satisfaction and enhance their professional growth by: fostering a higher profile for L2 programs; promoting Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and collaborative planning time, either at the same school or with others in the district; providing mentoring opportunities; and generally demonstrating encouragement and support.

🔑 Online resources

A number of Canadian associations provide helpful resources related to developing FSL teachers' pedagogical, linguistic and cultural competencies. Among them, **www.caslt.org** (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers), **www.acpi-cait.ca** (Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers) and **www.cpf.ca** (Canadian Parents for French) are excellent websites for information and other resources.

Common Framework of Reference for Languages: Self-Assessment Grid*

		A1	A2	B1
U N D E R S T A N D I N G	Listening	I can understand familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.
	Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences (e.g. on notices and posters or in catalogues).	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material (e.g. advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables) and I can understand short, simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.
S P E A K I N G	Spoken interaction	I can interact in a simple way, provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversations on topics that are familiar, of personal interest, or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).
	Spoken production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.
W R I T I N G	Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard (e.g. sending holiday greetings). I can fill in forms with personal details (e.g. entering my name, national-ity and address on a hotel registration form).	I can write short, simple notes and messages. I can write a very simple personal letter (e.g. thanking someone for something).	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.