

# Meeting Labour Market Needs for French as a Second Language Instruction in Ontario



ONTARIO PUBLIC  
SCHOOL BOARDS'  
ASSOCIATION

*Moving Forward with Understanding Perspectives Regarding  
the French as a Second Language Labour Market Issue*



## Phase II Executive Summary

**EMPLOYMENT  
ONTARIO**

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## INTRODUCTION

This summary report describes the actions and outcomes of Phase II of the three-year Ontario Labour Market Partnership initiative entitled, *Meeting Labour Market Needs for French as a Second Language Instruction in Ontario*. The Phase II report, *Moving Forward with Understanding Perspectives Regarding the French as a Second Language Labour Market Issue*, can be found at [www.opsba.org](http://www.opsba.org) along with the full report from Phase I. Funding for this Labour Market Partnership Project was provided in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.



**Please note that the views expressed in this report are the views of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province.**

## **BACKGROUND**

During Phase I, key stakeholder partners used research findings to develop recommendations and action plans towards workable solutions to address the growing gap between the number of students enrolling in French as a Second Language (FSL) programs and the availability of qualified teachers to do the job. Phase I was guided by two key objectives:

1. to study the supply and demand issues specifically related to the recruitment, hiring and retention of FSL teachers;
2. to develop and begin to implement recommendations towards workable solutions with key stakeholder groups.

In November 2018, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) was approved for Phase II Ontario Labour Market Partnership funding. The objectives of Phase II were drawn from the Next Steps articulated in the 2018 final report of Phase I, namely:

1. to begin to develop action plans to effectively implement the recommendations germane to the recruitment, hiring, retention and professional support of FSL teachers, and
2. to conduct research and develop recommendations that address the recruitment, hiring, and professional support of sufficient numbers of French-speaking education workers (such as Early Childhood Educators\*, Child and Youth Workers, and Educational Assistants).

To achieve the above objectives, work in Phase II has resulted in two sets of Next Steps and Recommendations that will:

- a) expand the implementation strategies to improve the recruitment, hiring, retention and professional support for FSL teachers in Ontario, and
- b) begin to implement strategies to improve the recruitment, hiring, and professional support for education workers working in FSL programs in Ontario.

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**Since 2005, the average annual enrolment growth of French Immersion has been 5.7 %.**  
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**Under the Education Act, French language instruction is mandatory in Ontario schools, with students obliged to study the language for a period of six years from grades 4 through 9. School boards have the option to offer supplementary French language programs, such as French Immersion, based on local demand and resources.**  
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*\*the term Early Childhood Educators includes Registered Early Childhood Educators, also known as Designated Early Childhood Educators*

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## **PHASE II FRAMEWORK AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Given the complexity of workable solutions related to the FSL teacher supply and demand issue, the FSL-Labour Market Partnership Project was structured through the work of four inter-dependent committees. Each committee's work was grounded in the guiding principles of *Program/Policy Memorandum 159, Collaborative Professionalism* to ensure that all voices were heard in order to build shared understanding, ongoing consensus and commitment to the project's objectives.

The framework for meeting the objectives in Phase II is structured through the FSL-Labour Market Partnership committee (FSL-LMPC); the FSL - LMPC Steering committee; the Education Worker committee, and the Research Technical Team. Additionally, an action plan committee was established to support the implementation of each Phase I recommendation. Partnership membership was expanded to include representatives from organizations and associations that support education workers in the province, and to form the Education Worker committee. The full membership of the FSL-LMPC is listed below.

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### **FSL-LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE**

Partnership committee membership continues to include representatives from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF), the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (ECCODE & PCODE), the Ontario Association of Deans of Education (OADE), the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO), Public and Catholic Supervisory Officers Associations of Ontario (OPSOA & OCSOA), all publicly funded English-language public and Catholic school boards in the province through their trustee/school board associations (OPSBA & OCSTA), and the Ontario Ministry of Education. New members included representatives from the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU), and the Ontario Council of Education Workers/Ontario Public Service Employee Union (OCEW/OPSEU). The FSL-LMPC serves as the key decision-making body of this project, makes recommendations linked to research findings and is respectful of collective agreements.

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## KEY PROJECT COMPONENTS

The work of the Labour Market Partnership committee followed two parallel paths in order to realize the key objectives of Phase II. First, the FSL-LMPC self-organized to lead the action planning of the seven recommendations from Phase I related to FSL teacher recruitment, hiring, retention and professional support. Six pilot projects were conducted across the province to operationalize the various recommendations with a view to inform the next steps in Phase III. At the same time, the LMPC supported a research plan to investigate the circumstances of education workers working in FSL programs in Ontario.

Below is a high-level summary of the key work of Phase II. Please refer to the full report for detailed descriptions related to action plans, pilot projects and education worker research organized as Sections 1, 2 and 3.

### SECTION 1: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PHASE I INTO ACTION

All members of the FSL - LMPC collaborated to develop and implement an action plan for each of the Phase I recommendations. Based on their professional interest and expertise with the content of the individual recommendations, two or three members of the LMPC were identified to lead the action planning thereafter and provide regular updates to the committee.

The recommendations and action plans fall into two broad categories: FSL teacher recruitment and hiring, and FSL teacher retention and professional support. While action plans for each recommendation were operationalized individually, it was recognized early in the planning process that the outcomes of individual action plans had strong potential to impact the outcomes of others. Indeed, this interplay was perceived as a likely positive result given the interconnectedness of recruitment, hiring, and professional support identified in Phase I research.

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**Existing tools, such as the CEFR, when implemented and supported more fully, increase the prominence of developing French language proficiency among teachers and students in FSL programs.**  
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## SECTION 2: PILOT PROJECTS TO SUPPORT ACTION PLANS

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FSL teacher retention is influenced by their active participation in high-quality professional learning and the value placed on their work.  
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Associated with the action plans were six pilot projects across the province. The goal of the pilot projects was to implement specific strategies in response to the challenges related to FSL teacher recruitment, hiring, retention and professional support. The six pilot projects selected gathered evidence of impact from small-scale implementation with a view to expand implementation in Phase III of the FSL-Labour Market Partnership project.

### Pilot Projects related to FSL Teacher Recruitment and Hiring

- Assessment Tool and Guidelines for Hiring FSL Teachers - Algoma District School Board (DSB), Near North DSB, and DSB Ontario North East
- Developing FSL Part 2 Additional Qualification Course - Halton DSB
- Subsidizing FSL Part 2 or 3 AQ Courses in Spring/Summer 2019 - Waterloo Catholic DSB

### Pilot Projects related to FSL Teacher Retention and Professional Support

- Retention of FSL Teachers Through CEFR-Inspired Resources and Professional Learning - Renfrew County Catholic DSB
- Apprendre Ensemble - Greater Essex DSB
- French Immersion Teacher Retention and Developing the French Immersion Program - Ontario Principals' Council

## SUMMARY OF SECTIONS 1 AND 2: NEXT STEPS REGARDING ACTION PLANS/PILOT PROJECTS

The FSL-LMPC collaboratively developed the following next steps for Phase III of the labour market partnership initiative. These next steps aim to expand implementation across the province.

### Next Steps regarding Recruitment and Hiring of FSL Teachers in Ontario:

*Recommendation 1a): English language school boards continue to support the expansion of implementation of CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference)-based assessment tools with secondary school-aged students in order to provide a common measure of French language proficiency for graduating students.*

In order to enhance the understanding and use of the CEFR as a meaningful tool in assessing French language proficiency, the following actions are planned for Phase III:

- School boards have committed to review their FSL Board Plans in order to ensure the inclusion of professional learning about the CEFR, and to provide ongoing support for students to access the Diplôme d'études en langue française Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELFL) virtual assessment centre.
- Monitor and support increased participation in the DELFL in 2019-2020.
- The FSL-Labour Market Partnership Project will become a standing agenda item for all Directors' meetings (CODE - PCODE and ECCODE) meetings for the duration of the initiative.

*Recommendation 1b): the FSL-LMPC facilitate a collaborative forum to discuss the viability of creating and consistently using a provincial framework for describing and developing FSL teachers' French proficiency, e.g., informed by the CEFR. Viability discussions to include:*

- *Faculties of Education using/implementing such a provincial framework to develop teacher candidates' French proficiency and French language pedagogy in preparation for employment in FSL programs in Ontario schools.*
- *School boards using the provincial framework to describe their respective proficiency level requirements when recruiting, hiring and developing teachers in their FSL programs.*

Once sufficient data have been collected and analysed from school boards and Faculties of Education regarding the tools used to assess French language proficiency of FSL teacher candidates, the FSL-LMPC will support further efforts for both groups to problem-solve towards greater consistency in the use of such tools. Specifically, the action plan will:

- proceed with gathering sample French language proficiency assessments from school boards used in the recruitment/hiring processes;
- initiate the collection of information from Faculties of Education regarding proficiency assessments used for intake to, and/or graduation from, FSL teacher education programs, all levels; and
- explore the potential for a pilot project between a school board(s) and a Faculty of Education to align proficiency assessments that allow teacher candidates greater predictability in understanding the French language proficiency requirements in school settings.

***Recommendation 2: school boards, teacher federations, the Ontario College of Teachers, and the Ministry of Education collaborate to extend the Ministry's current efforts and further develop a communication strategy to highlight the employment opportunities available in Ontario for FSL teachers. This strategy will target both the international teacher community as well as teachers who received their Canadian teacher-education from outside the province.***

The FSL-LMPC will continue to work with key partners to further develop a communication plan that begins with the distribution and implementation of the following two documents during Phase III of the project:

1. *Pathways to Employment as an FSL Teacher in Ontario* - a guide that identifies the pathways available for individuals interested in pursuing FSL teaching in Ontario; and
2. *Guiding Questions to Review School Boards' Websites Re: Promoting Employment Opportunities for FSL Teachers* - a resource to assist school boards who wish to review and potentially modify their existing websites to showcase FSL job opportunities and related application processes.

***Recommendation 3: Faculties of Education, Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) collaborate to develop a targeted recruitment strategy that maximizes enrolment of teacher candidates in the FSL qualifications streams.***

The FSL-LMPC has a key role to play, in consultation with the Ontario Association of Deans of Education (OADE), by providing ongoing information about the FSL teacher education demand pressures to the full complement of stakeholders involved in the initiative. As such, the following actions will be pursued during Phase III:

- Faculties of Education continue to monitor and maximize, where possible, enrolment in all FSL teacher education programs.
- Identify barriers that may challenge teacher candidates who wish to access FSL qualifications as part of their initial teacher education program and explore workable solutions.
- The FSL-LMPC will continue to collaboratively examine the multiple factors influencing the number of FSL teacher candidates graduating from Faculties of Education.



*Recommendation 4: the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) facilitate forums with English language public school boards' Human Resources officials to share data collected in this project related to effective recruitment and hiring strategies, e.g., use of technology to conduct portions of job interviews, use of social media, pool hiring, hiring timelines, and others.*

Given the impact of pilot projects dedicated to effective FSL teacher recruitment and hiring practices, the FSL-Labour Market Partnership Project will expand work in Phase III regarding French as a Second Language teacher recruitment and hiring as follows:

- Expand support for boards to collaborate to develop French language proficiency assessments based on the CEFR.
- Expand support for boards to provide targeted professional learning opportunities to occasional teachers with FSL Part I who require support to further develop French proficiency to levels needed for teachers to access the full range of FSL teaching opportunities.
- Create a provincially organized pathway for FSL-qualified teachers who have been unsuccessful in securing employment as an FSL teacher and who require improvement to their proficiency in French language.

**Next Steps regarding Retention and Professional Support of FSL teachers in Ontario:**

*Recommendation 1: the Ministry of Education provide financial subsidies for FSL teachers to enrol in courses and other language learning opportunities that support French language development, e.g., language development courses, general interest courses taught in French, language immersion experiences, Additional Qualification courses taught in French.*

Given the impact of pilot projects dedicated to effective FSL retention and professional support, the FSL-Labour Market Partnership Project will expand work in Phase III regarding French as a Second Language teacher retention and professional support as follows:

- Expand support in order to document the specific component parts of successful professional learning models for FSL teachers in a way that could be replicated or modified to local school board contexts.
- Expand support for school boards to collaborate with existing Additional Qualifications (AQ) providers to offer subsidized FSL AQ courses reflecting local board contexts in order to build professional communities of practice.

- Expand support of subsidies for a range of professional development opportunities for current or potential FSL teachers with a focus on language and cultural development.
- Expand support for organizations/boards to provide professional learning for principals/vice principals regarding leadership specific to FSL programs.

*Recommendation 2: key stakeholders develop a coordinated provincial strategy for professional learning that articulates a range of professional learning opportunities for FSL teachers that includes:*

- *being responsive to professional learning needs identified by FSL teachers and school boards;*
- *developing teachers' own French language proficiency;*
- *professional learning opportunities that span the first five years of an FSL teacher's employment in a board and provides continuity with the New Teacher Induction Program;*
- *providing funding as an incentive to participate in French language and cultural immersion experiences.*

This recommendation led to the development of a professional learning framework for FSL teachers accompanied by supportive strategies and resources. In Phase III, the action team will:

- develop a step-wise communication plan to accompany the document, *Strategies and Resources to Support Professional Learning for FSL Teachers* (Appendix I in full report). This document identifies strategies and resources available to school boards, teacher federations, professional associations and others supporting the professional learning of FSL teachers that build a community of practice to enhance French language and FSL teaching skills.
- conduct a provincial scan of school boards to determine the range of methods used to identify the professional learning needs of FSL teachers and education workers in FSL programs.
- based on the provincial scan, create sample instruments for school boards to use in identifying professional learning needs of FSL teachers and education workers in FSL programs.

*Recommendation 3: the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) facilitate forums with English language public school boards' Human Resources and Program officials to share research that identifies issues that may affect the long-term retention of teachers in FSL programs.*

Given the multi-layered nature of this recommendation, OPSBA is committed to providing ongoing support to all school boards by:

- using results from related FSL Labour Market Partnership pilot projects to facilitate follow-up opportunities with FSL program coordinators/consultants, school board leaders, and Human Resources (HR) personnel to expand discussions about perceived barriers and effective practices that affect FSL teacher retention.
- continuing to facilitate discussion with school board leaders to identify mitigating practices that respond to the research findings from the Phase I report (e.g., access to suitable teaching resources and workspaces).
- identifying and sharing innovative staffing and/or timetabling models in schools that support FSL teacher retention.
- supporting broader sharing of Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) projects, many of which have focused on FSL teaching contexts.
- working with HR officials to establish processes that may assist in quantifying the number of FSL teachers seeking alternate teaching assignments.



### **SECTION 3: RESEARCH REGARDING EDUCATION WORKERS IN FSL PROGRAMS**

Phase II of the FSL-Labour Market Partnership included a research component into the recruitment, hiring, retention and professional support of education workers supporting FSL programs. In this context, education workers include registered early childhood educators (RECEs), educational assistants (EAs), and child and youth workers (CYWs). In varying capacities, education workers may work in the full range of FSL programs offered in Ontario schools and are an important part in helping teachers and students meet FSL program objectives.

The purpose of this research aimed to examine the following questions:



The questions above span the recruitment and transition-to-working period in order to describe both the experience of French-speaking education workers in Ontario as well as factors affecting supply and demand. Survey questions for school boards included:

<p><b>How many education workers work in FSL programs and to what extent?</b></p>	<p><b>What processes are used to assign education workers to FSL programs?</b></p>	<p><b>Are the French-speaking skills of education workers part of the recruitment process?</b></p>
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Surveys and focus groups were also used to gather the recruitment, hiring and working experiences of education workers in FSL programs to explore questions such as:

<p><b>How did you come to work in an FSL program as an education worker?</b></p>	<p><b>How does your ability to speak French affect your work in FSL programs?</b></p>	<p><b>What professional learning experiences have you had to support your work in FSL programs?</b></p>
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## WHAT WE LEARNED

From the HR perspective in this project:

- Of the total EW workforce, education workers allocated to FSL programs range from a low of 15% (RECEs, CYWs) to a high of 18% (elementary EAs).
- 40% of school boards reported inquiring about the French speaking ability of early childhood educators specifically and 14% of school boards followed a similar process when recruiting and hiring educational assistants.

From the Education Worker perspective in this project:

- Registered Early Childhood Educators spend more time in FSL programs than other education worker groups.
- most EWs working in FSL programs did not perceive their limited French skills to be a deterrent to fulfilling their job requirements.
- most education workers expressed strong interest in improving their oral French skills through professional learning opportunities.

### Recommendations for Phase III regarding Education Worker Research

The recommendations below represent the consensus of the FSL-LMP committee members achieved through collaborative professionalism. It is, therefore, recommended that:

1. Education workers be provided with professional learning opportunities germane to supporting students in FSL programs, where possible;
2. School boards consider adjustments to their recruitment and hiring procedures for education workers to include inquiries about applicants' ability to speak French;
3. Education workers' ability to speak French becomes a consideration when assigning EWs to work in FSL programs.

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*“Now I’m more confident to read stories and allowing myself to make mistakes [in French] and show them that it’s ok, I’m learning too.”*

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## Overall Phase II Project Summary and Next Steps

Based on the successful completion of the Phase II deliverables, OPSBA has submitted an application to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) for a Phase III Ontario Labour Market Partnership Project based on the identified Next Steps and Education Worker Recommendations described in this summary report.



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From an FSL teacher:

*"This module provided an excellent opportunity to improve my French language skills in a safe and encouraging environment amongst my colleagues. These kinds of experiences allow for important dialogues to occur and collaboration to happen."*

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From a school Principal:

*"I am committed to increasing the visibility of French at my school next year."*

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Please see the full *Moving Forward with Perspectives Regarding the French as a Second Language Labour Market Issue* report at [www.opsba.org](http://www.opsba.org)