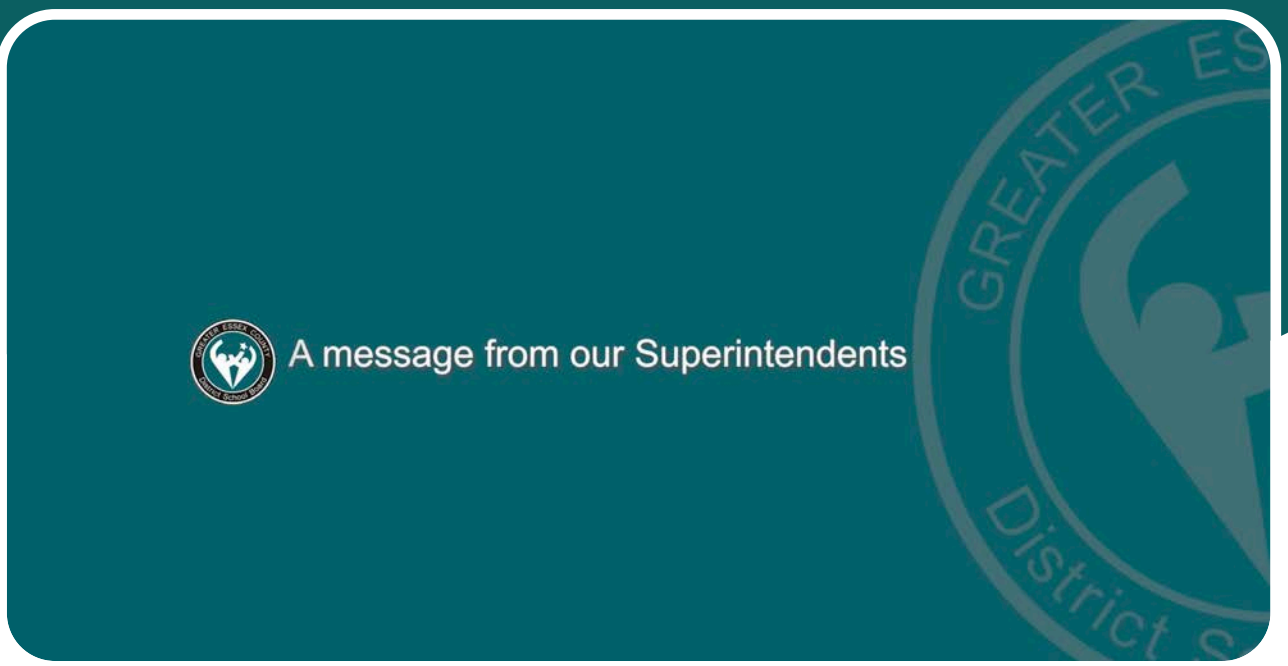
LEARNER'S GUIDE

Building Competent and Engaged Readers

in French Immersion

The *Building Competent and Engaged Readers in French Immersion* resource presents educators with supports to provide an equitable, inclusive, responsive and comprehensive literacy program, based on the Science of Reading, that utilizes assessments and instructional practices to ensure every student has the fundamental right to learn to read.

This resource includes planning for literacy instruction based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the components of effective early reading instruction to support all learners. This resource is based on a collaborative project between Greater Essex County District School Board and the *Association canadienne des professionnels de l'immersion* (ACPI).



Visit this link to view the video.

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The views expressed in the guide are the views of the Greater Essex County District School Board and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ontario Ministry of Education or the Government of Canada.

Association canadienne des professionnels de l'immersion

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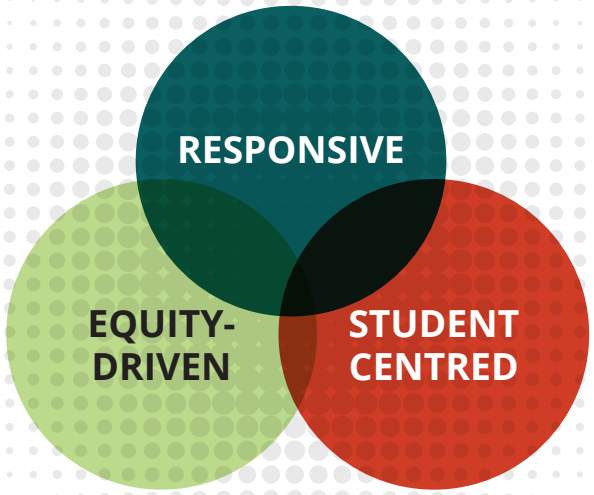
Section 1 • Key Approaches



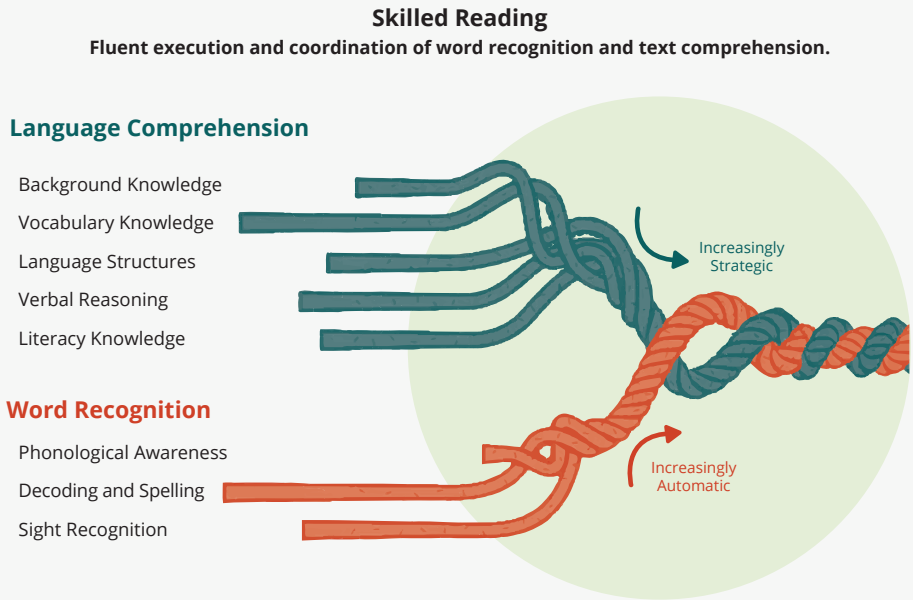
We have the unique opportunity and awesome responsibility to positively impact how all students experience literacy learning. We can focus on planning learning opportunities and environments that are student-centred, equity-driven and founded on responsive practices to ensure all students have access to effective literacy instruction in French Immersion.

A critical component to planning for instruction is knowing your learner. As noted in Growing Success 2010, "The primary purpose of assessment and evaluation is to improve student learning." Using assessment and pedagogical documentation based on observation, conversation and product, educators develop purposeful instruction to address the question '*Why this learning for this learner at this time?*'. Effective assessment helps us determine students' competencies and set meaningful goals to support their learning.

When planning for literacy instruction in French Immersion, there are several key approaches highlighted in this section.

Scarborough's Reading Rope

The Reading Rope is a visual representation of the many strands woven into skilled reading, created by Hollis Scarborough. The Reading Rope is divided into two parts, Language Comprehension and Word Recognition. Effective literacy instruction consists of all components of the Reading Rope so that students learn to both decode and comprehend. (VanHekken, 2021)



Structured literacy

Based on Louise Spear-Swerling's article, *Structured Literacy and Typical Literacy Practices Understanding Differences to Create Instructional Opportunities*, the key features of Structured Literacy approaches include:

a) explicit, systematic, and sequential teaching of literacy at multiple levels— phonemes, letter–sound relationships, syllable patterns, morphemes, vocabulary, sentence structure, paragraph structure, and text structure;

b) cumulative practice and ongoing review;

c) a high level of student-teacher interaction;

d) the use of carefully chosen examples and nonexamples;

e) decodable text; and

f) prompt, corrective feedback.

Explicit means that important skills and concepts are taught clearly and directly by the teacher; students are not expected to infer them simply from exposure or incidental learning (Archer & Hughes, 2011). Systematic and sequential means that skills and concepts are taught in a logical order, with important prerequisite skills taught first (Torgesen, 2006).

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) promotes an empowering vision of the learner…"fostering a "proficiency" perspective guided by "can do" descriptors rather than a "deficiency" perspective focusing on what the learners have not yet acquired." The CEFR presents the language user/learner as a "social agent", oriented towards real-life tasks based on real-world communicative needs. CEFR-informed instruction sees learners as:

- language users - implies extensive use of the target language in the classroom – learning to use the language rather than just learning about the language (as a subject).
- plurilingual, pluricultural beings - means allowing them to use all their linguistic resources when necessary, encouraging them to see similarities and regularities as well as differences between languages and cultures.
- social agents - implies involving them in the learning process.

(CEFR Companion Volume, 2020)

"The linguistic differences that children bring with them to school should be viewed positively in classrooms and used as strengths to leverage performance in literacy."

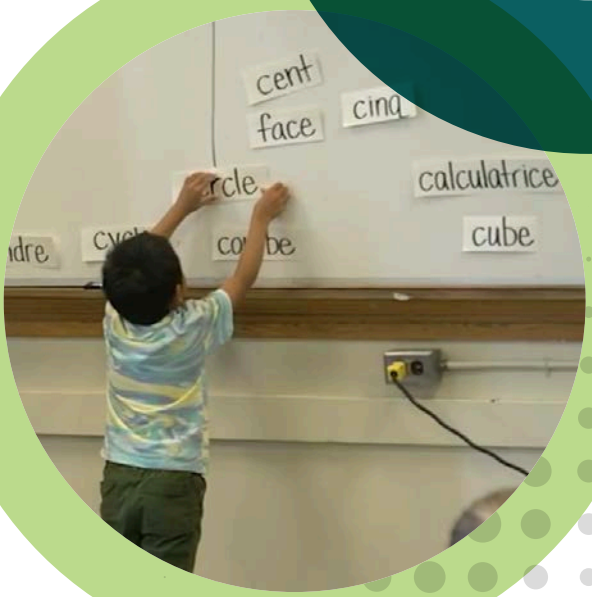
– Gatlin-Nash, B., Johnson, L., & Lee-James, R. (2020).

Action-oriented approach

The action-oriented approach implies purposeful, collaborative tasks in the classroom and views communication as a social activity designed to accomplish specific tasks. The CEFR and the action-oriented approach prioritize the co-construction of meaning through interaction. According to Dr. Enrica *Piccardo in From Communicative to Action-Oriented: A Research Pathway*, "The action-oriented task seeks to break down the walls of the classroom and connect it with the outside world." (Hunter et al., 2019)

Action-oriented task key elements:

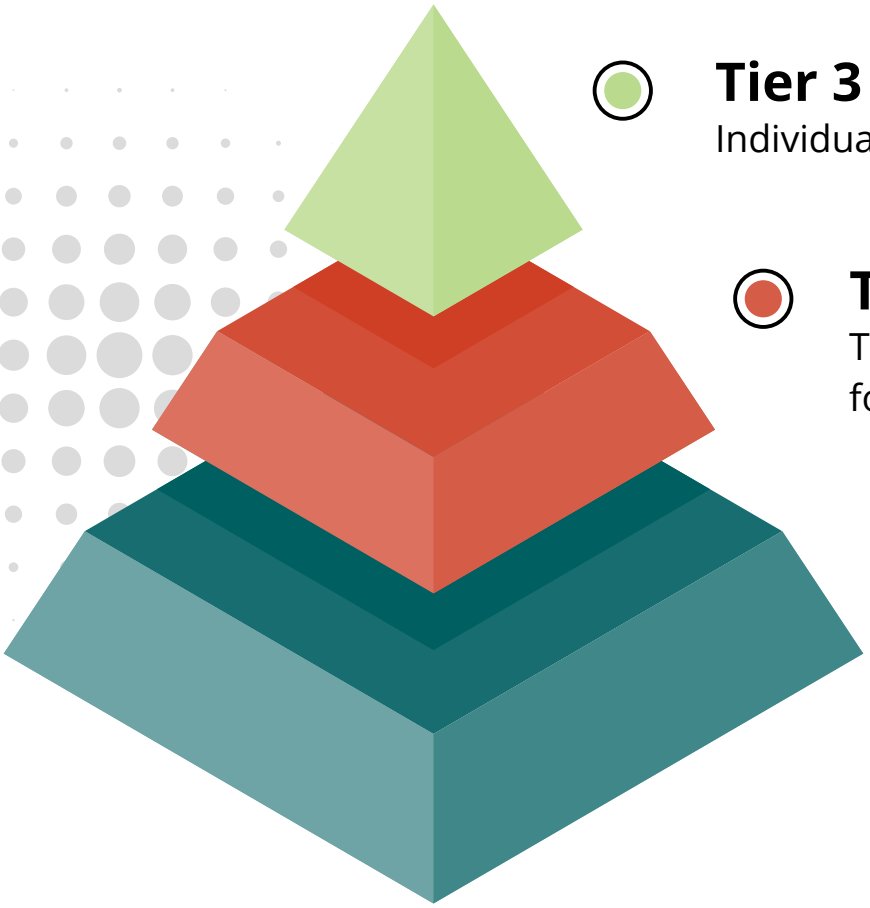
- Learners are "social agents" in an authentic social context
- Action is purposeful with real-world applications
- There is a clearly communicated goal to be accomplished that results in a product or outcome. Learning is supported by authentic, real-life texts and experiences
- There are conditions and constraints that promote critical and creative thinking
- Learners draw upon their existing and newly developed competences
- Learners make choices and think and act strategically (Hunter et al., 2019)



Tiered approach to prevention and intervention

Based on the Ministry's *Learning for All* (2013), "The tiered approach to ongoing prevention and intervention embodies principles of Universal Design for Learning and differentiated instruction, offers a systematic method for the early identification of students who are experiencing particular difficulties, and, through ongoing monitoring of their progress, provides the precise level of support those students need." Through the tiered approach to prevention and intervention, students are assessed based on risk, rather than deficit, meaning that intervention is proactive rather than reactive (Vaughn and Fuchs, 2003). The tiered approach:

- promotes early intervention for those in risk
- provides systematic and explicit instruction based on learning needs
- incorporates opportunities for metacognition and meaningful ongoing feedback
- integrates ongoing differentiated assessment to drive responsive instruction
- requires flexibility and fluidity of student grouping based on specific competencies
- reduces the number of children in later grades that may require intervention beyond classroom instruction



Tier 3
Individualized intensive intervention

Tier 2
Targeted small group interventions for in risk students

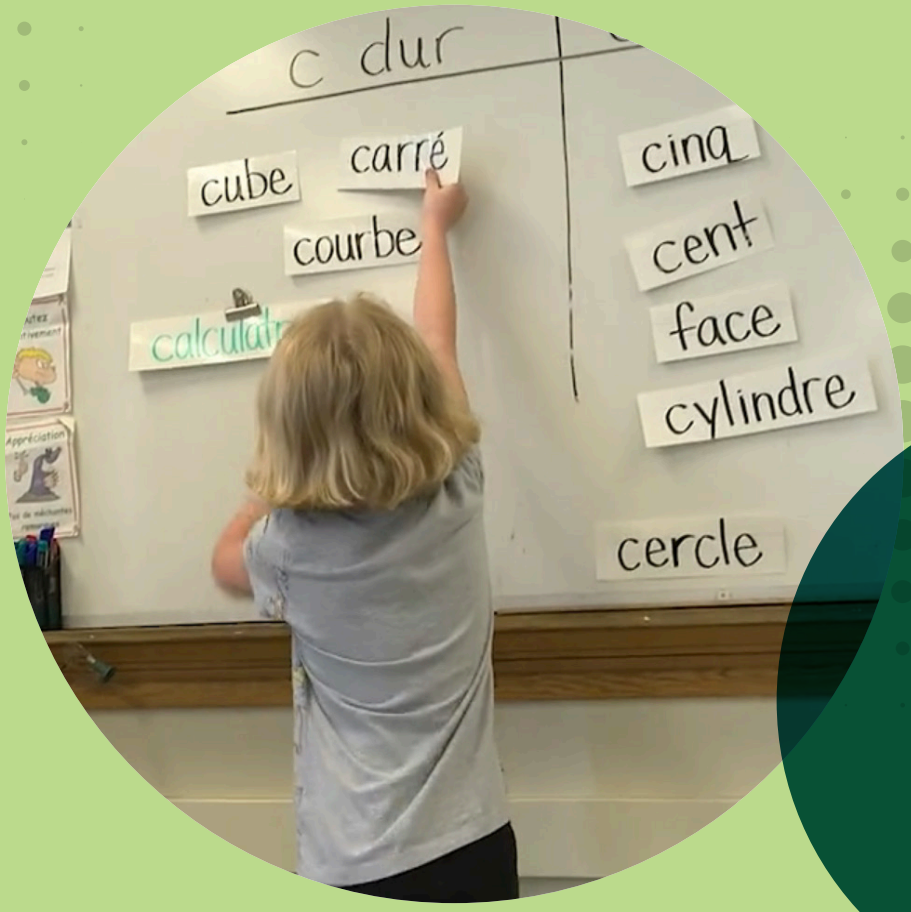
Tier 1
Whole class research based instruction, applying principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and differentiated instruction

Effective Tier 1 literacy instruction consists of all components of Scarborough's Reading Rope so that students develop word recognition and language comprehension skills. Intervention in Tier 2 and 3 instruction is where we can target specific skills with individual students or small groups.

Reflection questions for tiered intervention

The following reflection questions regarding Tiered Intervention are from *Learning for All* (2013):

- On the basis of early assessment data, which of my students require more time and/or support in specific areas of learning?
- What would be the most effective interventions and types of support for these students?
- What tracking tools could I use to monitor these students' progress? Do the assessment data give me an idea of the kinds of adjustments I could make in the type, intensity, and duration of support and interventions?
- When assessment indicates that further support is required, what specific information will the in-school team need to help decide on the most appropriate further interventions?



Section 2 • Components of literacy instruction

The *Key Approaches* section highlighted the big ideas that shape effective French Immersion literacy instruction. This section features some specific components of literacy instruction that are integral to building early reading skills. Each of these components was developed with the key approaches in mind.

All CEFR descriptors in this section are taken from the *Collated Representative Samples of Descriptors of Language Competences Developed for Young Learners, 2018*.

Planning literacy learning

Students grow as readers when literacy learning takes place throughout the day in a variety of contexts and across all program and curricular areas. Educators make intentional decisions to provide a rich learning environment that fosters literacy development that includes systematic and explicit instruction based on student learning needs.

The table on the following page lists effective practices for French Immersion literacy instruction. It is important to consider these reflective questions adapted from *Soutenir les lecteurs en langue seconde* (Bourgoin, 2019) when planning:

- What place does this practice hold in my reading instruction?
- Is selection of resources intentional and purposeful?
- How is this practice supporting the whole group/class?
- How is this practice supporting learners in risk?
- How can I continue to support literacy development through this practice?

Early French Immersion effective structured literacy instruction

This table is a snapshot of components of early literacy instruction.

Assessment

- Information gathered from universal screeners, diagnostic assessments and progress monitoring informs instruction.
- Evidence of student learning based on observation, conversation and product is collected on an ongoing basis. This information is used to support responsive and intentional instruction.
- There are frequent opportunities for metacognition and effective feedback.

When planning to intentionally support learning needs, ensure that:

- instruction is inclusive of diverse strengths and abilities; diverse student identities and family backgrounds and structures; and that it is culturally relevant and responsive; and
- selection of resources also reflects this diversity (i.e.. abilities, cultures, ethno-racial backgrounds, family structures, lived experiences and identities).

Grouping	Focus	Practices*	Possible resources*
Tier 1 whole group research-based instruction Focus is based on assessment and addresses all aspects of literacy development ***Tier 2 small group/ individual instruction*** Focus is intentional and differentiated to target a specific skill in response to student learning need (determined by assessment)	• Listening and speaking to interact to support Language Comprehension (background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning & literacy knowledge) • Phonological and phonemic awareness • Phonics (including both decoding & encoding) • Word study • Writing process • Traits of writing • Intercultural awareness • Oral production • Fluency	• Read-aloud (print, video, audio text) • Shared reading • Dialogic reading • Modelled writing • Shared writing • Word study • Direct instruction/ mini-lesson • Purposeful listening and speaking to interact • Writing conference (small group)	• IDÉLLO (video/audio) • Decodable texts (words, sentences, paragraphs, books) – co-created or published • Mentor Texts • Books read aloud to support vocabulary & comprehension • Phonological/phonemic awareness – sequentially planned activities • Resources to support alphabet knowledge/ phonics • Sound/articulation wall • Common European Framework of Reference • Provocations for oral and written communication • Elkonin boxes • Magnetic letters • Magnetic chips and wands • Highlight strips • Magnetic white boards • Multisensory materials (e.g., sand, play dough, manipulatives)
Action-oriented task/ purposeful practice/ collaborative learning (centres) While educators are working with small groups, other students may engage in intentionally planned learning opportunities individually or in small groups.	After modeling and explicit instruction, students may engage in the following: • Action-oriented task • Word study • Listening/viewing station • Independent reading (read to self) • Autonomous reading (read to self) • Interactive reading with peers (read to a friend) • Listening and speaking to interact with peers • Interactive writing • Independent writing • Inquiry-based learning		

** Please note that practices and resources are not listed in order of importance.*

Supporting literacy behaviours in Kindergarten (Sample)

Please note that this structure applies to effective literacy practices that may be scheduled throughout the day and does not reflect a single instructional block.

Grouping	Focus	Practices	Resources
WHOLE GROUP 10 minutes	• Listening and speaking to interact to support language comprehension • Self-regulation and well-being (Kindergarten Program)	• Dialogic read-aloud • Purposeful and responsive (e.g., questions, role play) • Repeated reading	• Mentor text
SMALL GROUP Approx. 5 minutes each, based on student need and readiness	Small groups are flexible based on student learning need. For example, some students may benefit from participating in multiple small group learning opportunities. Scheduling is flexible throughout the flow of the day (not necessarily in a single block of time). Focus, practices and resources are noted together for each group • Group 1: Phonological awareness – syllable segmentation and blending with connecting cubes • Group 2: Phonemic awareness - words with 2 or 3 phonemes with Elkonin boxes and chips • Group 3: Dialogic reading - vocabulary focused on problem-solving/ relationships with mentor text • Group 4: Phonics – blending CV words with magnetic letters • Group 5: Alphabet knowledge – grapheme-to-phoneme correspondence with sand and letter cards		
ACTION-ORIENTED TASK/PURPOSEFUL PRACTICE/ COLLABORATIVE LEARNING (CENTRES)	In addition to the other play-based learning opportunities, literacy options available may include: • Listening and speaking to interact, letter and word exploration, autonomous reading, independent/ shared writing, etc.		
WHOLE GROUP SHARING & CONSOLIDATION 10 minutes	• Phonological awareness • Alphabet knowledge/Phonics • Listening and speaking to interact – Share and consolidate how students were able to solve problems in a positive way throughout learning opportunities. • Metacognition – tell a partner about something new you did today. (Educator scaffolds reflection and communication about thinking and learning)		

Supporting literacy in Grade Two (Sample 100 minute block)

Grouping	Focus	Practices	Resources
WHOLE GROUP Building Proficiency 5 minutes	• Phonemic awareness – segmenting 4 phonemes	• Mini-lesson • Listening and speaking to interact	• Phonological/phonemic awareness – sequentially planned activities
WHOLE GROUP Building Proficiency/ Action-Oriented Task 15 minutes	• Language comprehension & Science - introduce provocation to lead to action-oriented task	• Read-aloud / Shared viewing of video • Listening and speaking to interact	• IDÉLLO • Curricular or other non-fiction posters, article, text, etc.
SMALL GROUP 25 minutes – duration for each group is based on student need	• Group 1: Phonemic awareness - segment phonemes to isolate medial sounds with Elkonin boxes and chips • Group 2: Phonics – reinforcing grapheme-to-phoneme correspondence focusing on é with decodable texts and highlighter strips • Group 3: Listening and speaking to interact to expand science vocabulary with images to provoke critical thinking		
Action-Oriented Task/ Purposeful Practice/ Collaborative Learning concurrent with small group above	While educator is working with small groups, other students are engaging in intentionally planned learning opportunities individually or in small groups, including: • Working on planning/design phase of the action-oriented task • Word study • Interactive writing		
WHOLE GROUP 10 minutes	• Phonics – 'ou' as in 'jouet'	• Mini-lesson • Listening and speaking to interact	• IDÉLLO • Resource to support phonics
SMALL GROUP 25 minutes – duration for each group is based on student need	• Group 4 – Phonics – decoding and encoding 'en/an' with white boards and markers • Group 5 – Read aloud of non-fiction text to build content knowledge in Science		
Action-Oriented Task/ Purposeful Practice/ Collaborative Learning concurrent with small group above	While educator is working with small groups, other students are engaging in intentionally planned learning opportunities individually or in small groups, including: • Continue working on planning/design of action-oriented task • Autonomous reading • Independent writing		
WHOLE GROUP SHARING & CONSOLIDATION 15 minutes	• Whole Group Sharing and Consolidation – Listening and speaking to interact, shared writing • Ticket out the door. (Assessment as learning/Metacognition based on literacy skills/strategies). – Independent writing or oral production (Differentiated based on student)		

Oral language

A solid foundation in oral language is especially important in early French Immersion programs. As we plan for learning, it is critical that we provide students with multiple opportunities to listen and speak French in various contexts. These opportunities support students in building on their background knowledge, expanding vocabulary and developing an understanding of language structures.

The Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists introduces their book Oral Language at Your Fingertips (2014) by focusing on the importance of oral language.

> ***Oral language is widely known to be the foundation for school success – the basis of reading, writing, and social interaction- but not all students learn oral language skills automatically. Many young learners have oral language needs. They are vulnerable to social isolation and academic failure, particularly because their needs are often "invisible" and not well understood or detected. Moreover, the communication requirements in today's schools are complex, even for Kindergarten and primary level students. Children are required to use oral language to listen and learn, to communicate their understanding in math, science, and across the curriculum and to navigate the social milieu of the classroom and the playground. As a consequence, effective oral language learning opportunities are important for all students, and especially necessary for some. (Blaxley et al, p.1, 2014)***

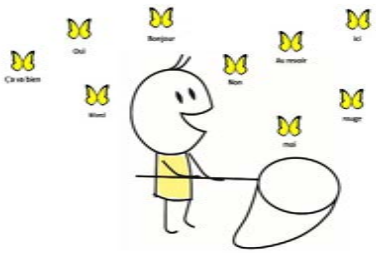
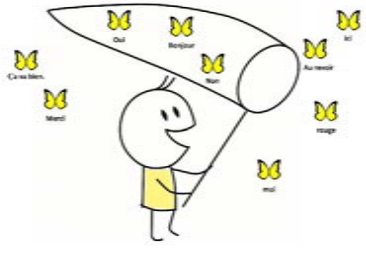
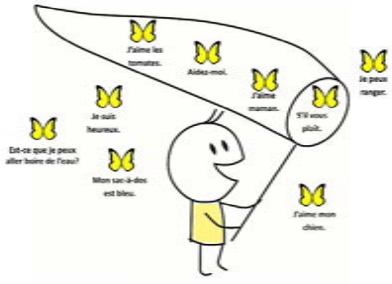
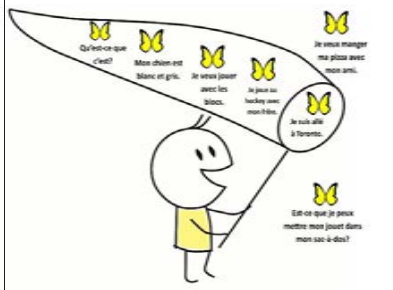
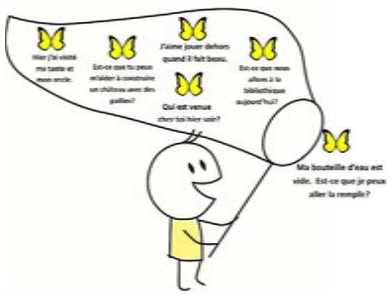
Students need to be exposed to a variety of French texts (audio, video, print) and speakers to develop their listening skills. Educators need to include supports and multiple opportunities for students, as speakers, to interact with others in authentic and meaningful contexts. A safe and inclusive learning environment is essential to promote learning a new language. Oral language in a French Immersion program includes:

- Listening - oral comprehension/*comprehension orale* (CO) – I can understand what I hear.
- Listening and Speaking to Interact – oral interaction/*interaction oral* (IO) – I can participate in an oral exchange as a listener and a speaker.
- Speaking – oral production/*production oral* (PO) – I can produce rehearsed and spontaneous words and phrases.

The following is a continuum created to support oral language based on the CEFR. It can be used as a self-assessment tool for early French Immersion. The 'I can' statements provide asset-based language for students and educators to communicate competences and determine next steps for learning and teaching. Educators can also use the strategies listed to support student learning. For students beyond this level, educators can refer to the searchable CEFR descriptors or those developed specifically for young learners aged 7-10.

JE SUIS CAPABLE!

Nom:_____

DISCOVERY/ PRE-PRODUCTION		EARLY PRODUCTION		SPEECH EMERGENCE
				
I can: ○ duplicate gestures and movements to show comprehension; ○ parrot/ repeat.	I can: ○ understand simple words and phrases; ○ respond in my first language; ○ respond physically to commands in French; ○ babble, whisper and invent words in French; ○ insert single French words in my discourse; ○ use simple greetings and departure expressions (e.g., *Au revoir*); ○ produce words with the help of gestures; ○ pay attention to someone when they are speaking; ○ take turns speaking.	I can: ○ understand my educator(s) with the support of gestures and context; ○ understand and follow simple directions; ○ express basic needs in French; ○ answer questions using a sentence starter (e.g., *J'aime…; Je vois…*); ○ use memorized, simple, short phrases for specific purposes; ○ use simple sentences; ○ introduce myself and others; ○ ask for clarification if I don't understand; ○ ask for help; ○ follow a model to build sentences and say them.	I can: ○ understand my educator(s) most of the time; ○ understand numbers and use them in everyday conversations; ○ use basic vocabulary to express myself; ○ understand the main idea of age-appropriate texts, songs and videos; ○ state a list of items; ○ use complete, simple sentences; ○ build simple sentences about myself; ○ ask simple questions; ○ use some French during play; ○ express my thoughts and feelings about media texts.	I can: ○ understand my educator(s) almost all of the time; ○ participate in conversations about mathematical concepts (e.g., numbers, shapes, patterns, graphs); ○ use more elaborate vocabulary; ○ use complex sentences; ○ join simple phrases using '*et*,' '*ou*', and '*puis*'; ○ tell and retell simple stories; ○ ask questions with details; ○ explain how things work using specific language; ○ engage in simple conversations in French; ○ use French in most contexts (e.g., with other educators and peers in a variety of settings); ○ speak at normal speed using correct intonation.
My educators can: • help me develop listening strategies; • consider that it can be overwhelming and exhausting to adjust to school and a new language; • speak French and use physical gestures and visuals; • provide a safe environment for me to take risks and help me to develop a great relationship with my educator(s) and the French language; • make sure that the language used is relevant; • ask yes or no questions; • provide me with engaging activities that I can connect to and that motivate me to be a lifelong language learner; • read simple French books with predictable text; • use simple French songs for routines and to build vocabulary; • model routine language using simple French words and correct phrasing; • model the use of sentence starters and question words; • engage me in role- play activities; • provide choice if I need support (e.g., "Est-ce que l'auto est rouge ou vert?"); • use *Supporting French Language Learning in the Early Years* document, Ministry documents, Board resources and the GECDSB Second Languages and Early Years sites.		My educators can: • engage in meaningful conversation as a way of using French during the whole class; • encourage me to communicate ideas at my own pace, with or without support; • foster a positive and dynamic environment in which I can produce (speak, write, read) with confidence, autonomy and pleasure; • allow me to use my home language as it is still a great source of relevant language; • provide many authentic opportunities to develop French vocabulary; • read developmentally appropriate books that engage students; • allow me to make mistakes; • provide me with opportunities to be actively engaged and produce what I already know in French and play with the language and structures; • expose me to other listening sources (e.g., other educators, French videos, French recordings). • ask me open-ended questions; • provide me with engaging activities that I can connect to and that motivate me to be a lifelong language learner; • provide opportunities for me to develop my phonological awareness; • provide choice if I need support (e.g., "Est-ce que l'auto est rouge ou vert?"); • use *Supporting French Language Learning in the Early Years* document, Ministry documents, Board resources and the GECDSB Second Languages and Early Years sites.		My educators can: • use French throughout the day to model and provide a rich language environment; • add something new to each interaction; • speak French at normal speed; • model using French vocabulary that I know to explain vocabulary that I am learning; • engage me in retelling stories; • encourage French dialogue during role play; • encourage me to exchange my ideas and opinions with others to demonstrate that we can learn language from one another; • ask me questions that require critical thinking and encourage inquiry; • provide me with engaging activities that I can connect to and that motivate me to be a lifelong language learner; • provide me with engaging activities that I can connect to and that motivate me to be a lifelong language learner.

Created by: Greater Essex County District School Board

Oral language • Video summary: Kindergarten

Students are interacting with peers and their educator as they engage with concrete objects during play. The educator prompts students with questions and modelling use of vocabulary in context.

Visit this link to view the video.

Why this learning?

This activity promotes vocabulary development and oral language proficiency, as the educator facilitates purposeful conversations about objects in their environment. It lends itself to cross-over the frames of the Kindergarten program.

Kindergarten Program connection

- Communicating with others in a variety of ways, for a variety of purposes, and in a variety of contexts. (OE1)
- Listen and respond to others, both verbally and non-verbally for a variety of purposes (e.g., to exchange ideas, offer opinions) and in a variety of contexts (e.g., in imaginary or exploratory play; in the learning areas, while engaged in games) (SE 1.2)

CEFR connection

- Can describe simple aspects of their everyday life in a series of simple sentences, using simple words and basic phrases, provided they can prepare in advance.
- Can understand questions and instructions addressed carefully and slowly to them and follow short, simple directions.

(CEFR Descriptors for Young Learners, 2018)

Learning goal

I can say/repeat a few words and short simple phrases. I can describe my school things in simple, short sentences.

Oral language • Video summary: Grade two

Students use information from a video they watch together to orally communicate their thinking and understanding about water conservation. The educator models French syntax with a focus on content-rich vocabulary. The components of this lesson include:

Visit this link to view the video.

- Students watch a video about water conservation without sound. They then engage in a conversation as a whole group using an *I see… I think… I wonder…* strategy in relation to the video.
- The students rewatch the video with sound in smaller segments. The educator pauses the video to make connections to prior learning and observations from first viewing, highlight new concepts, and reinforce specific vocabulary.
- The students rewatch the video with sound and engage in a *Think-Pair-Share* strategy in small groups. (Comment est-ce qu'ils ont utilisé l'eau dans la vidéo? Comment est-ce que vous utilisez l'eau dans votre vie?)
- After watching the video together, the class co-creates a list of the top ways in which they can change their routines to conserve water. (ex. prendre une douche vs prendre un bain, recueillir l'eau de pluie avec un contenant de plastique, fermer le robinet lorsque vous vous brossez les dents)

Action-oriented task

Students notice that their families are using too much water at home. In small groups, students will explain to one another ways in which they can reduce their water consumption. One student can play the role of a parent and the other can explain daily routines that need to change at home to save water.

Why this learning?

This activity will introduce new content-rich vocabulary to promote oral language proficiency, by facilitating sustained and purposeful conversations about water conservation. It lends itself to cross-curricular learning.

Science curriculum connection - Grade two

E 1.2 assess their personal and household uses of water, and create a plan to use water responsibly

CEFR connection

- Can identify simple, concrete information in a short video, provided that the visual supports this information and that the delivery is very slow and clear.
- Can take part in a simple conversation of a basic factual nature on a predictable topic (e.g., their home country, family, school). (CEFR Descriptors for Young Learners, 2018)

Learning goal

I can orally identify ways to save water at home.

Going beyond - Possible extensions for this activity

- Create an infographic (e.g., ways to save water at home)
- Create a short video with their Top 5 ways to save water
- Have a class discussion about other resources that are wasted and ways that we can be more responsible, specifically regarding non-renewable resources.

Phonological and phonemic awareness / La conscience phonologique et phonémique

- Definition and examples – Ministry of Education
- Définition et exemples – Ministry of Education

The following represents a continuum of phonological awareness skills:

Syllable Blending and Segmenting	• Separate and tap or clap the syllables in a word. • Blend syllables to produce a word.
Syllable Deletion	• Say a multi-syllabic word and omit a syllable.
Initial Sound Discrimination and Identification	• Identify the first/beginning sound in a word.
Rhyming	• Identify whether two words rhyme.
Onset and Rime Blending and Segmenting	• Blend the onset and rhyme to produce a word. • Segment a word into onset and rime.
Final Sound Discrimination and Identification	• Identify the last sound in a word.
Medial Sound Discrimination and Identification	• Identify the middle sound of a word.
Sound Blending and Segmenting	• Blend individual phonemes to make a word. • Identify each of the phonemes in a word.
Complex Sounds Blending and Segmenting	• Blend complex sounds to make a word. • Identify the complex sounds in a word.
Addition and Deletion of Sounds	• Say a word and delete a phoneme • Add a phoneme to a word • Replace a phoneme in a word with a different phoneme

Adapted from Oral Language at Your Fingertips (OSLA), 2014

Phonological awareness • Video summary: Kindergarten

In this whole-group lesson led by the educator, students use gestures and separate words orally into syllables.

Visit this link to view the video.

Why this learning?

This activity will focus on syllable identification (2 syllables) to build phonemic awareness.

Kindergarten Program connection

Explore sounds, rhythms, and language structures with guidance and on their own (SE 1.1).

CEFR connection

Can recognize and reproduce sounds in the target language correctly if carefully guided. (CEFR Descriptors for Young Learners, 2018)

Learning goal

I can identify the syllables in a word orally.

Phonemic awareness • Video summary: Kindergarten

In this small group lesson, students engage in an oral blending activity led by the educator.

Visit this link to view the video.

Why this learning?

This activity will focus on blending phonemes to build phonemic awareness.

Kindergarten Program connection

- Communicating with others in a variety of ways, for a variety of purposes, and in a variety of contexts. (OE1)
- Demonstrate an awareness that words can rhyme, can begin or end with the same sound, and are composed of phonemes that can be manipulated to create new words
(SE 1.11)

CEFR connection

Can recognize and reproduce sounds in the target language correctly if carefully guided. (CEFR Descriptors for Young Learners, 2018)

Learning goal

I can individually articulate each phoneme in a word and blend them orally.

Phonemic awareness • Video summary: Grade two

In this whole group lesson, the educator says a word and identifies a phoneme to replace. Students will substitute the phoneme as directed to create a new word.

Visit this link to view the video.

Why this learning?

This activity will focus on substituting phonemes orally to develop phonemic awareness.

CEFR connection

Can recognize and reproduce sounds in the target language correctly if carefully guided. (CEFR Descriptors for Young Learners, 2018)

French as a Second Language curriculum connection • Grade two

A 2.1 Using Interactive Listening Strategies: identify and use a few interactive listening strategies to suit a variety of situations while participating in structured and guided social and academic interactions

Learning goal

I can hear a word orally and substitute the phoneme to create a new word.

Alphabet knowledge / La connaissance des lettres

- Definition and examples – Ministry of Education
- Définition et exemples – Ministry of Education

The following represents a continuum of alphabet knowledge:

- identify letters and produce the most common sound associated with them
- name letters and the most common sounds associated with them
- form letters using multimodalities
- print letters
- produce the most common sounds of letter combinations
- print words using approximated spelling

Alphabet knowledge • Video summary: Kindergarten

In this whole group lesson, the educator is introducing a new letter name and sound to the students. This short lesson emphasizes letter formation, grapheme-phoneme correspondence, vocabulary, mouth movement/articulation, and simple CV blends.

Visit this link to view the video.

Why this learning?

This activity will focus on the introduction of a phoneme and grapheme with a focus on mouth shape, formation of the letter and words that contain that phoneme/grapheme.

Kindergarten Program connection

- Communicating with others in a variety of ways, for a variety of purposes, and in a variety of contexts. (OE1)
- Explore sounds, rhythms, and language structures with guidance and on their own (SE 1.1)

CEFR connection

Can recognize and reproduce sounds in the target language correctly if carefully guided. (CEFR Descriptors for Young Learners, 2018)

Learning goal

I can correspond letters and sounds.

Phonics / La connaissance du système alphabétique

- Definition and examples – Ministry of Education
- Définition et exemples – Ministry of Education

Phonics builds on the elements of alphabet knowledge. As automaticity develops, students apply their knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences to decode words with progressing fluency.

The sequence with which students develop these skills may vary.

- Decode/read single-syllable words with simple word structures aloud (CV, CVC, CCV) using blending skills
- Encode/write single syllable words
- Decode/read single-syllable words with more complex word structures aloud
- Encode/write multi-syllable words that include familiar spelling patterns across words

Phonics • Video summary: Grade two

In this small group activity, the educator says a word and asks students to substitute a phoneme to create a new word. This activity emphasizes identifying, correctly substituting phonemes and selecting the appropriate grapheme. Students use white boards, Elkonin boxes and letter cards to select and print graphemes and produce word chains that require them to change a single grapheme.

Visit this link to view the video.

Why this learning?

This activity will focus on connecting phonemes and graphemes through sound manipulation to build reading and spelling skills.

French as a Second Language curriculum connection • Grade two

C 1.3 Reading with Fluency: read French texts containing familiar words, names, expressions, and language structures, and dealing with everyday topics, at a sufficient rate and with sufficient ease to convey the sense of the text, using a variety of cues

CEFR connection

Can recognize and reproduce sounds in the target language correctly if carefully guided. (CEFR Descriptors for Young Learners, 2018)

Learning goal

I can identify the individual phonemes in a word orally and connect each phoneme to a grapheme.

Word study / L’étude des mots

- Definition and examples – Ministry of Education
- Définition et exemples – Ministry of Education

Explicit teaching of orthographic patterns and morphemes in French supports students’ ability to decode/read and encode/spell increasingly complex words.

Word study • Video summary: Grade two

In this whole group lesson, the educator will provide students with a list of familiar words in context to promote the identification of a specific orthographic pattern, the rule for the use of hard ‘c’ and soft ‘c’.

Visit this link to view the video.

Why this learning?

This activity will focus on the spelling pattern that differentiates the hard ‘c’ from the soft ‘c’.

French as a Second Language curriculum connection • Grade two

C 1.1: Using Reading Comprehension Strategies: identify a few reading comprehension strategies and use them appropriately

CEFR connection

Can recognize and reproduce sounds in the target language correctly if carefully guided. (CEFR Descriptors for Young Learners, 2018)

Learning goal

I will learn to apply spelling patterns to accurately decode words.

Section 3 • Project summary

Project overview

Over a quarter of our 55 Elementary schools offer French Immersion. We are pleased that our French Immersion programs have become much more diverse and continually look to support student learning. We continue to look for ways to eradicate systemic barriers to provide equitable instruction and increase success for all students, including those in our French Immersion programs. In alignment with these efforts, we know that we need to support educators with assessing and providing early interventions for reading. Given this need, a project was proposed in 2019 with the following objectives:

- Increase the knowledge and confidence of primary French immersion educators with regards to the Science of Reading and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).
- Develop practical teaching strategies that support reading interventions in French as a Second Language.
- Refine assessment strategies in relation to diagnostic assessment for reading in French as a Second Language.
- Partner with Speech and Language Pathologists, Psychologists, and Education Coordinators to further knowledge and develop capacity to support reading in French Immersion.
- Support principals in developing a process to organize reading intervention supports in their schools that increases primary French immersion reading achievement.

Various events impacted the timelines and the scope of this project. As challenging as this was, the delay provided us with the opportunity to develop our own learning in terms of evidence-based practices to support early reading. Since the outset of the project in 2019, many stakeholders at the system and school levels have collaborated and learned together to build capacity about the fundamentals of reading. The delay also allowed us to develop a partnership with the *Association canadienne des professionnels de l'immersion* (ACPI) to enrich this work and broaden the reach of the project.

The four members of the French Immersion Early Intervention team began their work on the project at the end of February 2022 with two weeks of professional learning that included evidence-based reading instruction and the Common European Framework of Reference, as well as training in the implementation of *Indicateurs dynamiques d'habilités précoces en lecture* (IDAPEL). IDAPEL is a research-based French-language dynamic indicator of basic early literacy skills including, phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy and fluency with connected text and text comprehension.

The team then conducted the IDAPEL assessment in three focus group schools and three control group schools with all students from Year 2 of Kindergarten to Grade Two. These six schools were selected from the fifteen schools in our district that offer French Immersion based on demographics (e.g., geography, single-track vs. dual track, school population). Team members were aligned with the three focus group schools to support effective Tier 1 instruction and to deliver Tier 2 intervention to Grade One and Two students identified through the IDAPEL assessments. The intent was for each team member to offer Tier 2 support to five to six pairs of students for three 30-minute sessions per week from the end of March until mid-June. Outside of the time devoted to this Tier 2 intervention, the team engaged with educators and administrators to support and implement Tier 1 instruction using research-based instructional practices. End-of-year assessments were then conducted in the six schools.

Visit this link to view the video.

In this video Lesley Doell, National French Immersion Consultant with the *Association canadienne des professionnels de l'immersio*n (ACPI), shares a message about the valuable partnership between ACPI and GECDSB and highlights some supports that ACPI offers Canada's French Immersion educators.

Project findings

The team's findings fall into three categories: quantitative data based on IDAPEL middle of year and end of year assessments, qualitative observations of student growth and educator impact reflections.

Quantitative data

Here are the findings from the analysis of the IDAPEL data for the district and specifically for focus group schools. The data findings for this project compare benchmark scores for the middle of the year (March) and the end of the year (June). It is important to note that the end of year benchmark increases in complexity. IDAPEL has established preliminary benchmarks for French as a first language speakers and continues to analyze data for the purpose of establishing benchmark goals for French Immersion. Our analysis is based on the current benchmarks in place for French Immersion.

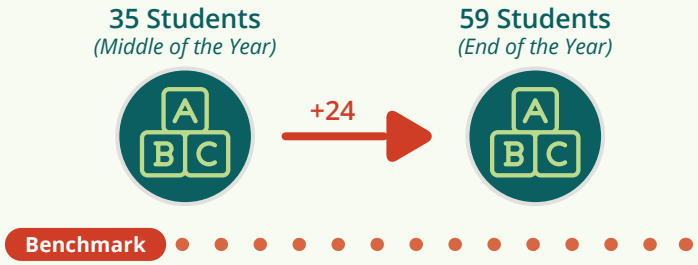
At the district level, we noted the following growth from March to June 2022 based on all schools involved in our project, three focus group schools and three control group schools:

Senior Kindergarten *(Year 2 of Kindergarten Program)*

The IDAPEL data for the 175 Senior Kindergarten *(Year 2 of Kindergarten Program)* students reflects growth in several areas:

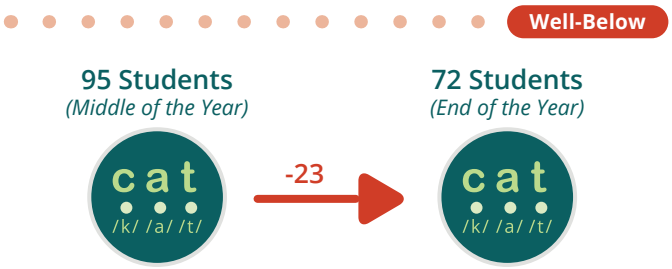
Letter naming fluency

- at the middle of the year 35 students were at or above benchmark, while 59 students met that level at the end of the year, demonstrating an increase of 24 students at or above benchmark



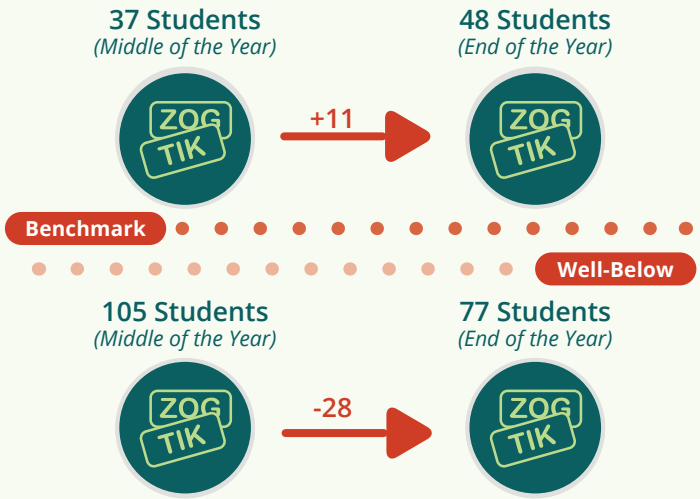
Phonemic segmentation fluency

- a similar number of students were at or above benchmark across the two assessments
- at the middle of the year 95 students were well below benchmark, while 72 students were at this level at the end of the year, demonstrating a decrease of 23 students well below benchmark



Nonsense word fluency – Correct letter sounds

- at the middle of the year 37 students were at or above benchmark, while 48 students met that level at the end of the year, demonstrating an increase of 11 students at or above benchmark
- at the middle of the year 105 students were well below benchmark, while 77 students were well below benchmark at the end of the year, demonstrating a decrease of 28 students well below benchmark

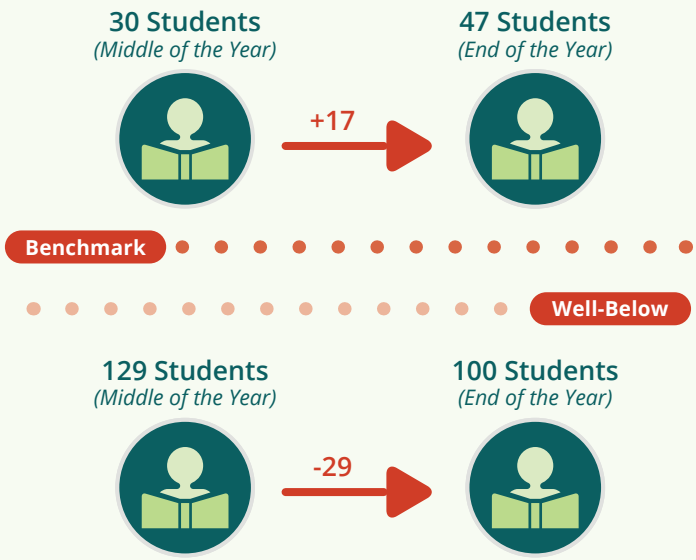


Grade One

The IDAPEL data for the 192 Grade One students reflects growth in students' ability to read nonsense words and maintenance of skill level in oral reading.

Nonsense word fluency – Words recoded correctly

- at the middle of the year 30 students were at or above benchmark, while 47 students met that level at the end of the year, demonstrating an increase of 17 students at or above benchmark
- at the middle of the year 129 students were well below benchmark, while 100 students were well below benchmark at the end of the year, demonstrating a decrease of 29 students well below benchmark



Oral reading fluency

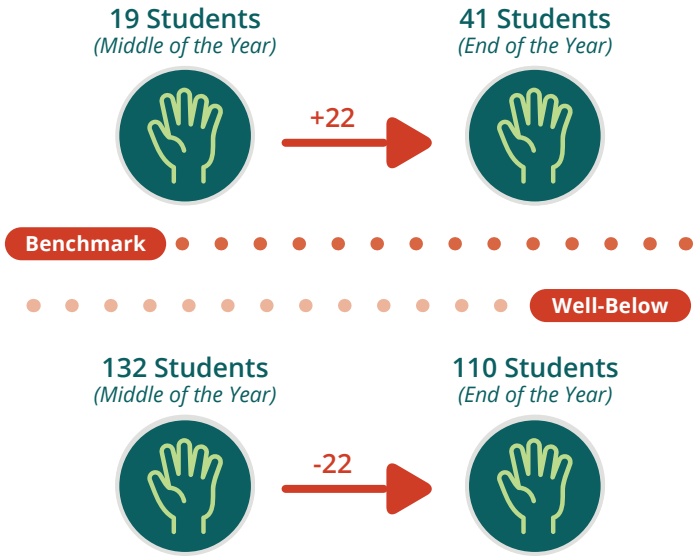
- a similar number of students were at or above benchmark across the two assessments

Grade Two

The IDAPEL data for the 175 Grade Two students shows growth in the ability to provide an oral summary of a decoded passage. There was a positive shift in retell. Students were asked to provide a summary if they were able to read a pre-determined number of words from a passage.

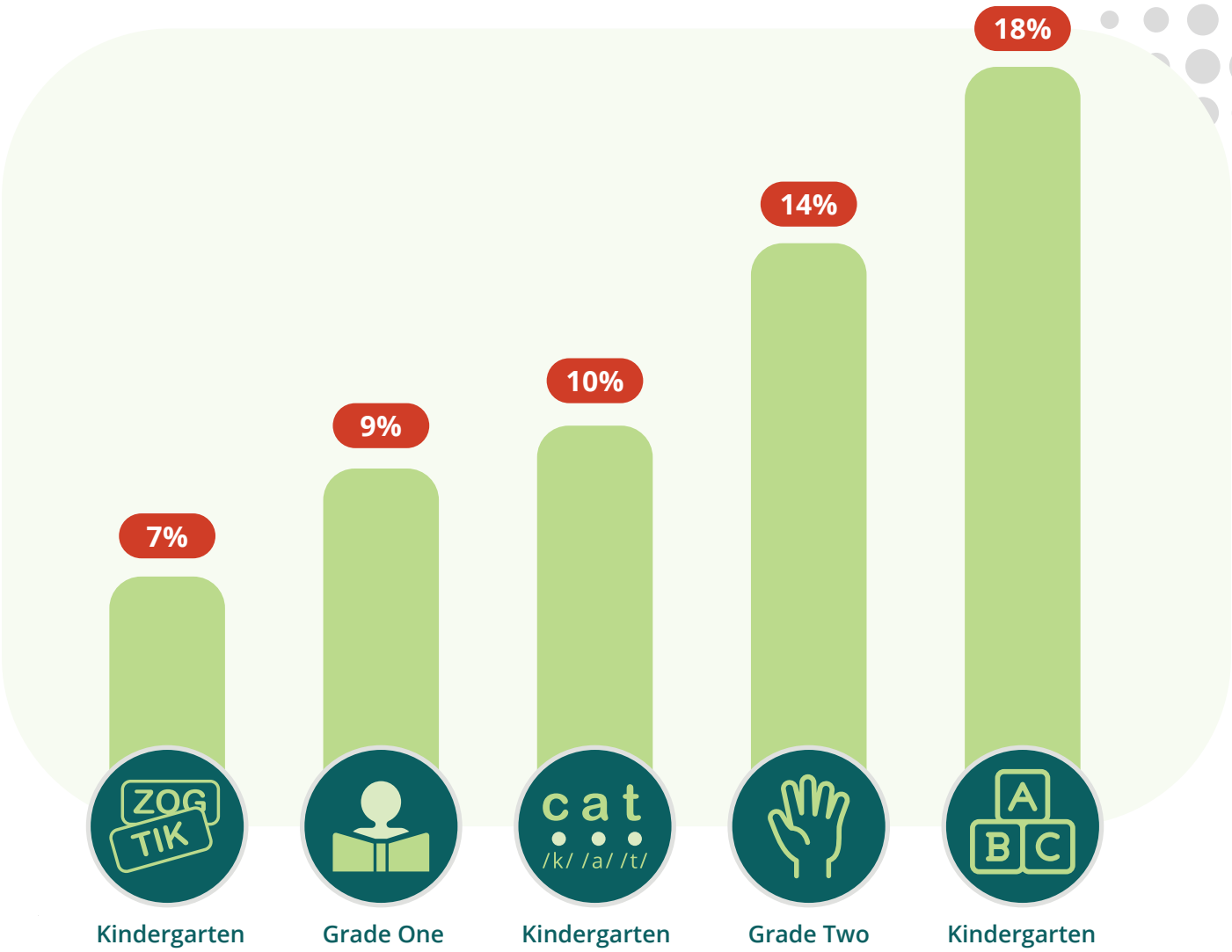
Oral reading retell

- at the middle of the year 19 students were at or above benchmark, while 41 students met that level at the end of the year, demonstrating an increase of 22 students at or above benchmark
- at the middle of the year 132 students were well below benchmark, while 110 students were well below benchmark at the end of the year, demonstrating a decrease of 22 students well below benchmark



In the three focus group schools, we noted the following growth from March to June 2022:

- 18% more Kindergarten students were at or above benchmark for letter naming fluency.
- 10% more Kindergarten students were at or above benchmark for phonemic segmentation fluency.
- 7% more Kindergarten students were at or above benchmark for nonsense word fluency.
- 9% more Grade One students were at or above benchmark for word reading fluency.
- 14% more Grade Two students were at or above benchmark for retell. Students were only asked to provide a summary if they were able to read a pre-determined number of words from a passage.



Qualitative observations – student growth

In response to the short-term intervention, student growth varied; some students showed significant gains in alphabet knowledge, blending and fluency. Gains were observed in the students' ability to: identify and decode complex sounds, read high frequency words with automaticity, and read sentences with fluency. The evidence of learning from the small group instruction sessions also identified those students that may require further targeted support and/or intervention.

Many of the students expressed more confidence in their literacy skills and were able to apply reading strategies outside of the intervention group context. Team members noted an increase in enthusiasm and engagement accompanied by a positive shift in mindset about themselves as readers in French Immersion.

Qualitative observations – educator impact

The collaborative work that team members did in their focus schools fostered several shifts in practice within a short period of time. Educators reflected on their practice and made intentional decisions that prioritized student need. Ongoing conversations around assessment practices provided opportunities to introduce new assessment tools and resources. The team observed a shift towards more differentiation and purposeful planning. The teams' collaboration with educators and administrators has inspired their desire to seek further learning opportunities around building competent and engaged readers in French Immersion.

The following reflection videos of educators, team members and an administrator capture some of the impact of this project. In addition to reflecting on the project, these videos highlight the commitment of all stakeholders to continue this ambitious and necessary work. We are grateful to the Ministry of Education for their support of this project. We hope that our journey will contribute to the learning of others and inspire a necessary transformation in French Immersion literacy instruction.

Educator reflection video

Educators deserve support to provide effective reading instruction to every learner. We acknowledge that we are learning and growing together in all roles across our system at GECDSB and striving to provide necessary supports to all educators. We are extremely grateful to educators, Julie Wark and Julie Imeson, for inviting us into their classrooms and sharing where they are in their learning journey. This video highlights some of their experiences and reflections connected to building competent and engaged readers in French Immersion.

Visit this link to view the video.

Reflection questions

- How do you gather information about your learners?
- What resonated with you in connection to supporting every student as a reader in French Immersion?

Administrator reflection video

Leaders play a powerful role in equitable and inclusive learning in French Immersion. In this video administrator, Stephanie Paraschak, shares valuable insight into her experience leading and learning in French Immersion.

Visit this link to view the video.

Reflection questions

- How does your background and experience impact you as an educator?
- What would you like your administrator(s) to know in connection to supporting your growth as a French Immersion educator?

Team reflection videos

The following series features Teacher Consultant, Angeline Humber, and members of our French Immersion Early Reading Intervention Research and Support Team; Chadai Cassidy-Boulos, Carla Garneau and Laura Murtagh.

In this video the team discusses their key learning as part of this project.

Visit this link to view the video.

Reflection questions

- What has been your key learning in connection to teaching students to read in French Immersion?
- How might you get to know your learners to ensure that you are meeting their needs?

In this video the team continues their discussion focusing on their work in connection to the CEFR and reading instruction.

Visit this link to view the video.

Reflection questions

- What has been your key learning in connection to teaching students to read in a French Immersion context?
- How might you get to know your learners to ensure that you are meeting their needs?

In this video the team continues their conversation focused on the Ontario Human Rights Commission's *Right to Read Inquiry Report* and discusses next steps for their own professional learning.

Visit this link to view the video.

Reflection questions

- What components of reading instruction are you most comfortable with in a French Immersion context?
- What professional learning will support you in providing effective reading instruction to all learners?
- Who can you collaborate with to help provide equitable, inclusive and accessible reading instruction to every learner?
- How can we ensure coherence and cohesion in our assessment and instruction of literacy, while maintaining flexibility to meet each learner's needs?

Case studies

These case studies provide a brief snapshot of the experience of five students that engaged in Tier 2 instruction with our team during this project. They highlight the need to see students as individual children with diverse backgrounds and needs. The case studies also share the student's growth and the impact of instruction within our short project. We hope that these provide you with an opportunity for reflection when considering the personal journeys and needs of each of child you teach.

Yasir

Yasir is a Grade One French Immersion student who is excited to engage with others in French. He was born in Syria and immigrated to Canada at the age of three. His family speaks Arabic at home. He attended an English school for his first year of Kindergarten and has attended a French Immersion elementary school for his second year of Kindergarten and Grade One. He attends Arabic school on Saturdays.

Yasir's classroom teacher describes him as outgoing, eager to take risks and keen to practice new skills. He experiments with French speaking, trying out new words with little prompting. He likes hands-on activities and learns routines quickly. He shows responsibility in the classroom.

Yasir's Term 1 report card indicates some needs in the areas of French Listening and Speaking and significant needs in French Reading as well as some area for growth in self-regulation. On a scale from one to five, where one represents an area of need and five represents a strength, his French language skills are as follows: Listening = 3, Speaking = 4, Reading = 1 and Writing = 1.

Yasir shows difficulty articulating some sounds in French. It appears that this is related to the sounds he is accustomed to producing when speaking Arabic. He is learning to produce the unfamiliar sounds.

In an interview, Yasir shared that he is happy to come to school to play with his friends, though he reports feeling tired many days. He shared that he feels "very scared" when he reads at school "because I don't really know how to read." He said that he does not like reading. When there is a challenging word to read, Yasir says he "thinks." He is happy to select books because his brother, who is in high school, can read the books to him.

Yasir was identified for intensive literacy support based on winter scores from the *Indicateurs dynamiques d'habilités précoces en lecture* (IDAPEL). When presented with two-syllable nonsense words for one minute, he correctly decoded two simple letter sounds (one vowel and one consonant). When presented with a passage to read aloud for one minute, Yasir was not able to decode any of the words in the first passage. Based on benchmark IDAPEL scores, he was considered a student in risk.

Yasir received intensive small-group Tier 2 support to develop letter recognition and beginning phonics skills in 20 half-hour sessions. The entry point for the support was based on initial assessments to pinpoint the specific gaps in his letter knowledge. He was not yet identifying most letter sounds. In addition, he was just beginning to blend individual letter sounds to produce syllables and small high-frequency words like 'la', 'me' and 'si'. The 20 sessions consisted of systematic and explicit instruction that introduced letter sounds and blending through multimodal tasks and decoding games, with frequent check-ins to track growth. At the end of the intensive support sessions, Yasir showed a mastery of four consonants and three vowels (letter name and sound) as well as an ability to blend the sounds to produce syllables and short words (CV) and some CVC and VCV nonsense and real words. He enjoyed working in a small group and was particularly engaged when playing games with letter sounds and syllables.

Yasir's spring IDAPEL results showed incremental gains in letter sound knowledge and the ability to decode the word 'ma' in a reading passage. He would benefit from continued intensive Tier 2 support to build his letter sound knowledge and early decoding skills. In addition, the school team should continue to monitor his articulation needs and track his growth to determine next steps.

Jolie

Jolie is a motivated Grade Two student who is keenly aware of the challenges she encounters as a reader. She was born in Canada. She has attended a French Immersion program since Year 1 of Kindergarten. She attended the online school program for the first quadmester of Grade One. Her home language is English; she has immediate family members who speak and read French.

Jolie's classroom teacher describes her as motivated to do her best, an active participant in class activities and very resourceful in general. She is keen to help in the classroom and is very social with her peers and adults. She excels in math.

Jolie achieved C+ and D+ for Reading in Terms 1 and 2 in Grade One, with Writing at C+ for Term 2 and Speaking and Listening in the C range. In SK and Grade One, she received support from the school learning support teacher to build her letter recognition skills. Her Grade Two teacher notes that Jolie's receptive language skills are generally much stronger than her expressive skills. On a scale from one to five, where one represents an area of need and five represents a strength, her French language skills are as follows: Listening = 4, Speaking = 2, Reading = 1 and Writing = 1 – 2. Her English Language teacher reports similar difficulties with Reading and Writing. She shows some inconsistency in her ability to retain information and sometimes experiences challenges with tasks that place high demands on her working memory.

In response to ongoing needs, Jolie was formally assessed in the fall of Grade Two. The assessment revealed a severe reading disorder. Jolie was formally identified through IPRC mid-Grade Two and an IEP with modified expectations for Reading was developed. She continues to receive support from the school learning support teacher.

In an interview, Jolie says she feels happy to come to school because she can hug her teacher and she "can learn stuff." She reports feeling nervous when it is time to read in French, stating, "What if I mess up?" and noting that she is worried if she will not do enough of the digital reading programs used in her classroom. Jolie says that she likes independent reading because she can use her brain and it is "not so loud 'cause everybody needs to be quiet." When asked about what she does when there is a difficult word to read, she shared, "I try my best. Sometimes I'm scared that I mess up. I close in the hard part and do the easy part. I remember that you can learn to read." She likes to choose books on her own.

Jolie was identified for intensive literacy support based on winter scores from the *Indicateurs dynamiques d'habilités précoces en lecture* (IDAPEL). When presented with a passage to read aloud for one minute, she was able to decode five short high-frequency words 'moi', 'de', 'une', 'la', and 'et' in the first passage. Based on benchmark IDAPEL scores, she was considered a student in risk.

Jolie received intensive small-group Tier 2 support to develop her decoding skills in 20 half-hour sessions. The entry point for the support was based on initial assessments to pinpoint the specific gaps in her letter knowledge and blending skills. She was able to read some letter sounds and blend individual letter sounds to produce syllables and small high-frequency words like 'la', 'te' and 'ami'. The 20 sessions consisted of systematic and explicit instruction that introduced letter sounds, blending and fluent word reading through multimodal tasks and decoding games, with frequent check-ins to track growth.

At the end of the intensive support, Jolie showed a mastery of nine consonants and five vowels (letter name and sound) as well as an ability to read syllables and some two-, three- and four-syllable real and nonsense words with those sounds. She was able to read some short sentences with limited support. She was always an eager participant in small group learning. By the end of the sessions, she stated proudly, "I know that I am a reader!"

Jolie's spring IDAPEL results showed her ability to decode a reading passage remained static. She would benefit from continued intensive Tier 2 and Tier 3 support to build her knowledge of complex sounds (e.g., ou, eu, in), to build her repertoire of sight words and to enhance her reading fluency. In addition, the school team should continue to monitor her progress to ensure that her IEP reflects her current skills.

Abdul

Abdul is a Grade Two student who is adjusting to attending school in-person. He has been enrolled at the same French Immersion elementary school since his first year of Kindergarten. He had many absences from school in both years of Kindergarten. His family chose online schooling for all of Grade One and half of Grade Two. He was born in Canada. At home, the adults in his family speak Arabic with him and he speaks English with his older sister. He reports understanding more Arabic than he can speak.

Abdul's classroom teacher shares that he enjoys physical activity and using technology. He often observes others before engaging in an activity.

Abdul's Grade One report cards show he encountered challenges in Reading and Writing. His family has shared that Abdul was often not actively engaged in online learning. In his Grade Two year, his Term 1 online teacher noted significant challenges in French and English Reading. His Term 2 in-person teacher notes general concerns about his limited engagement in tasks. Abdul expresses worry that others will judge him for the difficulties he encounters. He is working on refining his fine motor skills in printing and cutting and benefits from explicit instruction with tasks.

Abdul has a limited repertoire of French words that he uses in spontaneous talk. He is learning to follow directions. His teachers report the need to engage with Abdul one-on-one for him to initiate and persevere with most tasks.

In an interview, Abdul noted that he is happy to go to school because he can be with his friends because "we like to play." He is ambivalent about reading and stated "I don't know how to read." He likes reading with his sister when she reads to him. When he encounters a difficult word while reading, Abdul shares that, "I just practice." He is happy to choose a book to read with his sister because "I can choose any book I want."

Abdul was identified for intensive literacy support based on winter scores from the *Indicateurs dynamiques d'habilités précoces en lecture* (IDAPEL). When presented with a passage to read aloud for one minute, he was able to decode four different words in the first passage. Based on benchmark IDAPEL scores, he was considered a student in risk.

Abdul received intensive small-group Tier 2 support to develop letter recognition and beginning phonics skills in 20 half-hour sessions. The entry point for the support was based on initial assessments to pinpoint the specific gaps in his letter knowledge and emerging decoding skills. He was able to read some letter sounds and blend individual letter sounds to produce syllables. He required repeated practice to understand the difference between letter names and sounds. The 20 sessions consisted of systematic and explicit instruction that introduced letter sounds, blending and fluent word reading through multimodal tasks and decoding games, with frequent check-ins to track growth.

At the end of the intensive support, Abdul showed a firm grasp of nine consonants and five vowels (letter name and sound) as well as an ability to read syllables and some two-

and three-syllable real and nonsense words with those sounds. He was able to read some short sentences with limited support. Abdul made considerable progress in his ability to read words. He particularly enjoyed reading silly sentences. Abdul gained self-confidence and appeared happy to engage in the learning each session.

Abdul's spring IDAPEL showed his ability to decode a reading passage remained static. As he enters Grade Three, he will need continued intensive Tier 2 and Tier 3 support to continue his growth as a French reader. In addition, the school team should continue to monitor his progress to determine next steps in terms of further support and assessment.

Emily

Emily is a Grade One French Immersion student who is excited to come to school each day and demonstrates a thirst for knowledge. She is an energetic student who readily engages in learning, utilizing strong problem-solving skills and creativity. Emily has strong oral communication skills in French and continues to seek out opportunities to build and use new vocabulary. She engages in metacognition, understanding what she needs to be successful and advocates for herself in her learning environments.

Emily's teacher and family had previous discussions that she was not meeting Grade One benchmarks for French reading and writing and that additional supports in these areas would be of benefit to her. On a scale from one to five, where one represents an area of need and five represents a strength, her French language skills are as follows: Listening = 5, Speaking = 4, Reading = 2 and Writing = 2.

Emily identifies all the letter names and sounds in French, as well as several complex sounds (e.g., ch, ou, oi). She quickly blends one- and two-syllable words containing simple and some complex sounds. Emily was able to read several high-frequency words with automaticity (e.g., 'est', 'aime', 'elle'). She has difficulty decoding words with three or more syllables containing several different simple and complex sounds. She is continuing to build fluency when reading full sentences.

In an interview, Emily shared that she is happy to come to school where she enjoys eating with her friends and doing math. She shares that she both likes and dislikes reading. She enjoys reading when she has books that include illustrations and photos. When she encounters challenging words to read, her strategy is to "sound it out." When selecting her own books to read she shares, "J'aime choisir mon livre et j'aime lire des livres qui a des 'chapters' en anglais."

Emily was identified for intensive literacy support based on winter scores from the *Indicateurs dynamiques d'habilités précoces en lecture* (IDAPEL). When presented with two-syllable nonsense words for one minute, she correctly decoded most simple letter sounds and a few complex sounds. When presented with a passage to read aloud for one minute, Emily was able to read some high-frequency words of the initial passage. However, due

to the limited number of words she read, was not able to move onto the next passage. Based on benchmark IDAPEL scores, she was considered a student in risk.

Emily received intensive small-group Tier 2 support to develop beginning phonics skills in 20 half-hour sessions. The entry point for the support was based on initial assessments to pinpoint the specific gaps in her decoding knowledge. The 20 sessions consisted of systematic and explicit instruction that reviewed letter sounds, introduced complex sounds, and blending through multimodal tasks and decoding games, with frequent check-ins to track growth. At the end of the intensive support, Emily showed a mastery of all letter names and sounds and several additional complex sounds, as well as an ability to blend sounds to produce syllables and short words, CVC and VCV nonsense and real words. She looked forward to engaging in the decoding games and activities, recognizing her growth. She is eager to continue building her literacy skills.

Emily's spring IDAPEL results showed significant gains in letter and complex sound knowledge and the ability to decode words in a reading passage. She was able to decode almost twice as many nonsense words that included a variety of simple and complex sounds. When decoding the reading passage, she was able to read enough of the first passage to continue to the other two passages. When reading each of the three passages, she was able to read several more high-frequency words and successfully decoded a significantly higher number of unfamiliar words. In her retell, she demonstrated some comprehension of each passage. Emily would benefit from continued small group instruction to build her decoding skills of more complex words.

Kiara

Kiara is a Grade Two French Immersion student who is eager to learn. She has attended a French Immersion elementary school since Kindergarten.

Kiara's classroom teacher describes her as outgoing, confident, and willing to learn. She likes to engage in new learning and is proud of herself when she accomplishes something she thought was going to be difficult. She enjoys participating in class and does not hesitate to seek assistance when needed.

Kiara's teacher notes that she is reading below grade-level in both French and English and that she struggles with decoding and fluency. Kiara has strong comprehension skills when a text is read to her. Kiara received some support from the learning support teacher in Grade One. On a scale from one to five, where one represents an area of need and five represents a strength, her French language skills are as follows: Listening = 2, Speaking = 3, Reading = 1 and Writing = 1.

Kiara knows the names and sounds of all the letters of the alphabet. She can read many sight words with automaticity, and she can read words with two or three simple sounds, but appears overwhelmed when presented with larger words. Kiara often lacks confidence in her abilities and requires encouragement and positive affirmations before more challenging activities. With encouragement, she can read multisyllabic words and words with some complex sounds and is working on overall fluency and accuracy.

In an interview, Kiara shared that she is happy to come to school because she likes "getting smart at school." She shared that she has mixed feelings when she reads at school because "I can't really read yet." Kiara said that she likes reading but she finds it a little bit difficult. When there is a challenging word to read, Kiara says, "I try to sound it out and if I can't I ask somebody to help me." She is happy to select books because she thinks they are "going to be good" and she is ready to read them.

Kiara was identified for intensive literacy support based on winter scores from the *Indicateurs dynamiques d'habilités précoces en lecture* (IDAPEL). When presented with a passage to read aloud for one minute, Kiara was able to decode 10 words of the first initial passage and attempted to read the following two passages but did not read a sufficient number of words to continue to the retell. Based on benchmark IDAPEL scores, she was considered a student in risk.

Kiara received intensive small-group Tier 2 support to develop blending and decoding skills in 20 half-hour sessions. The entry point for the support was based on initial assessments to pinpoint the specific gaps in her knowledge. While Kiara was able to identify letter sounds and names, she was beginning to blend larger words, with simple sounds. In addition, when decoding words, she read individual sounds with a need to develop fluency. The 20 sessions consisted of systematic and explicit instruction that reviewed letter sounds and blending through multimodal tasks and decoding games, with frequent check-ins to track growth. At the end of the intensive support, Kiara showed a mastery of blending CVCV words with simple sounds, and she was beginning to decode words with complex sounds. Kiara was able to read real words, short sentences and write words with familiar patterns. Kiara enjoyed working in a small group and was proud of the gains that she made. She would often say things like, "I did it!" or "I can read now!" or "That was easy for me!" It was evident that her self-confidence increased and that she was beginning to see herself as a reader.

Kiara's spring IDAPEL results showed gains in her ability to decode reading passages, as she nearly quadrupled the number of words read accurately. In addition, she was able to provide a brief retell with some relevant details for two of the three passages. Kiara would benefit from continued support to build her fluency and her ability to decode longer words with more complex sounds.

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French Immersion reading intervention literature review

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Introduction

In Canada, as well as across the world, many children in school learn to read and write in a language other than the one they speak at home (Jared, Cormier, Levy, & Wade-Woolley, 2011; Aronin & Singleton, 2008). From a historical perspective in Canada, the immersion of students into an additional language other than those they spoke at home changed dramatically in 1965 with the introduction of a French Immersion program in St. Lambert, Quebec (Genesee & Jared, 2008). The program in St. Lambert moved to a model of teaching English-speaking students in French. In their model, the students' initial literacy and academic instruction in reading and writing was taught in French before they were introduced to English instruction in reading and writing. Specifically, the St. Lambert program provided all instruction in French from Kindergarten to the end of grade 2, with English instruction in reading and writing starting in grade 3. Since that time, alternative forms of immersion programs have been developed across Canada and the offering of immersion programs has grown significantly.

Cognitive and linguistic advantages of French Immersion programs

The growth of French Immersion programs in Canada has been supported by a record of successful outcomes for students in these programs (Krenca, Gottardo, Geva, & Chen, 2019). Research has identified several positive effects of learning an additional language, especially in terms of cognitive ability. In this regard, research has indicated that multilingual learners develop flexible thinking, which can improve their performance on tasks which require originality and creativity. Additional language acquisition has also been shown to have positive effects on metalinguistic skills (Aydin-Yuecesan & Banu, 1999). Learning additional languages has been shown to facilitate metalinguistic awareness, which enables a child to focus more readily on particular aspects of language (Bialystock & Herman, 1999). Children learning multiple languages have been shown to more selectively attend to language components such as syntax, semantics, and phonology more rapidly than monolingual peers.

The Science of Reading

The Science of Reading (SOR) is an ever-growing body of research encompassing years of scientific research, applies to many languages, and shares the contributions of experts from many relevant disciplines. SOR has evolved from a wide span of research designs, experimental

methods, participants, and statistical analyses. This conclusive, empirically supported research provides us with the information we need to gain a deeper understanding of how we learn to read, what skills are involved, how they work together, and which parts of the brain are responsible for reading development. From this research, we can identify an evidence-based best practice approach for teaching foundational literacy skills called Structured Literacy. SOR has demonstrated that a Structured Literacy approach is a necessary foundation for reading success of all students with its focus on both word knowledge and language comprehension, including the subskills in each of these two areas.

Early universal screening

In terms of the development of foundational reading skills, French Immersion programs face common challenges in terms of early identification of students who are at increased risk for acquiring reading skills (Krenca, Gottardo, Geva, & Chen, 2019). As described in the Ontario Human Rights Commission's (OHRC's) *Right to Read Inquiry Report* (OHRC, 2022), screeners provide a quick and informal evidence-based assessment tool that provide information about possible reading difficulties. Screeners assist in identifying students who require more instruction or immediate intervention to support the development of their foundational reading skills. It is important for educators to be aware that screening does not result in a diagnosis of a student but acts as an early detection strategy of students in risk. In this regard, teachers are then better able to understand their students and can target students who would benefit from receiving immediate and targeted support. Education researchers have noted several disadvantages with the "wait and see" model. Assessment is imprecise because it is mostly based on teacher observation or identification measures that are not linked to effective instruction (Vaughan & Fuchs, 2003). This can lead to decisions informed by bias, rather than data. The intervention is reactive and based on deficit, rather than proactive and based on risk. Students receive interventions too late or not at all. Moving forward, schools must move to screening every student early (starting in Kindergarten) using evidence-based screening tools, as research is clear that the earlier schools screen students, the earlier students can receive instruction or intervention that will enable them to learn to read accurately and fluently (Siegel, 2011).

As noted in the OHRC *Right to Read Inquiry Report* (OHRC, 2022), the Association of Psychology Leaders in Ontario Schools (APLOS) highlights the importance of screening, as it provides a classroom profile to help teachers to determine the focus of curriculum for their classrooms. Such a classroom profile can lead to early and effective intervention for struggling readers, which can reduce the potential for long-term learning challenges for many students. In this regard, early reading screening tools provide an opportunity for schools and teachers to determine programming adjustments that are responsive to the emerging learning needs of each student. Such responsive programming does not need to result in children being separated into groups or centred out among their peers. Instead, it can ensure that learning goals continue to change within the classroom and that the needs of all learners are addressed. Furthermore, early assessment can lead to instruction that incorporates direct and systematic instruction that reduces reading difficulties in the later years, thereby decreasing requirements for more comprehensive assessments to determine the core difficulty.

One challenge that is more evident in terms of early screening in Ontario to identify in-risk students in French Immersion is the lack of adequate screening tools. As noted by Jared (2008), while there are numerous screening assessments that assess English early reading skills and prediction of in-risk students, the assessment of French Immersion students' reading abilities in French is significantly impacted by the lack of tests appropriate for young French as an additional language learners. Specifically, there is a lack of French tests for young French as an additional language learners that are technically sound and that have been normed on French Immersion students in Canada. More recently, Acadience Learning has introduced a series of French formative assessments designed to assess the early literacy skills of students learning to read in French in Kindergarten through to Grade 5. I*ndicateurs dynamiques d'habilités précoces en lecture* (IDAPEL) is reported to assess the fundamental early reading skills of phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy and fluency with connected text, and text comprehension. IDAPEL is currently most effectively used with French as a first language speakers and has some utility for students enrolled in French Immersion programs. The publishers of IDAPEL indicate that they are working to analyze data collected with students who are enrolled in French Immersion for the purpose of establishing benchmark goals for this population. The development of benchmarks for students in early French Immersion programs will help to identify in-risk students for reading, as well as progress monitor their response to interventions.

Reading interventions in French Immersion

Consistent with students in English programs, students who enroll in French Immersion programs also present with varying reading abilities and skill development; a percentage of students will require strategic interventions to develop French reading skills (Wise & Chen, 2010). To date, most intervention programs to support the development of students identified as in risk in the acquisition of reading skills in French Immersion programs have utilized interventions in English. The use of English interventions for students in French Immersion to date is typically a result of lack of human resources and programs available in French.

There is evidence that reading skills develop interdependently across language for bilingual students (Archambault, Mercer, Cheng, & Saqui, 2018). In terms of the evidence on interdependent development, the Linguistic Independence Principal (LIP) (Cummins, 1998) proposes that there is an underlying cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) that facilitates transfer of academic and literacy-related skills across languages. Based on this proposition, it is suggested that reading instruction in one language leads to a deeper CALP, which facilitates literacy in the additional language. The LIP theory is also consistent with research showing that students instructed for all or part of the day in an additional language experience no long-term academic delays in their first language (Genesee & Jared, 2008). There is also significant support across many studies that have shown a strong association between reading skills in students' first and additional languages (Melby-Lervag & Lervag, 2011). Metanalysis of studies on cross-linguistic transfer have reported moderate to large correlations between coding skills and phonological processing in bilingual readers' first and second language. In terms of studies looking at students in French Immersion programs, they

have shown that phonological processing and rapid automatized naming tasks administered in English in early elementary grades are predictive of later word reading skills in both French and English (Jared, Cormier, Levy, & Wade-Woolley, 2011).

Many boards in Ontario, and in other provinces in Canada, have been forced to utilize English interventions for students in French Immersion programs due to the lack of human resources and tools to support effective programming. In terms of providing intervention in English to students in French Immersion programs, Wise and Chen (2010) examined the impact of phonological awareness instruction on the reading achievement of in-risk Grade 1 readers enrolled in an early immersion program. These students received 20 weeks of phonological awareness training in English. After providing the 20 weeks of training, the intervention was then changed to French once the students had acquired a foundation in the language. Results indicated significant gains in phonological awareness in the students that received the intervention, suggesting that a phonologically based intervention in English can effectively address phonological awareness deficits and facilitate French reading acquisition for early immersion students considered in risk for later reading difficulties.

Archambault, Mercer, Chen, and Saqui (2018) examined the effects of an intervention program for reading fluency in French with three students identified by their teacher as experiencing French reading difficulty who were attending a French Immersion program. The students received a reading fluency intervention that integrated several evidence-based fluency building strategies. The students received individual intervention sessions two times per week. The results of the study reported that the interventions the students received produced improvements in French reading fluency on instructional passages. General improvements in English reading fluency were also noted. These results are consistent with research that supports transferability of reading skills across languages.

In a more recent study, Cote, Savage, and Petscher (2021) investigated the impact of supplemental reading intervention in English with in-risk children in French Immersion schools in Quebec and Alberta. Students were assigned to one of two intervention conditions: i) *Common and Best Practices intervention* in which they received systematic synthetic phonics and sight word instruction; and ii) in a *Direct Mapping and Set for Variability* condition in which they were taught grapheme-phoneme correspondence in context, as well as strategies to match phoneme strings to known and irregular words. Results of the study indicated that students in the *Direct Mapping and Set for Variability* intervention group performed consistently better on at post-test in both English and French. Significant improvements were observed in word reading in English and in French for these students, even with the intervention having been delivered in English only. Results of the study also indicated that improvement in French for those in the *Direct Mapping and Set for Variability* was observed immediately after the intervention, which is consistent with prior research indicating a strong relationship between L1 and L2 phonological awareness and word and pseudoword reading skills. These results also provide some initial evidence that explicit and systematic instruction delivered in the context of books that assist in learning grapheme-to-phoneme correspondence can be a powerful way to support cross-linguistic transfer. These practices could potentially be adopted in the context of teaching in early French Immersion programs to assist in early reading.

Future direction in French Immersion

Access to French Immersion programs continues to be an important and beneficial option for many students entering school in Canada. Currently there are four key areas that are important to the future direction of French Immersion programs.

Consistent universal screening

Evidence-based early screening assessment tools to identify students in risk for reading difficulties are well-developed and readily available. At this time, a number of early screening assessments for French have been utilized in Canadian schools, however, there has been very limited research to develop any evidence-based screeners for additional language learners. The development of effective evidence-based screening tools in French needs increased research attention. The use of universal screening at least three times across the year is critical so that schools and teachers in French Immersion programs can identify those students who require increased support. IDAPEL is one promising option that is currently being developed and researched to meet this need, although it currently lacks coherent benchmarks for students in early French Immersion programs.

Diagnostic assessments

Another key aspect of supporting students experiencing difficulties in reading is the use of diagnostic assessments. Unlike universal screeners, diagnostic assessments take a more complete look at where students are currently performing in their foundational reading skills. Diagnostic assessments are longer and target a deeper set of skills than those seen in universal screening. The goals of diagnostic assessments are to find the strengths and gaps in the student's knowledge and skills more specifically and provide teachers with areas to target interventions to accelerate student progress. While there are many evidence-based English diagnostic assessments for reading, there are currently no such diagnostic assessments for French as an additional language. Moving forward, this is another area that requires research to support teachers to better target intervention for students acquiring foundational reading skills.

Language interventions in French

There is a lack of both research and development of French reading interventions for learners of French as an additional language. While we know that interventions in English can support reading in French through cross-language effects, French interventions need to be researched and developed to support all the components of reading development.

Professional learning

In the report, Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science: *What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able to Do* (Moats, 2020), Dr. Louisa C. Moats states "Just about all children can be taught to read and deserve no less from their teachers. Teachers, in turn, deserve no less than the knowledge, skills, and supported practice that will enable their teaching to succeed. There is no more important challenge for education to undertake." Researchers have identified inadequate preparation in teacher education programs on how to teach reading. As a result, like all educators, French Immersion educators require knowledge of effective literacy instruction and how it connects to teaching, learning and assessment in an additional language context. It is critical that we focus on leveraging time, talent, and resources to ensure that educators have the knowledge and tools that they need to provide every student with the fundamental right to read.

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