

Summary Report

FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

FOCUS GROUPS YUKON: 2015-16

“More French for More Students: Follow the Learner”

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Summary of Recommendations

	RECOMMENDATION	PROPOSED LEADERS	WAYS FORWARD
Create policy for FSL programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of purpose, parameters • Basis for decision-making • Continue Early FI at Selirk as a dual track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department with consultation of advisory groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve Policy Branch, French Programs. • Communicate choices and pathways to schools, parents, the community
Core French	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional K – 3, grades 4 to 8 literacy-based, neurolinguistic approach • Revitalize reading resources and IT tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task force of educators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share practices, enriching resources, reading materials, IT-enriched, action-oriented tasks
Intensive and Post-Intensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect time and intensity • Personalize modules • Enable engaging resources and IT • Investigate laddering from Intensive to Late Immersion in the same schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task force of educators • Principals, who ensure appropriate blocks of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revitalize and personalize existing modules • Create Yukon-based, personalized, action-project-driven, IT-enriched modules.
Early Immersion at Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an integrated, 90% French classroom environment • Incorporate learner strategies to build on students' plurilinguistic background knowledge • Implement early intervention strategies for students at risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquiry-based professional learning network across schools involved facilitated by the Department • Timeline for implementation as appropriate for each site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support existing and future Immersion teachers' linguistic, pedagogic and cultural competencies (CASLT, 2010)
Secondary Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create incentives to develop content-based courses for FSL students • Create incentives for secondary interdisciplinary programs for students from all schools • Create a grade 10-12 semester combining work experience, tourism, travel • Implement a digital Language Passport (CEFR) with assessment <i>for</i> learning • Develop "distributed learning" as a tool for above and rural needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the document "from Communicative to Action Oriented" • Establish a secondary task force with reps from each School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate Piccardo (2014) • Use CASLT Assessment Toolkit (assessment <i>for</i> learning) • Ensure timetables allow flexibility including "outside the timetable blocks" between the 3 sites • Offer a "late intensive option" at Porter Creek

Acknowledgements

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We would also like to thank Wendy Carr, Cathy Elliott, Sharon Jeroski , Patti Holm, Sharon Lapkin, Alicia Logie, and Nicole Thibault for their personal consultations about the background and the preparation of the report.

Thank you to the Department of Education! Un grand merci! The focus group experience of October 2015 was a very personal and social process for the participants, which highlighted the extraordinary dedication of the territory to enabling the very best language education for students.

Focus Group Sessions

Purpose

In October 2015, the Yukon Department of Education commissioned focus group sessions involving administrators, teachers, parents and students in all schools in the Whitehorse area with Core French, Intensive French and Immersion programs, to provide an opportunity for reflection and direction setting within the context of the current and future FSL Programs 5-year Action Plan (2012-2017).

In the original Action Plan, five areas of action were identified:

- Action 1: Leadership and Vision
- Action 2: Programs and Programs Support
- Action 3: Review Process
- Action 4: Strategic Communication Plan
- Action 5: Intensive and Post-Intensive French

More specifically, in the context of developments within the community, increased demand for certain programs and new curriculum from the B. C. Ministry of Education focusing on personalized learning and interdisciplinary competencies, these focus groups were intended to seek input from educators, students and the community in order to:

1. Recommend a long-term process for establishing expectations, guidelines, policies and locations for programs in light of the existing FSL Action Plan, new curriculum, demographic trends affecting school populations, and continued parental interest in the expansion of spaces for certain programs.
2. Clarify the goals and expectations of the program models in place (Core, Intensive and Post-intensive, Immersion) and suggest ways of enhancing promising practices in light of the new curriculum competencies and the emphasis on personalized learning.
3. With respect to Core French at the elementary level, examine current practices with a view to establishing common expectations and consolidating time and intensity according to research-supported, literacy-based models.
4. Revisit current literacy development practices of the Early Immersion program with respect to French Language Arts and English Language Arts and with a view to maximizing student learning in both languages.
5. Review the success of the various choices and programs available to students at the secondary level in terms of student retention and engagement, and identify future possibilities for maximizing student opportunities and achievement for students in Core French, Post Intensive and Immersion.

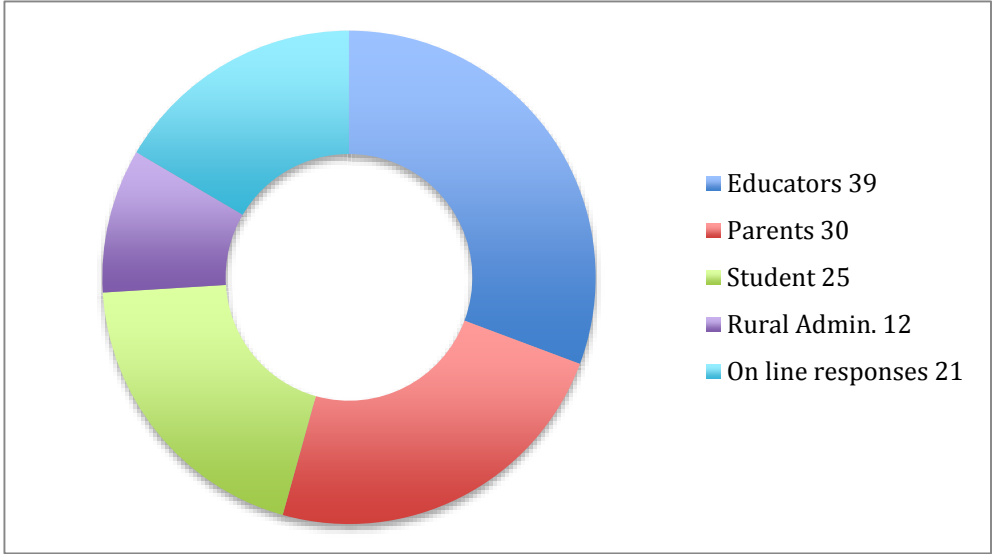
Schedule of Focus Group Sessions

During the week of October 26, 2015, the principal researchers met with staff and students of all the urban schools with Core French, Intensive French and Immersion programs and with Department of Education staff from Learning Support Services.

Consultations continued in February 2016 with a focus on FSL programming in rural schools. Researchers met with rural school principals, superintendents and Yukon First Nation language representatives from the Department of Education and Yukon Native Language Centre.

Focus Group Topic	Participants
FSL Secondary Programs (Oct 26, 2016)	Secondary Educators and students, FSL Consultants, CPF
FSL Programs Parent Perspective (Oct 26, 2016)	Parents
French Immersion K-12 (Oct 27, 2016)	Immersion Educators and students, FSL Consultants, CPF, School Council
Core and Intensive Programs (Oct 28, 2016)	Core and Intensive Educators and students
FSL and language Programs in Rural Schools	Rural principals, Superintendents and Yukon First Nation language representatives
Additional visits were made to Selkirk Elementary, F.H. Collins Secondary and Porter Creek Secondary to meet with teachers and tour facilities.	

Participants

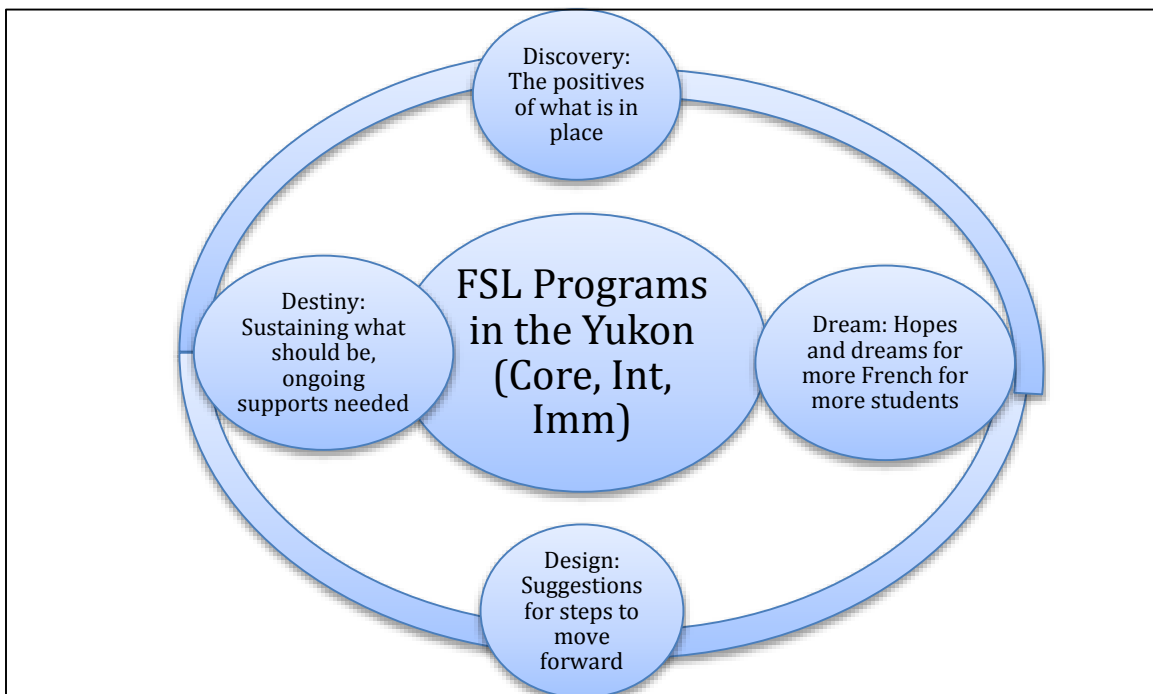


Methodology: Appreciative Inquiry Process

The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process was followed for the focus group meetings because it emphasizes beginning discussion with an appreciation of the positive aspects of what has already been achieved. At each meeting, after an introduction to the purposes of the meeting and current considerations about the new curriculum, participants were invited to write comments on post-it notes, placing them on chart paper under the appropriate headings in the AI process.

Common themes were reported on in groups. Individuals were then invited to share personal perspectives and concerns with the theme, *“My dream for these programs is . . . and to get there we should . . .”*

A running transcription of the proceedings was kept.



Qualitative Data

The facilitators examined the qualitative data from three sources:

- Transcripts of each meeting by meeting venue (see Appendix B)
- Themes that emerged from the classification of all the individual comments (see Appendix A)
- Individual comments from online responses (a section of Appendix A)

The themes that emerged from analysis of the data are summarized below with supporting quotes from the participants in the meetings. These themes flow across the individual sub-goals of the research. We have organized them into three sections:

- Positives of what is in place
- Hopes and dreams of what could be
- Ways and means forward

Positives of what is in place

1. The value of the cultural activities and experiences offered by the Department.

Many participants viewed the cultural aspects and events for students as definite highlights. Rural school administrators remarked that their schools benefitted from the cultural approach of itinerant visits of the French Monitor, as well as the French Programs and First Nations working together.

- *Proud of the integration of French culture into the learning environment.*
- *Enjoy the class trips to places in the community where French is spoken.*
- *Integration of French culture.*
- *Support and involvement of the Francophone community.*
- *There is a shift in culture – FN and French educators sharing practice.*
- *Valuing of multiple languages.*

2. The choice of several programs and entry points for learning French.

Parents and educators were very positive about the range of choices of programs and locations that have been implemented.

- *Early Immersion, Late Immersion, Intensive at several schools.*
- *“PASE” and other innovations at secondary.*
- *I am impressed with the breadth and quality of services offered.*
- *Opportunities for different entry points.*

3. The positive atmosphere and enjoyment of learning French in place in many settings.

Many students were positive about their enjoyment of learning the language

and their pride in being able to communicate.

- *Supportive learning environment for students and parents.*
- *Learners are proud to share their learning with others.*
- *When we started the French Intensive Program, if our parents were coming to pick us up we would tell them what we were learning in French and I had fun teaching French to my Dad.*

4. Access to and inclusiveness of the programs.

Both French Immersion and Intensive programs are sensitive to programming being “for all students” in the sense that students with a wide range of abilities can succeed in the program and will receive the supports they need to remain part of the program.

- *High demand for all French programming – lots of momentum and interest*
- *A variety of programs, not just three areas, but also lots of programs within each one. Lots of types of learning.*
- *Students with learning disabilities are progressing and staying in French Immersion.*

5. Engaged and motivated teachers and consultants working together.

Many comments by students and parents recognized that they were fortunate to have committed and dedicated staff involved in language education. Educators mentioned the value of working together in a supportive and collaborative environment facilitated by the Department.

- *We had a chance to work together, plan for the future, and I felt like it started to move forward. I teach at Wood Street and FH. For years, I was telling students and teachers . . . If I want to see something like this, I had to move ahead . . . I feel like this a good place to get things moving . . . ultimately, when they come to high school . . . I want to see immersion kids to be proud to speak in both languages, then that shows that the program is doing well.*
- *Motivated teachers equals motivated and passionate students.*

6. Opportunities to learn French are perceived as “additive” experiences, which is to say that French Immersion is not perceived to have a negative effect on English Language Arts achievement, and Intensive French programming is designed to attend to the compacting of the other subjects in Grade Five. In fact, FSL programming is seen to enhance the educational experience of students in terms of both bilingualism and social and emotional development.

- *Inclusion of English reading within French immersion at primary (at WES, a good thing).*
- *Confidence of students, particularly when they hit secondary school. A strength in terms of personal confidence.*

- *The children are smarter than ever. They have access to a whole world of possibilities.*
- *Value of the uniqueness of being bilingual.*
- *Would like students to come out of FSL programs with a bilingual identity.*
- *If you learn French fluently it's easier to learn other languages like Spanish and others.*

Hopes and dreams of what could be

Participants were encouraged to think of ideals, wishes, hopes and dreams for students in the programs.

1. More engaging content in French and more time at secondary.

Many participants referred to the need for more flexibility and choice, fewer constraints that force students out of secondary follow-up, and more engaging content through which to learn.

- *A lot of kids don't enjoy the units that they're learning in the classroom. Not speaking French because they aren't enjoying those units, not engaged.*
- *I think that Intensive in the last 3 years is going well, that students are very strong speakers, and much more engaged in class. But then it comes to a halt (at Vanier). I teach 3 days a week, for 1 hour. We haven't had one full week this year for a variety of reasons. So it's a blank slate every Monday. Not enough time. A lot more time was dedicated in earlier years, but there isn't any progress after that. The barrier is the schedule, especially for smaller schools. More time, more Intensive for half a year, would result in more success. I don't find Intensive units particularly engaging for older years.*
- *Increased relevance for youth.*
- *I would ask the Department, can we have Post Post at every high school? We are losing a lot of kids.*

2. More engaging access to real information and personalized content, more opportunity to practise real-life practical vocabulary and communication in French with other speakers of the language in French at all grade levels.

Many students remarked that they wished they could really use their French in real-life situations and have more interesting reading materials and opportunities to create technology-infused projects.

- *Les livres ne sont vraiment pas intéressants. Mais quand on lit en anglais, les livres sont plus intéressants. Oui, un défi, les livres en français ne sont pas très intéressants. Donc on préfère lire en anglais.*
- *Functional literacy not worksheets.*
- *We should choose what we do in class.*

- *More challenging and interesting curriculum, using functional language, makes students feel what they are doing is not worth their time.*
- *I can conjugate verbs but I can't go skiing and ask about the snow conditions in French!*
- *In French class when you are learning from a book, you kind of feel trapped. I'd like to do things like pen pals and to see other people who speak French in the world.*

3. Recognition and credentialing for achievement.

Students, parents and teachers mentioned an effective way of motivating students would be to offer a concrete recognition of language competence, together with “milestones” along the way.

- *Assessment of language skills so students know where they are.*
- *Students can attain a B level (CEFR) by Grade 12.*
- *Needs to be a carrot for kids to reach for, a formal standard to achieve, something that is recognized that means something to employers.*
- *Need a standard that kids can strive for to measure their French.*
- *Je peux, Can do statements”, correlation with CEFR.*
- *Bilingual certificate at the end of high school recognized nationally for job level requirements.*

4. Hopes for more language learning in the rural communities.

In some rural communities, the current hopes for more advancement of Aboriginal languages was seen as a priority. It was also recognized that students were already dealing with the unique home language, attempting to learn their native Aboriginal language and learning standard English. In this context at this time awareness of the French language through the cultural monitor program was viewed as appropriate, but not without challenges.

In other rural communities, Core French was desired but greatly impeded by a lack of staffing with any expertise or capacity to make space for such with such a wide range of student needs.

- *Human Resources for French*
- *Development of curriculum supports*

Ways and means forward

1. Concentrate on quality

- *We are a small territory, we have a tendency to want to have everything for everyone, but we should focus on quality programming instead of quantity necessarily. Parents need to know that it's good programming—what fits for their kid and their family. Might not mean more programming, but all quality programming.*

2. Provide more consistent, Department-initiated information about program parameters and expectations so that all parents receive the same information.
 - *Better communication from Govt. to parents about goals, curriculum and new approaches.*

3. “Personalize the curriculum” for students, especially at secondary. Create more content-based, interdisciplinary projects and courses.
 - *We need more concrete projects, do real life applications of French— translate website for local business, teach French to younger students.*
 - *To change the consumer model so students see French as something they want to do.*

4. Create more opportunities for students to take advantage of the Francophone presence in the community, e.g., work experience and job shadowing for credit.
 - *Speak French outside the school in real ways.*
 - *My daughter had an awesome experience having a pen pal at EET.*
 - *Adding the possibility of volunteer work in the Francophone community.*

5. Create more opportunities for students to take part in interest-based communities of French speakers using enabling technologies. This could include personalized independent study for credit.
 - *More exchanges and opportunities to interact with students our age who speak French.*
 - *Online and face-to-face mentors around certain interests.*
 - *Some adaptations of distributed learning models incorporating this design is a possible solution to student access from rural communities.*

6. Ensure the structures and resources to maintain and enhance the professional growth of all educators in the programs and to promote collaborative practice.
 - *Emphasis on pluriliteracy and the neurolinguistic approach.*
 - *All schools who will offer French Immersion need to work together on common programming resources and interventions.*
 - *Yes, you train for that first wave that you have to hire. Should be at the dept/ministry level, and putting money into it, we need to say “we believe in this and we support it,” then needs to be supported all along the way. Individual schools do well to find teachers that work well for their school but need more support from the ministry.*
 - *The problem is staff turnover that is inexperienced.*
 - *Collaboration time with other teachers to show differentiated projects through the use of technology.*

7. Find ways for secondary schools to work more closely together to share programs and students, to make more opportunities happen.
 - *My dream for FSL is the same for all disciplines: find a way to get past the “shifting gears” between each course, class to class, leaving one behind, feeling like they’re doing something completely different. Need to find more ways, especially at Secondary level. The 8-period way helps give lots of different options to students, but we need to find a way to do it that still gives structure, but could we build more interdisciplinary opportunities.*
 - *Only one content course currently offered in French. It would be great to offer more content courses in French and allow them to use their French. But need to respond to needs/desires of students, and if there's no demand, we can't invest those resources.*
 - *Would like to see the breaking down of barriers between the French and English high schools.*
 - *Align timetables to allow sharing between schools.*
 - *Coordinate with Wood Street programs.*
 - *Expand experiential programs for post intensive students.*
 - *Embedded into the school-based focus, experiential, technology, fine and culinary arts.*

8. Continue to ensure accessibility and inclusion.

There were several examples of suggestions to promote increased opportunities including:

- Continuing with the Early Immersion program expansion at Selkirk Elementary.
- Ensuring faith-based choice and language program choices are compatible.
- Providing Intensive to Late Immersion transitions at the same school.
- Continuing with early interventions with students who are deemed to be at risk of reading difficulties in Early Immersion.
- Increasing opportunities for more French at Porter Creek Secondary.
- Working individually with rural community schools to provide extra resources (itinerant staffing, development of an online distributed learning model of course) to help those learners where appropriate to access Core French, Intensive French or some adaptations of time and intensity.
 - *We really hope French immersion will continue at Selkirk to serve the Riverdale area. We are busy creating a community , hiring bilingual staff so that many families in Riverdale can have both French immersion and a neighbourhood school.*
 - *Catholic French Immersion?*
 - *Could possibly increase late Immersion if offered in other locations.*
 - *Post Intensive at Porter Creek?*

- *Creative structures to support learners.*
- *Seamless between programs, accessible to all.*
- *Expand the circle of stakeholders to include First Nations and low income families.*
- *Community co-op programs, early identification of partners, action on initiatives.*

9. Work together across all languages and in partnership with individual communities

The rural administrators focus group in particular mentioned the desire to work together, in partnership with individual communities and across all languages- Aboriginal Languages, English, French, to build a common framework of curriculum to support student learning.

- *Curriculum – creating a framework for FN languages*
- *Transferring oral skills to written skills*
- *Rural communities – each one is so different – a one size fits all doesn't work*
- *Has to be a ground up approach, to meet their specific needs*

Recommendations

The recommendations below are organized to address the individual goals of the focus group process. Each recommendation takes into account the feedback of the community. Pertinent literature and research is cited to support each recommendation.

First, the authors wish to contextualize the recommendations within the overarching concepts of intercultural competence and the role of the department in the “new curriculum.”

The big picture: a word about “Intercultural Competence: A Way to Live In Common With Others” (Bennett, 2011).

The big-picture goals of second language education recognize that intercultural competence is a lifelong skill that accompanies second language learning experiences. This goal is for all learners and is particularly pertinent in light of the core competencies that are key organizers in the recent new curriculum: Communication, Thinking and Personal and Social Development. Clearly, second language education enhances these core competencies. While engaged in debates over program parameters, the community in the Yukon should not lose sight of its dedication to this greater goal for the greater good, which encompasses all language program goals including Aboriginal languages and French programs.

The value of intercultural learning is briefly described here:

Intercultural competence is a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts. Intercultural competence provides an overarching perspective for weaving together primary concepts for interacting across both global and domestic differences. Philosopher Maxine Green (1988) has called on us to recognize our place in “a world lived in common with others.” We are thus able to view the intersections among these contexts, recognizing that the Ukrainian man and the Jamaican woman have much to contribute to the domestic dialogue on culture, race, and gender. Further, the culturally responsive organization allows individuals to do so in a way that honors different values, beliefs, and behaviours, whether the cultural differences are global or domestic.

We can—and must—carefully construct a complex, multilayered, widely contexted framework that is grounded on both/and, not either/or.

What we share both domestically and globally includes the necessity of:

- Knowing our own cultural identities
- Communicating effectively with others
- Developing knowledge, skills and attitudes that foster understanding
- Managing inevitable contact with others

- Solving problems together
- Engaging our own learning
- Working well with culturally different others (Bennett, 2011)

It is recommended that the concept of intercultural competence be examined by educators moving forward with inquiries flowing from this report as the bridge to the new curriculum competencies.

The recommendations are organized under six themes:

1. The need for policy
2. The need for clarification of program specific guidelines and outcomes for Core French
3. The need for clarification of program specific guidelines and outcomes for Pre-Intensive, Intensive and Post-Intensive French
4. The need for clarification of program specific guidelines and outcomes for French Immersion
5. The need for revitalization of all programs and the creation of cross program opportunities at the secondary level in all secondary settings
6. The ways forward: What the Department of Education will do to enable the long-term interventions necessary

Recommendation 1

The need for policy: clarity of program parameters and a decision-making process for future locations and programs

The Department of Education currently supports three different models of FSL education:

- Early and Late French Immersion based on a long-standing approach whose research over decades has demonstrated that students speaking English in the home can acquire a second language, French, in a natural manner, by experiencing an immersive and rich oral language environment and by learning the language through the content of schooling (Government of Canada, Language Portal: Myths and Realities of French Immersion)
- The Intensive model of FSL based on the neurolinguistic approach and certain parameters of time and intensity (Netten and Germain)
- Core French based on a communicative experiential approach (BC Ministry of Education, 2015)

As interest grows in additional access to Immersion and Intensive models, there is a clear need for policy regarding the parameters of each program, including a process for deciding new locations. It is therefore recommended:

- 1.1 That the Department of Education develop a French as a Second Language policy describing the parameters and outcomes for each program offered.

- 1.2 That the Department of Education develop a process for the placement of new programs based on input from the community and adjudicated by the Department to consider demographics, future space, equity of access and other planning considerations.
- 1.3 That based on feedback from the focus groups, the Department of Education approve that early French immersion be continued at Selkirk Elementary in a dual-track setting.
- 1.4 That possible additional locations be identified for the expansion of the Late Immersion program (based on sufficient interest and numbers), so that students in Intensive French have an option to enter Late Immersion at the same school or regionally to build upon their Intensive start.

Recommendation 2

Core French: The need for outcomes: clarification of the expected outcomes and the key elements to ensure the success of the program

For Core French at the elementary level in non-Immersion and non-Intensive settings (including rural), it is recommended:

- 2.1 That primary Core French grades K – 3 be offered at the discretion of the school, and be based on active, arts-based, integrated learning principles with a strong cultural component.
- 2.2 That the Department of Education support literacy-based programming in Core French in Grades 4 to 8 with professional development guided by the neurolinguistic approach.
- 2.3 That in Grades 9 to 12, Core French be revitalized based on a thematic, interdisciplinary, project-based approach with appropriate, rich reading materials and digital access, and that Core French students be afforded opportunities to take content-based courses to further intensify their French experiences.

Recommendation 3

Intensive French: Strengthen the parameters and outcomes of the Intensive and Post-Intensive French programs to realize the potential of these programs

The Intensive French program has been successfully implemented at six elementary schools. Post-Intensive follow-up courses at the secondary level are delivered, but students, teachers and parents expressed concerns that students were not continuing to make significant linguistic progress and that course work was not engaging. It is therefore recommended:

- 3.1 That clear descriptors of the outcomes of the Intensive program be based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) global scale (Council of Ministers of Education of Canada, 2010) and that these be more clearly communicated to parents and embraced by Post-Intensive teachers.
- 3.2 That schools ensure the time and intensity required to deliver the program as intended—especially in the Post-Intensive program at grades 6 and 7 and secondary levels.
- 3.3 That teachers involved in the program work together, supported by the Department, to revitalize the content of the Post-Intensive units, “personalize” content and enhance learning with more exciting reading materials and technology-fuelled projects.
- 3.4 That Post-Intensive students engage in assessment *for* learning through the use of a digital Language Passport based on the CEFR and receive appropriate recognition of the linguistic levels attained through the DELF or other locally developed credentialing processes. (Council of Ministers of Canada, 2010)
- 3.5 That students in Intensive French are afforded pathways for increased access (e.g., opportunities to transfer from Intensive to Late Immersion), that Intensive students have equal and increased access to integrated programs in French (e.g., PASE and MAD), and future content-based courses in French such as work experience, mentoring and peer tutoring, service learning for credit, and integrated semesters such as International Careers.

Recommendation 4

French Immersion at primary: The need for understanding about bilingual and plurilingual learners

The document about French Immersion called *Two Languages... A Shared Approach* (Ontario Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2011), states:

The goal of French Immersion is to develop students’ proficiency in French while building mastery of English—that is, not to replace a first language with an additional one but to develop proficient communication skills in both. Researchers suggest that French Immersion programs enjoy success in meeting this goal because the cognitive and linguistic component skills required for learning to read, write, speak, view and represent in a student’s first language support literacy development in a second. The transfer of skills works both ways. Students’ developing abilities in French also support their continuing growth in English.

Part of the mandate of the focus groups was to revisit the relationship between the teaching of English language arts and French language arts in the primary years of Early Immersion. This appears to be an ongoing debate among teachers and parents unique to École Whitehorse Elementary School, which historically has been the only French Immersion school in the territory. Now that French Immersion programming is more popular and more space is needed in other schools, the parameters of the program will need to be defined for the future. The larger context of French Immersion programs in Canada is that a variety of models are in place: for example, largely 100% French K – 2 in British Columbia, the introduction of English language reading in Grade 1 in Manitoba, and several 50/50 program variations in Ontario.

Currently at École Whitehorse Elementary School (ÉWES), all primary students spend 20% or more of their time in formal English Language Arts instruction in Grade 1 and onwards. The rationale seems to be that students who may be at risk of having difficulty in reading will do better if they are taught to read in English first, that therefore more students will experience success, and that the program will be more equitable. As seen in the focus group and online responses, several staff members at ÉWES and parents of current students wish to maintain the current practice. Some teachers and parents, however, are concerned about the intensity and time for instruction in the target language of French being compromised by this practice.

The role of the Department of Education is to develop a position on the broader parameters for the Early Immersion program for the future, at ÉWES and at other schools. The questions and considerations which require reflection in this regard are:

1. The promise of early French Immersion is that students will receive a strong oral language base and experience learning the language “naturally” within the context of an integrated and personalized primary program, where individual students learn in different ways and at different rates. The promise has always been that early primary is a good place for this immersive experience, because individual development is supported. It’s primary! How does spending a considerable amount of time in English every day affect and compromise this immersive integrated environment?
2. The desire to develop immersion programming that is inclusive of a wide range of student abilities is an ethical consideration and one which we all share in public education. Are there promising practices for the early identification and attention to students at risk which would be less of a “one size fits all” approach and more personalized to student needs?
3. How are we informed by emergent research concerning multiliteracies and the ways in which bilingual and plurilingual students transfer metacognitive skills and meaning using all their languages, including recent neurolinguistic approaches? This question is particularly pertinent because increasingly in Canadian classrooms across the board, students are going to school in a

language of instruction while speaking a home language which is neither English or French. Bilingualism and plurilingualism are huge assets in a global world. Pedagogy is responding to this Canadian reality.

We, the facilitators and researchers in this inquiry, recommend that the Department of Education support the ways forward to respect the initial intentions of Early French Immersion (an immersive environment and dedication to oral language development, with French as the language of instruction at early primary), and at the same time, support ways of maintaining an inclusive learning environment in which a wide range of students will encounter success in both languages.

In the process of this inquiry, recent research has been shared and analyzed by the staff at ÉWES as well as the authors. Ironically, some of the key pieces can be used to defend the current practices at ÉWES as well as to suggest the “third ways” being recommended in this report. The authors wish to highlight a few key points in some pertinent articles, recognizing that a study group that examines these articles in a less highly charged environment would be very useful in the future.

Specifically, it is recommended:

- 4.1 That in all FSL programs, the Department take a role in reinforcing key notions around literacy and pluriliteracy, educating parents and the community as to how languages being acquired concurrently benefit from teaching strategies that optimize metacognitive transfer and language learning strategies.

In the study entitled *Learning to Read in Two Languages: Impediment or Facilitator?* (Joy, 2011), the author concludes that learning to read in two languages is an asset in some aspects and an impediment in others, to which educators and parents need be sensitive.

Those studies that have been conducted with second-language learners suggest that the rate of reading development of these children is similar to those learning only one language. For example, Chiappe and Siegel (1999) found that phonological-processing and word-recognition skills predicted reading and spelling skills in ESL and English-speaking children. However, they did not differ significantly from one another across languages in terms of their development. Regardless of whether it was a first or second language, reading development followed a similar trajectory.

The importance of these variables (e.g. phonological awareness, word recognition) as predictors of reading and spelling development cannot be underestimated. However, knowledge of the developmental trajectories of these skills is also important in order to understand the process of reading and spelling development for these learners, to establish appropriate goals

for their achievement and to ensure the design of effective teaching methods to promote success (Lesaux, Rupp, & Siegel, 2007).

- 4.2 That the Early Immersion model K – 2 respect the integrated nature of the early primary classroom. In Early Immersion, by definition, this atmosphere operates in French where the role of the teacher as the primary language model is imperative for the success of the model.
- 4.3 That instead of viewing the learner as needing to be instructed separately in both languages, respect the plurilinguaging abilities of the learner and develop some space in the day for choice of language, e.g., book sharing and buddy reading, literacy explorations, book talks. Encourage students to use both (or more) of their languages to notice similarities and differences between and among languages.

Cummins reasons that "if students are making cross-linguistic connections throughout the course of their learning in a bilingual or immersion program, why not nurture this learning strategy and help students to apply it more efficiently?" (Cummins, 2014). This perspective is further strengthened by Garcia's idea of translanguaging based on extensive research with Spanish-English bilingual students and communities living in New York (García, 2009).

Cummins further points out that researchers who have been in the forefront of French Immersion program evaluations during the past 40 years have advocated more instructional flexibility with respect to bringing the two languages into productive contact (e.g., Swain and Lapkin, 2013).

- 4.4 That early intervention strategies are in place as required and that all the resources of the students—their interests, languages and learning styles—are used to reach students struggling with reading and literacy. Several research articles could be used to unpack this idea.

In the context of Kindergarten and Grade 1, low-achieving readers should be identified as soon as possible. The educator should create explicit sequenced activities in both English and French to reinforce phonological awareness (Wise and Chen, 2009, as reported in CPF French-Second-Language Research Update, Sept. 2014).

To quote Erdos et al. (2010), "The use of L1 indices to identify individual differences in reading achievement in immersion students would facilitate early identification and intervention of immersion students."

We recommend consideration be given to a model similar to Wise and Chen, 2009:

Our study clearly demonstrates that at-risk readers in French Immersion programs are well-positioned to improve their reading skills, having received systematic and explicit phonological awareness instruction. One potential benefit would be a reduction in the attrition rate from immersion programs and an increase in the proportion of bilingual high-school graduates. . . . Another strength lies in the languages we chose to deliver the phonological awareness intervention. Our program was initiated in English, a language in which children already had conversational proficiency when they entered Grade 1, and switched to French after 10 weeks once students had acquired a foundation in the target language. Because of this language combination, the intervention could be initiated immediately upon entry into the immersion context with struggling readers who are just developing French oral proficiency, while simultaneously meeting the demands of school staff and administration to maximize the use of French. Our results demonstrate that early identification and early intervention can be used effectively in French Immersion programs. . . . In sum, our research demonstrates that supplemental instruction of sufficient duration and intensity for those who may be at-risk for later reading difficulties, provided early in their educational careers in small group settings, may be the key to breaking the cycle of failure.

- 4.5 That the department work with Early French Immersion staff in a teacher inquiry group to explore and understand the “evolving view of the literate learner” as presented in the Ontario Ministry document on French Immersion, *Sharing Two Languages*. Emphasis should be placed on developing the bilingual literacy capacities of the learners in Early French Immersion. (Ministry of Education, Ontario, 2011)

The same approaches to effective literacy instruction apply, regardless of students’ first languages or the language of instruction. These include:

- A strong oral language component
- Scaffolding on prior knowledge and experiences
- A focus on higher-order thinking
- Critical literacy practices

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004)

The teacher inquiry group could take the following questions from the document *French Immersion in Ontario, Two Languages, a Shared Approach* (2011) as a starting point. What would be the impact on student learning of:

- Supporting collaborative planning by teachers of both language programs to cluster and target expectations across strands, clarify learning goals and success criteria and plan for integrated literacy

- learning?
- Collaboratively planning for the intentional teaching of metacognitive strategies linked to feedback, learning goals and success criteria in order to help students gain independence as literate learners in both languages?
 - Providing English/French teacher teams with opportunities to build the instructional capacity required to co-teach in a literacy-rich dual-language program, by connecting the content areas to ground language and literacy learning in meaningful, authentic contexts?
 - Selecting a variety of connected texts in both languages with multiple perspectives and cultural awareness to support students in developing universal literacy skills, such as critical analysis?
 - Providing the necessary framework for French Immersion teacher teams to map their instruction in a way that avoids unnecessary duplication of instruction and allows students opportunities to reinforce, consolidate and transfer learned skills across languages?

Recommendation 5

Focus on the upper years: revitalizing secondary FSL education

In the view of the researchers, the most compelling concerns in the entire enquiry process stemmed from what students told us about their dreams for more engaging opportunities for the use of the language at the intermediate and secondary levels. Their dreams clearly reflected a desire for a more action-oriented, authentic use of the language, the need for which is clearly supported in the emergent literature about language education pedagogy (Piccardo, 2014). In addition, parents and students wished to access the opportunities of speaking in French and living in French in the Whitehorse community such as more time spent together with students in the Francophone sector and more involvement in tourism and the arts community, which operate in both languages.

Students at the secondary level in particular are users of the language and social agents. Language use occurs within their personalized lives, within the greater context of their identities as individuals. Finding contexts for secondary students to use French meaningfully, regardless of their level of language, requires an action-oriented pedagogy.

Enrica Piccardo (2014) has written an engaging research and pedagogic guide to this shift in thinking, entitled *From Communicative to Action Oriented: A Research Pathway*, based on the orientation of the pedagogy of the Common European Framework, which could serve as a study guide for secondary educators in the Yukon in all FSL language and Aboriginal language programs. This action-based orientation may act as a catalyst for all second language programs, including Aboriginal Languages, which the participants in our study clearly valued.

Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of competencies both general and in particular communicative language competencies. They draw on the competencies at their disposal in various contexts under various conditions and under various constraints to engage in language activities involving language processes to produce and/or receive texts in relation to themes in specific domains, activating those strategies which seem most appropriate for carrying out the tasks to be accomplished. The monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences (CEFR, p. 9).

It is recommended:

- 5.1 That, within all FSL secondary classrooms (Core, Intensive and Immersion), action research and inquiry groups be established to explore best practices and new ways of organizing courses and providing resources in order to emphasize:
- Interdisciplinary, project-based learning
 - Literacy-based practices (Anderson et al , 2005)
 - Action-based pedagogy (Piccardo, 2014)

In particular, in Core French and Post-Intensive classrooms there seemed to be a lack of information-based reading material to appeal to a wide variety of student interests at accessible reading levels. Students will be engaged by interesting content in print as well as digitally (e.g., webquests, blogs, social media in French). Specific attention should be paid to giving the educators involved the time to find and organize these resources.

- 5.2 That secondary schools work together to create and offer:
- Content-based courses for all students in French, especially for Core and Intensive (e.g., Cooking in French, PE in French).
 - Work-experience semesters, integrated semesters and community-based programs fuelled by technologies—for example, a semester called *Tourisme et Culture* in which Core, Intensive and Immersion students job shadow and do work experience in French in the community, as well as receiving credit for one or two language courses., and/or peer tutoring and older/younger teaching opportunities for credit.
 - An opportunity for an Intensive semester in Grade 9 level (e.g., at Porter Creek) for students who have missed previous entry points.
- 5.3 That, to help secondary students gain a clearer idea of their language progress and their goals, a secondary task force involving core, intensive and immersion work together to:
- Understand the CEFR as a tool to promote action oriented pedagogy and learner autonomy.
 - Implement a meaningful student passport based on the CEFR (digital).

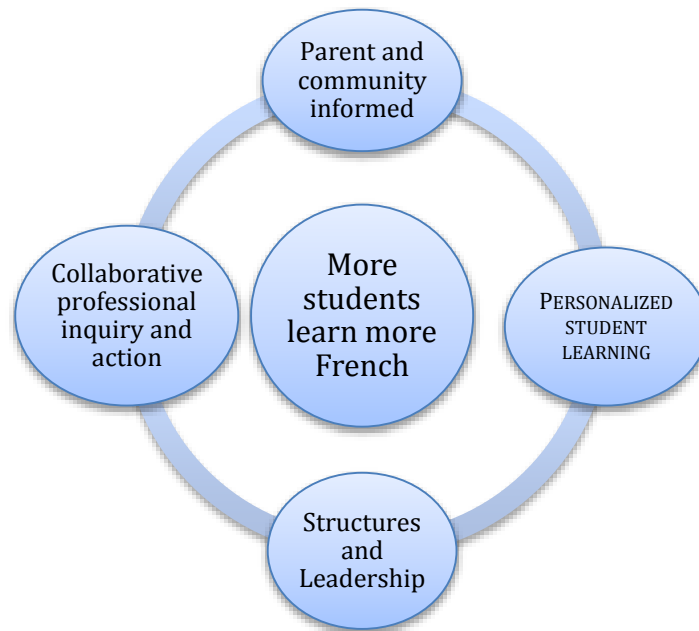
- prepare students for the DELF or other credentialing.
- 5.4 That distributed learning models be researched and developed to contribute to pathways for the above secondary goals and to facilitate challenges in rural schools—for example, personalized independent study for credit through distributed learning (partial face-to-face and online).

Recommendation 6

The ways forward: the role of the Department of Education in supporting quality teaching and learning in second language programs in Yukon

The role of the Department of Education is to ensure that the best conditions possible are in place and that schools have the human and physical resources to develop optimal learning and teaching. The Department also has a role in promoting and supporting best current practices, including literacy-based practices, the neurolinguistic or balanced literacy approach to second language pedagogy, differentiation of instruction, early intervention, assessment *for* learning, communicative and intercultural competency, and appropriate expectations and clearly defined outcomes based on national and internationally understood standards for language proficiency.

In order to implement the above recommendations in a sustainable way, four domains need ongoing education and support through strong partnerships among the Department, educators, parents, students and the community:



It is recommended:

- 6.1 That to engage the inform parents and the community, the Department of Education:
 - Hold information meetings to clarify the choice of FSL programs and their outcomes.
 - Hold parent workshops about literacy and pluriliteracy development.
 - Hold parent workshops about how learning at home and in the community can enhance learning at school.
 - Hold parent workshops about the Common Framework of Reference for assessment and learner autonomy.

- 6.2 That to support and promote pedagogy and curriculum centered around personalized student learning and assessment, the Department:
 - Educate staff about the use the Common Framework of Reference tools provided through the Language Passport and other classroom activities being used across Canada to develop learner autonomy.
 - Ensure a wide variety of reading materials and attractive, age-appropriate informational texts are present in every FSL classroom in the territory.

- 6.3 That to promote collaborative professional inquiry and action, the Department:
 - Provide innovation grants for teacher inquiry groups which meet across schools to conduct and share action research.
 - Lead inquiry groups to activate the various recommendations of this report.
 - Twin schools and staff with schools outside the region with similar inquiries, e.g., plurilanguaging. Visits and virtual mini-conferences could help bring in fresh perspectives.
 - Create an inquiry group to discuss working together across language groups to create a common framework for language learning and promote the sharing of understandings about language and culture.

- 6.4 That, for structures and leadership, the Department:
 - Organize and share historical demographic data about participation rates and graduation numbers in FSL programs by school and territory wide.
 - Conduct and track exit information when students leave a program and as they graduate.
 - Provide incentives for innovative secondary school programming.
 - Ensure secondary timetabling is an enabler for new course and clusters of courses, not a barrier.
 - Ensure teachers who are hired possess the linguistic, pedagogical and cultural competencies and continue to support individual professional growth in these three areas (CASLT, 2010).

- Work individually with rural community schools to provide, where needed, extra resources (itinerant staffing, development of an online distributed learning model or course) to help those learners where appropriate to access Core French , Intensive French or appropriate modifications.

Final Words

All this is to take place at a time when schooling as we know it is at a critical point of defining new relationships between learners as “partners” and teachers as “activators.”

Fullan (2013) calls for a new order, in which:

- The learning solution would have to meet four criteria:
 - Irresistibly engaging for both students and teachers
 - Elegantly efficient and easy to access and use
 - Technologically ubiquitous 24/7
 - Steeped in real-life problem solving (Fullan, 2013a)
- This new engagement is in pursuit of “deep learning goals,” which we have referred to as the 6Cs: critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, creative thinking and imagination, character education and citizenship (Fullan, 2013b).

It is clear that schooling would have to be radically overhauled to meet the four criteria above and to enable learning to flourish.

Respectfully submitted,
Cynthia Lewis and Robert Swansborough

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Excel Spreadsheet of the compilation of comments from meetings and online responses available as an electronic file

Appendix B: Notes taken at each Focus Group meeting available as electronic files