

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

January 17, 2006

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Acting Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: French Language Renewal Project

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Executive Director

RESOURCE
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INFORMATION

Rationale

Edmonton Public Schools is committed to preparing our students for an increasingly globalized society. The ability to speak more than one language will provide a competitive edge to anyone who plans to work, study or live in the global community. In addition, research and practice show that for all students, regardless of ability, learning a second language enhances the development of first language proficiency (Bouret, Trites and Tallowitz, 2002)

Background

In the fall of 2001 the Edmonton Public School District commissioned a comprehensive study to examine the state of French language education in the district. The study, the most comprehensive ever done in a district in Alberta on this subject, had as its purpose to identify the present state of French as a Second language (FSL) and French Immersion (FIM), to identify strengths and weaknesses in the French programs and to recommend actions that would enable the district to more effectively support this area of study.

The district by 2001 had experienced a 35 per cent decline in enrollment in both FSL and FIM over a 12 year period. The decline was such that if not addressed the infrastructure to deliver French programming was being seriously threatened. In addition the representative of the federal Commissioner of Official Languages met with the then superintendent to express concerns over the erosion of what once was Canada's premier FIM model.

The study drew on direct observations on schools as well as interviews of teachers, administrators, central services staff, parents and students, including students who had left French programming, or who had gone to the Edmonton Catholic system for French Immersion. The study resulted in the identification of a number of areas that required redress to create the conditions for quality language learning and the growth and long term sustainability of French programming.

Subsequently the Board of Trustees in April 2002 unanimously approved a three year initiative entitled the *French Language Renewal Project*. The purpose of the project was to implement the recommendations brought forward as a result of the study (Appendix I Un Nouveau Jour).

The Project had four overriding goals:

1. To increase student enrollments in French language programs. The goal includes increasing student enrollment by 100 per cent in FSL and FIM over a five year period from September 2002 to September 2007. The target is to have 4,000 students in FIM and 27 000 in FSL.
2. The FIM and FSL programs will produce distinguished student results. The district's goal is to help students develop levels of French language proficiency enabling them to achieve national and international recognition for their ability with the language.
3. The district will increase contact with francophone communities to provide more opportunity for authentic utilization of the French language in the lives of students. These opportunities will include school twinning, e-mail correspondence, visits, work experience placements and participation in special events.
4. The district will form partnerships and foster relations with school jurisdictions and agencies interested in the enhancement of French language education.

The project is guided by a broad based advisory committee with representatives from Edmonton Public Schools central services, district schools, Alberta Education, Canadian Parents for French, Department of Canadian Heritage, Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, Alliance française, Campus Saint Jean, Department of Modern languages (U of A), and La Chambre économique de l'Alberta.

Results of the French Language Renewal Project

Target	Results																											
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The district has developed policies specific to French language education, as well as the most comprehensive regulations in Alberta to guide and support schools to create the conditions for successful French education. This was approved by board in the spring of 2004.The policy and regulations are now being used to guide similar support in many districts in Alberta and across Canada.																											
Program Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enrollment growth:<table><tr><td></td><td><u>Sept 2001</u></td><td><u>Sept 2005</u></td><td><u>% change</u></td></tr><tr><td>FIM</td><td>1,950</td><td>2,610</td><td>+34%</td></tr><tr><td>FSL</td><td>13 807</td><td>17 581</td><td>+29%</td></tr><tr><td>Other Lang</td><td>5,710</td><td>6,878</td><td>+20%</td></tr></table>Growth at Key Division Points from September 2001 to September 2005:<table><tr><td>FIM Grade 7</td><td>131</td><td>216</td><td>+64%</td></tr><tr><td>FIM Grade 10</td><td>22</td><td>91</td><td>+312%</td></tr></table>High school immersion increased to full immersion, including math, sciences, social studies and French language arts.					<u>Sept 2001</u>	<u>Sept 2005</u>	<u>% change</u>	FIM	1,950	2,610	+34%	FSL	13 807	17 581	+29%	Other Lang	5,710	6,878	+20%	FIM Grade 7	131	216	+64%	FIM Grade 10	22	91	+312%
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Target	Results
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late French Immersion sites established at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – McKernan School – Kenilworth School – Dickinsfield School – Laurier heights School • Three new French Immersion sites added: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dunluce (Elementary - September 2004) – Ross Sheppard (High School – September 2005) – Brander Gardens (September 2006) • In FSL instructional time has been raised to a consistent 150 min/week (minimum 95 hours/year)
<i>Learner Assessment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district has developed and implemented French HLAT's for FIM students from grade 2 through 9, thus establishing standards of reading and writing achievement and helping to bring increased consistency across the district. • The district entered into an agreement with the Public Service of Canada to pilot the national public service exam on French Language proficiency. The district was able to run the test for three years over which time students outperformed all expectations of the federal service. Nearly 80 per cent of FIM students exceeded the requirements for bilingual imperative positions with the civil service, with a substantial number scoring at an advanced level. The pilot proved that our FIM programs work very well at creating fully bilingual citizens. We are currently working with the federal government to have this program continued. • The district has also reached an agreement with agencies in Paris to be a centre for administration of French language proficiency exams which will provide our students with an official standing through the European Language Portfolio system. These credentials are recognized nationally and throughout the world. • The district is now completing the development of common assessment tools for FSL for grades 6, 9 and 12. Grade 9 will be ready for administration in May 2006, grade 6 ready for pilot in May 2006 and grade 12 ready for use in May 2007 • The district is the lead jurisdiction in the development of a "Language Portfolio" based on the European Language Portfolio. The goal will be to have the completed instrument evaluated for authorization by the Council of Europe, so district students will have language results internationally recognized, and EPSB known as a centre of language excellence. • It has been noteworthy that despite a 35 percent increase in FIM enrollment, and the retention of a wider range of student abilities, the achievement within French Immersion remains ahead of the district average.

Target	Results
<i>Classroom Support and Professional Development</i>	<p>The French Language Renewal Project has provided for the support of classroom teachers in a number of ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three full time French Consultants have been made available to schools with their costs covered by the Renewal project. They serve to support FSL, FIM and Late French Immersion. - Information on bursaries, scholarships and exchange opportunities were provided for teachers - The French Renewal Website (www.french.epsb.ca) was developed to convey information to teachers and to act as a two way communication support to teachers sharing information about French education. <p>French Language Assessment Tool is available without charge to all district teachers. Assessment develops a profile of skills which can inform the teacher's professional growth plan. It is linked to courses in French language and pedagogy offered at U of A. Tuitions are supported by the district (staff development), to enable the district to build language capacity. It also identifies competence in teachers applying to teach French in district schools. To date about 300 teachers have sat for the assessment.</p>
<i>Curriculum Support</i>	<p>To support FSL, grade level outcomes were identified for four different ranges of programming, to clarify expectations for student development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grades 1-12 (12 year) - Grades 4-12 (9 year) - Grades 7-12 (6 year) - Grades 10-12 (3 year) <p>These serve as program articulation documents, or Scope and Sequence documents to help provide for smooth articulation between grade levels, especially at division points.</p>
<i>Student Recognition</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The federal Commissioner of Official Languages has commissioned a special certificate for graduates of the district's FIM program. • The district has created district certificates of recognition for students who have completed grade 12 FIM, and grade 12 FSL.
<i>Learning Resources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committees of teachers formed, supported by the project, to identify and select quality learning resources for FIM and FSL programs, including recommendations for which resources should be purchased to support instruction. • Math to the Max, math resource was translated into French to support math instruction in K-6 FIM classrooms. • The project supported schools by contributing to update library collections to support FIM schools. • Programs translated into French to enable the Bennett Centre to offer more programming in French. • Resource section added to the French Renewal website.
<i>Marketing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district, to assist with building growth of the FSL and FIM programs in EPSB, has engaged in an aggressive programming of creating awareness in the Edmonton area of our programs, their quality and the advantage to students to be involved in the programs. This includes marketing the national and international recognition available.

Target	Results
<i>Partnerships</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French Language Advisory committee has been formed, drawing on expertise from the broad community. Meetings at a minimum of twice annually. • Partnerships have been formed with 24 school districts in Alberta regarding the piloting of national and international tests to measure the proficiency of French Language skill acquired by students in both FIM and FSL programs. • Partnership formed with Alberta Education on matters of assessment, curriculum and promotion of French language education. • The Alberta French language Education Consortium was formed as a result of the project • A partnership is being developed with the local francophone board on how the district's can work closely together to help EPSB in developing French language achievement, with other benefits accruing to the francophone board.

Summary

The French language Renewal Project has significantly contributed to reversing the decline in enrollment experienced continuously prior to the establishment of the project. By systematically addressing each area of concern identified in the original study, supports have been put in place to sustain French programming in the district well into the future. Every effort has been made to ensure the conditions needed for success are in place in our schools (Appendix II Characteristic of Successful French Language Programs). This includes identification and commitment of ongoing support, equal to the amount received annually by the district in federal funding for the support of French language education.

The project, aside from providing the district with improved French language programming, has resulted in the district once again being viewed as the national leader in French language education. Presentations on the district's renewal model have been given in Ottawa and Toronto at the request of the federal Commissioner of Official Languages, who has three times referenced the project in her annual report to Parliament. The Committee of the Canadian Senate responsible for bilingualism also requested a presentation on the French Language Renewal Project, which is now referred to as the model for French language growth across Canada.

The project is on target and all indications point to a realization of all objectives by September 2007, helping to facilitate superb results from all students.

SW:dh

APPENDIX I: Un Nouveau Jour

APPENDIX II: Characteristics of Successful French Language Programs

June 2002

Report on the French
Language Programs
Review

un nouveau jour!



Renewal of **French Language Programs** in **Edmonton Public Schools**



EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

introduction

Edmonton Public Schools is committed to preparing our students for an increasingly globalized society. The ability to speak two or more languages will give a competitive edge to anyone who plans to work, study or live in this global community.

We want our students to have that edge.

In addition to the many advantages offered by learning a second language, French language programs offer some unique benefits:

- After English, French is spoken on more continents and in more countries than any other language.
- French is a relatively easy second language for English speakers to learn. The two languages have a close historical relationship and share similar alphabets and sentence structures.
- Our students have access to French media (radio, television and print) and francophone communities that offer authentic and meaningful opportunities for French language learning.

Despite these obvious benefits, student enrolments in French immersion and the FSL programs have declined over the last decade. Student enrolments in French immersion have decreased from 3,111 students in 1992-93 to 2,022 students in 2001-2002, a decline of 1,089 students or 35%. In FSL, the enrolments have declined from 21,829 in 1992-93 to 13,774 students in 2001-2002, a decrease of 8,055 students or 37%. Today, less than 20% of district students participate in a French language program, compared to almost 31% in 1992-93, and only 1% of district students complete 30-level courses in French language programs.

About the **French Language Programs Review**

In the 2001-2002 school year, Edmonton Public Schools undertook a comprehensive review of its French as a Second Language (FSL) and French immersion programs. The purpose of this review was twofold: to determine how the district could strengthen program success and to identify strategies for increasing student enrolments.

The review team visited 35 schools that offer FSL and all 12 schools that offer French immersion. They observed selected classes and interviewed principals, teachers, students and parents. In addition, 75 principals, 164 teachers, 767 students and 350 parents completed questionnaires.

Several dimensions of the French Language programs were reviewed, including: student achievement, student and parent satisfaction, staffing, instructional time, instructional practices, learning resources, program articulation, curriculum and promotional activities.

French as a **Second Language (FSL)**

- Several district schools have effective FSL programs. Strong FSL programs in district schools are characterized by positive principal support, teacher proficiency in French, effective teaching practices, low rate of FSL staff turnover and positive support from parents.
- The FSL program is not standardized or universally available. FSL is currently offered in 103 of the district's 209 schools (approximately 50%). Only 44 out of 132 elementary schools (33%) offer some form of FSL programming. Among the schools that offer FSL, some start a program as early as Kindergarten or Grade 1, other schools begin in Grade 4 and still others begin in Grade 7. The elementary schools with FSL programs generally offer the program to all students, while most junior high schools with FSL programs offer the program on an optional basis. FSL is also optional at the senior high school level.

What we learned

- Program articulation between elementary, junior and senior high school is limited. Articulation includes standard instructional times, common learner expectations, common assessment practices and appropriate learning resources. This lack of standardization creates repetition and frustration for some students and missed opportunities for others.
- Instructional time for FSL needs to be increased. FSL instruction requires a minimum of 150 minutes per week or 95 hours per year to achieve satisfactory development of French language skills. Most of the elementary and junior high schools reviewed offer FSL for less than 150 minutes per week.
- FSL should be an integral part of the regular school curriculum in the district. The current optional nature of FSL results in inconsistent programming and variable student results across the district. Most of the principals, teachers, students and parents who participated in the review indicated that it is important that all students be required to learn French for at least part of their schooling.
- Learning resources need to be updated at many schools and at every level. Many schools that offer FSL need audiovisual resources, French music, simple readers, French computer software, language learning laboratories, testing materials, evaluation tools, posters, magazines, novels and a comprehensive learning resource series.
- The benefits of FSL need to be clearly communicated. Students, parents, teachers and principals need more information about the benefits of learning FSL to help them make decisions about enrolling in or promoting FSL programs.
- Student enrolments need to be increased. French immersion is currently offered in 12 schools, including six elementary, two elementary-junior high, three junior high and one senior high school. Since 1992-93, enrolments in French immersion have dropped 35%. During that same period, four elementary and two senior high schools have stopped offering the program, limiting access for students in some parts of the district. At the senior high school level, only 63 students are registered in the French immersion program.
- No common time has been established for the introduction of English language arts. The introduction of reading in English in the district's French immersion schools ranges from Grade 1 to Grade 3. This is often in response to fears that students will not learn to read English soon enough or will not perform well on the Highest Level of Achievement Test (HLAT). Studies have shown that immersion students who learn to read well first in French experience no long-term negative effects in their English reading skills and, by the end of Grade 6, perform as well and often better than their English program peers in all skill areas.
- The need for learning resources is urgent. When new curricular guidelines are introduced, many Kindergarten to Grade 9 teachers spend much time searching for and adapting learning resources, or translating materials from English. There is a strong current need for elementary mathematics and French language arts resources. As well, library, audiovisual and computer resources need updating.
- The benefits of the French immersion program need to be clearly and regularly communicated. Enrolments in French immersion can be increased, but people need to understand the benefits of French immersion and the strengths of the Edmonton Public Schools' program. There is also a need to continually inform students and parents of the achievements of the French immersion program and to encourage student continuation in the program to the end of Grade 12 and beyond.

French Immersion

- The district has a strong French immersion program. The French immersion program in district schools is characterized by dedicated and hard-working teachers, strong principal support, teacher proficiency in French, exemplary teaching practices, student achievement and motivation, positive support from parents and valuing of the program by the entire school staff.

Key recommendations

- 1. Policies.** Adopt supportive French language policies, including district endorsement of French language learning and the benefits of learning French.
- 2. Personnel.** Hire, appoint or contract the appropriate personnel to deliver high quality French language programs, including:
 - A full-time French immersion consultant.
 - A full-time FSL consultant.
 - Reading and learning specialists with knowledge of the French immersion program.
 - French-speaking support staff for French immersion schools.
 - Bilingual librarians (whenever feasible) for French immersion schools.
 - Bilingual administrator in each French immersion school.
 - Linguistically competent teachers assigned to the French immersion program.
- 3. Assessment measures.** Align French language program goals with national and international guidelines/assessment measures, such as those developed by the Public Service Commission of Canada, the Council of Europe and the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages.
- 4. Learning and program resources.** Update and increase access to French language learning resources, including library collections, audiovisual resources and novels. Develop a French version of the HLAT and services/resources for students with learning difficulties and gifted students that are equivalent to those in the regular program.
- 5. Professional development.** Provide enhanced professional development programs for both FSL and French immersion teachers in areas such as language proficiency, second language pedagogy, special needs students and current research.
- 6. Francophone communities.** Provide opportunities for FSL and French immersion students to participate in francophone communities in Edmonton, Alberta, Quebec and other countries.
- 7. Community support.** Increase community support for and promote the benefits of French language learning among students, parents, teachers, administrators and the broader community.
- 8. Student recognition.** Recognize students who graduate from French immersion and FSL programs with certificates and awards from national and/or international agencies.
- 9. Teacher recognition.** Recognize French immersion and FSL teachers, administrators and support personnel with sabbatical leaves, bursaries, awards and exchange opportunities.
- 10. Access.** Identify possible sites for French immersion in all areas of the city to provide more equitable access to the program.
- 11. Late immersion.** Study the feasibility of establishing a late immersion program (Grades 7-12).
- 12. Program articulation.** Standardize the FSL program at the elementary, junior and senior high school levels and implement 6-year (Grades 7-12), 9-year (Grades 4-12) and 12-year (K/1-12) program sequences.
- 13. Integral part of school program.** Implement FSL, over time, as an integral part of the regular school program. This will allow students to attain high standards of achievement in a second language, comparable to those of students in other provinces and countries where a second language is mandatory.
- 14. Instructional time.** Provide at least 150 minutes per week (95 hours per year) of instructional time for FSL from Grades 1 to 9.

Edmonton Public School's Response

In April 2002, the Edmonton Public School Board approved a three-year French Language Renewal Project to implement the recommendations of the program review. The expected results of this project include:

- Increased enrolments.
- Enhanced student achievement.
- Increased student contact with francophone communities.
- Partnerships with agencies interested in the learning of French.

The Project will be guided by a broad-based Advisory Committee with representatives from EPS and district schools, Alberta Learning, Canadian Parents for French, Department of Canadian Heritage, Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta, Commissioner of Official Languages, Alliance française, Faculté Saint-Jean, University of Alberta and Grant MacEwan College.

For more information about the French Language Renewal Project, visit the EPSB website at: www.epsb.edmonton.ab.ca or contact name? number?xxxxxxxxxxxxx



Characteristics of Successful French Language Programs

Successful French Immersion and FSL Programs demonstrate the following characteristics:

1. Positive District Support

The district endorses the importance of learning French and has a policy stating its commitment to French language learning. The district defines programming conditions (e.g., student eligibility, equitable access, instructional time), provides sufficient funding and hires competent teachers. The district encourages lifelong professional development and promotes the French immersion and FSL programs.

2. Positive Principal Support

The principal hires and assigns competent teachers and schedules sufficient time for the French language programs. The principal plays a leadership role in the administration and promotion of the programs, allocates an appropriate budget and supports teachers.

3. Competent, Enthusiastic Teachers

The teachers possess Intermediate or high level competency in French if teaching FSL, and an Advanced or Superior level if teaching French immersion. The teachers are knowledgeable about second language acquisition and appropriate teaching strategies. The teachers understand how to effectively integrate technology into their instruction. They teach effectively, arranging a variety of interactive learning activities for students. They are competent in the content areas if teaching subjects other than French, and participate in professional development activities.

4. Positive Community Support

Parents understand and support the French immersion and FSL programs. The business community and the community at large support second language learning as part of a world-class education. The school community supports second language learning. The French language and culture are visible in the school and community.

5. Integral Part of Regular Program

FSL is given the same importance as other subjects. FSL is taught in a classroom designated for the language. Class time is respected. The program is stable.

6. Sufficient Instructional Time

FSL students receive instruction for a minimum of 30 to 40 minutes per day or 150 to 200 minutes per week over ten months. Students take FSL for up to nine years, from Grades 4 to 12 and receive at least 945 hours of instruction from Grades 4 to 12.

French immersion programs provide at least 75% of the instructional time in French at the elementary school level, 60% of the instructional time in French at the junior high level and 40% of the instructional time in French at the senior high school level. Following these guidelines, students would receive over 7,000 hours of instruction from Grades 1 to 12.

7. Clear and relevant curricular expectations

The curricular expectations are easy to understand and help students to develop a meaningful level of language proficiency and cultural understanding in French. In French immersion, students learn effectively a variety of required and optional courses through the medium of French.

8. Students engage in interactive learning

Students learn French in situations that are as close as possible to real communication. They develop an understanding of the French language system and subsystems (phonological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic) by using the French language in authentic contexts. They develop communication skills through games, skits, simulations and dramatizations. Students make contact with speakers of French through structured interviews, use of the telephone, writing letters or e-mail messages and meeting French-speaking residents in the community.

9. Quality learning resources

Sufficient and appropriate classroom and library resources are available to support the French language programs. Learning resources are appropriate for the students' interest and language level. Resources include dictionaries, novels and audio-visual material such as videos, cassettes, computer software, CD-ROMS, films, music and television programs, novels, magazines and books for personal interest.

10. Well-articulated programs

Students experience a similar learning program at a given instructional level in schools across the district. Program expectations, instructional time, instructional and assessment practices and learning resources are similar at each grade level.

Smooth and logical transitions occur between elementary, junior high and senior high school levels. Program expectations in junior high build on knowledge and skills acquired at the elementary school level and program expectations at the senior high school build on knowledge and skills acquired at the junior high school level.

Elementary, junior high and senior high second language teachers and school administrators work together to develop programs that build on previous learning in the second language.

The junior and senior high schools develop several program streams to accommodate both students who are beginning the learning of a second language and those who are continuing from a previous level.

In the French immersion program, French language arts and English language arts teachers undertake joint planning to eliminate needless repetition of skills already taught in one language, to maximize the possibilities of language transfer and to reduce interferences between the two languages.

11. Professional Development

Teachers access a variety of second language professional development activities and school administrators encourage and support lifelong professional development. The teachers belong to a language oriented professional organization. The teachers as well as their school subscribe to one or two professional journals dealing specifically with the teaching of French as a second language.

12. Promotion and Marketing

The district and schools promote the benefits of learning French and other second languages. Promotion highlights job opportunities, research results and study and exchange opportunities. The French immersion and FSL programs are promoted through information packages for parents and students, open houses, information evenings, brochures, district Web site, school displays, student clubs, Internet e-mail pals, field trips, student exchanges and posters. The French language is visible in the school through the use of signs, bulletin boards, displays, school concerts, extra-curricular activities and school announcements.

13. Student Access, Support and Recognition

The French language programs are available to all students, including gifted students and students with special needs. Immersion schools are located in all areas of the city to provide equitable student access. Students who have special needs receive appropriate assistance. Students are recognized for their achievement through certificates, awards, bursaries and other incentives.

14. Financial Support

Sufficient funds are available to purchase learning resources, student assessment materials and to fund professional development needs, cultural activities and student and staff recognition.

October 2002