Developing a French-Language Proficiency Assessment Toolkit and Resource Guide

Year 1

A survey of the assessment practices of faculties of education and school districts when preparing and hiring FSL teachers

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Satisfying the demand for French as a Second Language (FSL) teachers for Core/Basic[1] and French Immersion programs has been a persistent labour market challenge in Canadian schools for many years. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) led one related initiative sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. Throughout the three phases of this initiative entitled, *Meeting Labour Market Needs for French as a Second Language Instruction in* Ontario 2017-2021, there were a number of high-potential strategies that emerged which required further exploration. These strategies emerged as complex, interrelated and multi-faceted and required the collaborative commitment from many education partners.

In early 2020, OPSBA was approved to lead three subsequent initiatives as part of the *FSL Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy in French Immersion and French Second Language Programs*, an initiative funded in part by the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Province of Ontario. These initiatives support the public education sector and are envisioned to be three years in length and pan-Canadian in scope.

The following represents a brief outline of the initiatives:

1. **Recruitment Guide for English-Language School Boards**
   This initiative's key objective is to develop a guide for English-language school boards that supports the effective recruitment and hiring of FSL teachers. Research will be conducted to determine higher-yield strategies and explore alternatives that would ultimately increase the overall supply of FSL teachers.

2. **French-Language Proficiency Assessment Toolkit and Resource Guide**
   This initiative explores existing research on the assessment of second language proficiency in teaching contexts. This information will inform the development of a toolkit of evidence-informed assessment practices that could be used in various education contexts to review current French-language proficiency assessment processes as FSL teachers prepare to enter the job market.

3. **Supporting Principals to Address Challenges in Retention and Professional Support of French as a Second Language Teachers**
   This initiative recognizes the important role of school administrators in facilitating FSL teacher retention and professional support. The overall objective is to conduct research in order to facilitate school administrator engagement, share innovative practices and ultimately build a compendium of strategies that positively affect FSL teacher retention.

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[1] For the purposes of this report the terms Core French and Core/Basic French programs are interchangeable and reflect the different terms used across Canada.

During the first year, each initiative focused on exploratory research to better understand the pan-Canadian context. In order to deliver a comprehensive set of strategies, practices and resources, OPSBA established an Initiative Coordinating Team (ICT) consisting of all three project team members which include researchers and educational leaders with expertise in the field of FSL. The ICT met regularly to share perceptions, problem-solve as required, and align/streamline efforts where possible. The ICT also acted in the capacity of a research review committee which led to valuable feedback for implementation efficacy, and to provide guidance with issues of research practice, and ultimately to inform the recommendations and next steps for each initiative.

Given the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on all levels of the education sector, research efforts of each initiative encountered notable challenges with respect to communication and data gathering across the country. Nonetheless, the persistence and generosity of many members of the public- and higher-education communities have led to the collection and analysis of meaningful, authentic data for each initiative.

Appendix B includes the Initiative Coordinating Team membership.

Executive Summary

Prior research conducted by the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) into the French as a Second Language (FSL) teacher shortage issue concluded that a better understanding of how the French-language proficiency of prospective FSL teachers is assessed has the potential to improve teaching and learning in Canadian FSL classrooms, inform FSL teachers' professional learning needs, ensure that hiring processes are fair, and clarify for upcoming FSL teachers the language proficiency expectations needed to support learning French as a second language. To support this initiative, funding was provided by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario to conduct a pan-Canadian study of the French-language proficiency assessment practices that are in place for prospective FSL teachers.

The key components of this initiative are:
- A review of relevant research, prior projects, and French language assessments;
- An empirical study examining the French-language proficiency practices used by school districts during hiring and faculties of education during admissions or teacher education;
- The creation of collaborations and pilot projects to implement our findings into practice.

The review of research identified the importance of language teachers being proficient in the target language alongside known, effective practices in language assessment for teachers. These practices include targeting language skills likely to be used by teachers, using a variety of assessments, making assessment components authentic to teaching, and establishing clear language proficiency expectations.

The review of research was followed by a three-phase empirical study that collected data from school districts and faculties of education. For both districts and faculties, data were collected from websites, survey responses, and interviews. The website, survey, and interview findings were consistent, enhancing our confidence in the robustness of these findings. These findings are summarized below.

- All faculties of education and almost all school districts assess applicants' French-language proficiency.
- Both school districts and faculties of education prefer to use internally developed assessments, although faculties of education were more likely to use standardized French proficiency tests such as the Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELF).
- Speaking and writing skills were priorities. Speaking was given the highest priority, especially by school districts.

- The content, format, and expected achievement standards for internally developed assessments were generally not communicated to applicants.
- For school districts, the most common assessment format was to ask some questions in French during the employment interview. For faculties of education, counting course credits was the most commonly used assessment.
- Faculties of education use French-language proficiency assessments for formative as well as summative purposes. This practice is less common with school districts.
- Few school districts and approximately half of the faculties of education could articulate the rationale and history of their assessment.
- Examinations for patterns of response (e.g., by district or faculty size) yielded no discernable patterns. Provincial differences existed where policies exist relating to French-language proficiency assessment for teachers or teacher candidates.
- Language proficiency assessors were most often school administrators in school districts and French curriculum instructors in faculties of education.
- Evaluation of applicants' performance tended to be impression-based in school districts. Faculties of education were more likely to use rubrics or other scoring guides when evaluating applicants.

Upon completion of data collection for the empirical study, a call for proposals was sent out to school districts and faculties of education inviting them to apply for pilot project funding. Pilot projects needed to be collaborative and relate to French-language proficiency assessments for teachers or teacher candidates. We received 13 proposals and funded 11 of them. Some groups' projects were similar, so they were asked to collaborate resulting in nine separate pilot projects in total. These projects target diverse issues in French-language proficiency assessment for FSL teachers including:

- Setting common French-language proficiency standards across school districts,
- Using assessment information for formative purposes and teacher development,
- Aligning proficiency standards and assessments between school districts and faculties of education,
- Supporting school administrators in their assessment of French-language proficiency of FSL teachers,
- Establishing a common language proficiency assessment framework across school districts and faculties of education.

Pilot projects were selected based upon their coherence with the aims of this initiative and applicants' willingness to collaborate with other educational stakeholders. Pilot project teams will provide regular updates that will be used to inform the development of the assessment toolkit. The results of our research review and empirical study, combined with experiences and findings from the pilot projects will inform the future development of an assessment toolkit. This toolkit is

designed to provide sample assessment tools, language proficiency frameworks for teachers, and performance standards that school districts and faculties of education may use to develop and refine their own tools. The intent of the toolkit is not only to improve French-language proficiency assessment practices, but also to facilitate clearer communication of proficiency expectations to prospective FSL teachers.

Background and Rationale

In 2017, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) was approved for Ontario Labour Market Partnership funding to conduct research into the French as a Second Language (FSL) teacher shortage issue in Ontario. An important part of this work was to partner with key stakeholders to develop recommendations towards workable solutions to this persistent and growing labour market challenge. This work revealed that 90% of Ontario school districts conduct some form of French-language proficiency assessment for applicants to FSL teaching positions. One of the recommendations arising from this study was a deeper investigation into how two key stakeholders, school districts and faculties of education, assess the French-language proficiency of those wishing to become FSL teachers. Recognizing that the shortage of job-ready FSL teachers is not only an issue in Ontario, but a Canada-wide problem, the Department of Canadian Heritage, as part of their *FSL Teacher Recruitment and Hiring Strategy in French Immersion and French Second Language Programs*, jointly funded this study with the Government of Ontario.

Clear, valid assessments of French-language proficiency have the potential to improve teaching and learning in Canadian FSL classrooms, inform professional learning needs, ensure more equitable hiring processes, and provide future teachers with well understood French proficiency expectations needed in FSL teaching. Given the range and potential impact of these benefits, it is critical that we begin to understand what assessment tools and practices are most likely to better predict French-language proficiency of FSL teacher applicants. This is a long-term goal, and this study starts that process through a literature review and an empirical study. The literature review examines relevant research and publications to determine known, effective practices related to second language assessment for teaching. Our empirical study identifies French-language proficiency assessment processes and tools used by faculties of education and school districts across Canada.

Together, these two components of the study give stakeholders an awareness of what language proficiency assessment practices and tools are used in the development and hiring of FSL teachers in Canada, how satisfied stakeholders are with those practices and tools, how well current practices align with effective language assessment practices identified in the literature, and how these assessments can contribute positively to FSL education in Canada. The data and understanding gained from the scan and analysis will inform a framework for developing a common French-language assessment toolkit. The toolkit itself is anticipated to be useful to stakeholder organizations such as faculties of education and school boards to help them review current assessment protocols for clarity and validity as appropriate to their context and needs. The end goal is that assessments of prospective FSL teachers' French-language proficiency leads to informed decisions relating to admissions, hiring, and professional learning.

The last component of this initiative is funding pilot projects across Canada related to French-language proficiency assessments for teachers. These pilot projects are intended to facilitate

collaboration among stakeholders (i.e., faculties of education and school districts) in the hopes that these collaborations will lead not only to thoughtful analysis of assessment tools and practices currently in use, but also towards more consistent, transparent French-language proficiency expectations for those wishing to become FSL teachers. The pilot projects are critical for implementing the findings of this research into action.

Research Aims and Methods

The aims of this initiative and our research questions

The ultimate goal of this initiative is to support quality FSL education in Canada by addressing longstanding challenges with FSL teacher recruitment and retention. Our immediate contribution towards this goal is to provide a deeper understanding of how language proficiency assessments used in selecting and developing FSL teacher candidates, and in hiring FSL teachers, may contribute to higher quality teaching and learning. To that end, there are three components to our work:

1. A review of relevant research, prior projects, and French language assessments
2. An empirical study examining the French-language proficiency practices used by school districts during hiring and faculties of education during admissions or teacher education
3. The creation of collaborations and pilot projects to implement our findings into practice

These three components support the main goals of our work, which are to:

- establish what French-language proficiency assessments are currently used by school districts across Canada;
- establish what French-language proficiency assessments are currently used by faculties of education across Canada;
- use those assessments to infer how French-language proficiency is defined by school districts and faculties of education;
- describe contextual factors that may affect the implementation of the aforementioned assessments;
- describe supports offered to pre- and in-service teachers to help them develop their French-language proficiency;
- review relevant research literature that may support the goals of this initiative;
- investigate and initiate partnerships among stakeholders such as faculties of education, school districts, language teacher associations and ministries of education, and
- begin the development of a French-language proficiency assessment toolkit that may serve as a resource for stakeholders.

Our empirical research aimed to answer the following broad research questions:

- What French-language proficiency assessment tools and practices are currently used by faculties of education for purposes of admission into, or graduation from, teacher education programs?
- What decisions do faculties of education make based on the French-language proficiency assessment results, and why?
- What French-language proficiency assessment tools and practices are currently used by school districts for purposes of hiring?
- What decisions do school districts make based on the French-language proficiency assessment results, and why?

These research questions address the core goals of this initiative. However, the exploratory nature of this research demanded that a breadth of questions and issues be explored related to French-language proficiency assessments of those planning to become FSL teachers. Thus, we designed our data collection instruments to provide information on the following supplementary research questions:

- What processes have school districts and faculties of education put in place to review their assessment results and refine their assessment protocols?
- What challenges and opportunities do faculties of education and school districts encounter in their current French-language proficiency assessment protocols?
- What language skills are being prioritized, if any, in French-language proficiency assessment tools and processes?
- What supports do faculties and districts have in place to help FSL teacher candidates/applicants develop their French-language proficiency assessments if needed?

How do we define "assessment"?

For this initiative, we opted to define assessment in broad terms. This choice was made to reflect the many ways Canadian school districts and faculties of education collect information about a potential FSL teacher's French-language proficiency. Thus, interviews, third-party tests, emails, course credit history, informal interactions in French, and other methods are included as assessments in our work. Our definition of assessment is less related to the method of data gathering than to its intent. If a school district or faculty of education undertakes an action to learn about a person's French-language proficiency, we count the action as an assessment.

Data Collection Methods

As is appropriate for an exploratory study, we used multiple methods of data collection (Creswell, 2014). These methods included website scans, surveys, and interviews. A description of how each method of data collection was enacted is given below.

Preliminary Data Collection

Before formal data collection started, we had conversations with human resources personnel in two school districts and people connected to FSL teacher education in 12 faculties of education. The purpose of these conversations was twofold. The first purpose was to gain an initial understanding of the perspectives of participants. This was done to inform the initial development of our survey and interview items. The second purpose was to establish contacts and connections that might help increase our sample size for formal data collection. Notes of these conversations were taken, but do not form part of our reported data set here. This is because the conversations took place before we had completed our ethics process and because the informal nature of the conversations means that data were not collected in a systematic fashion suitable for rigorous analysis.

Website Scans

For faculties of education, we scanned the websites of 52 faculties of education, covering every Canadian faculty of education. We report on 38 different faculties of education, as not all faculties offer pathways to become FSL teachers. For school districts we scanned 86 websites. For provinces with fewer than 10 school districts, we examined the website of every district in the province. For provinces with more than 10 districts, we chose a sample of 10 districts that included the largest cities, some suburbs, and some rural districts. Districts were selected from different geographical areas of the province.

Survey

Our primary data collection instrument for both faculties of education and school districts was a survey. Separate surveys were created for faculties of education and school districts (See Appendices C and). Survey development started with a review of the research questions and the development of an item bank. A first draft of the survey was created using Qualtrics survey software and this first draft was revised based upon discussions among the research team. These discussions were informed by our own experiences completing the draft survey online and by our preliminary discussions with faculties of education and school districts. Once the first draft of the survey had been established, we presented it to two groups of researchers who completed the survey online and offered feedback. This feedback was incorporated into the third draft of the survey. Finally, the survey was trialled with members of our target populations (3 faculties of education and 5 school districts). Their feedback was incorporated into the final draft of the survey that was implemented for the research initiative. Changes made to the survey at this point were minimal (e.g., fixing typographical errors) and so we included the data from our trial sample in our data set.

Interviews

Interview data provided a richer, more detailed data set than what was available through our surveys or the website scan. We recognized there may be instances where interview participants may not have completed the survey. Thus, for both faculties of education and

school districts, we created separate interview protocols for participants who completed the survey and those who did not (see Appendix E). The survey protocol for survey completers focused on providing additional detail and context to their survey responses. The protocol for the non-completers recreated many of the survey items and incorporated questions that asked participants to provide context and rationale for their French-language proficiency assessments. Like the surveys, the initial draft of each interview protocol was developed using the research questions as a foundation. First drafts were revised and modified based upon discussions within the team and then presented to two external research teams for feedback. A second draft of each protocol was created based upon this feedback. This draft was used with no further trialling. The rationale behind not trialling the interview protocols was that if the protocol proved unsatisfactory after two or three interviews, we could meet as a group and modify it. This step proved unnecessary as the protocol functioned well.

Modifications due to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges to all organizations, and educational institutions were forced to make radical changes to their operations in a short period of time. Addressing these changes effectively continues to be a top priority for faculties of education and school districts. Thus, securing adequate numbers of participants in our research proved challenging. To maximize the number of participants we engaged in the following strategies:

- We allowed for the survey to be completed orally over the phone. Several participants did not want to complete the survey but were willing to be interviewed. In interviewing these participants, we ensured that responses addressed all survey items.
- Instead of sampling the faculties of education, we contacted every single faculty.
- We accepted different forms of response (e.g., emails, informal conversations, surveys, interviews, policy documents).
- We leveraged our personal contacts when making requests to participate in the research.

Sample size and limitations

We obtained data in some form from 38 faculties of education and 112 school districts. This sample exceeds those of prior studies (e.g., Boutin, Chinien, Boutin, 1999; Masson, Larson, Desgroseilliers, Car & Lapkin, 2019, 2019; Salvatori & MacFarlane, 2009). Our larger sample means we were able to include data from all provinces and territories and from different contexts. These contexts include English-language, bilingual, and French-language universities, large and small B.Ed. programs, and rural and urban school districts. There are some limitations with our sample. As is typical in studies where participation is voluntary, our survey and interview samples are not representative of the overall population. This is especially true of our sample of school districts. Thus, the findings from these phases of the study cannot be extrapolated to make conclusions about general practices. This is not a concern as the study

does not aim to make generalized statements or statistical conclusions about the prevalence of assessments. Rather, the aim is to better understand the range of practices that are in place.

Review of prior research

Introduction

Teachers matter. While this statement is obvious to anyone who has gone through school, it is also borne out by research. Hattie and Yate's (2014) meta-analysis of 800 studies found that teachers make a bigger difference to student learning than parents, peers, principals, or any other factor outside the student themselves. Given the importance of teachers, it is natural that school districts are keenly interested in ensuring they hire competent, effective teachers. While Canada has been blessed with an abundant supply of qualified teachers (Coughlan, 2017) who are well trained and effective, there are recent concerns about a teacher shortage (MacDonald, 2019). This concern is especially acute with FSL teachers, where a shortage has been noted for some time (CBC, 2017; Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2016; Swanson & Mason, 2018).

This shortage is due to a number of factors, including the growing demand for FSL programs in Canadian schools. Some Canadian jurisdictions have mandatory French language instruction for some portion of K-12 schooling (e.g., Ontario, New Brunswick) and in all provinces, French Immersion is a popular programme (Dicks & Genesee, 2017). The number of Canadian students enrolled in French Immersion increased by almost 70,000 students between 2015 and 2019 (Statistics Canada, 2019). Consequently, there is a persistent need for qualified, competent FSL teachers and strong evidence that finding such teachers is a challenge for school districts (Alphonso, 2019; Karsenti, Collin, Villeneuve, Dumouchel, & Roy, 2008; Masson, Larson, Desgroseilliers, Carr, & Lapkin, 2019; Veilleux & Bournot-Trites, 2005; Jack & Nyman, 2018).

Defining "qualified" in the Canadian context is easy because all provinces and territories have clear certification requirements for FSL teachers although requirements vary across the country. Defining "competent" is not as easy. There has been substantial discussion in the educational research literature as to what constitutes "competent" teaching (e.g., Heneman & Milanowski, 2004; Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Pantić & Wubbels, 2010; Selvi, 2010). This review will not enter into that debate. Instead, it will focus on one important component of teaching effectiveness for French as a second language (FSL) teachers (and second language teachers in general)–target language proficiency. Target language (TL) proficiency has long been discussed as fundamental for effective second language (L2) teaching (Canale & Swain,1980; Faez & Karas, 2017; Richards, Conway, Roskvist, & Harvey, 2013).

The amount of published research specifically connecting French-language proficiency and FSL teaching is small (Arnott, Masson, & Lapkin, 2019; Chambless, 2012). Thus, we include research from all L2 language teaching, including English as a second language (ESL). English is the most widely studied language in the world, resulting in a large body of research related to L2 teaching. While we have availed ourselves to that literature, first priority has been given to research specific to FSL. When such research was not available, we used relevant research that examined L2 teaching in any target language. This review is not designed to be

exhaustive–it aims to give the reader an understanding of the current orthodoxy surrounding definitions of language proficiency, how it is assessed, and its importance for L2 teaching.

To frame the research questions in the context of FSL language proficiency assessment, relevant literature will be reviewed to examine the following questions:

- What is language proficiency?
- Why is language proficiency essential for FSL teachers?
- What are the consequences of FSL teachers having low language proficiency?
- Why is French-language proficiency assessment important?
- What should form the basis of language proficiency assessments?
- What happens in other countries regarding language proficiency assessment for teaching?

The sections of the literature review will be followed by a synthesis of the findings that examines their implications for French-language proficiency assessments of Canadian teachers and teacher candidates.

What is language proficiency?

It is understood that proficient FSL teachers are needed in Canadian classrooms, but how is language proficiency defined? Language use is complex, multi-faceted, and context-dependent. Devising a precise, measurable definition of language proficiency is challenging (Bachman, 2007) and as a result, a variety of definitions exist in the literature. This variety is partly due to the fact that proficiency is a relational construct that depends on the interaction of many variables (Richards, Conway, Roskvist and Harvey, 2013). Moreover, language proficiency is bound by context and defined by the type of language required for each situation. As such, finding a suitable definition is problematic and challenging (Faez, Karas & Uchihara, 2019). Still, there are some areas of agreement on what it means to be proficient in a language. There is consensus that being proficient in a language means being able to communicate one's meaning and correctly interpret the meanings of others (e.g., ACTFL, 2013; Bachman, 1991; Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Schmidgall, Oliveri, Duke, & Grissom, 2019).

When asked, people in general will answer that someone who is proficient in a second or foreign language sounds fluent (De Jong, 2018) or like a native[2] speaker. This narrow definition of language proficiency is not only inaccurate (Sandoval, 2019) but is even more challenging in the context of FSL teaching as many factors apart from L2 proficiency contribute to effective

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[2] In this discussion, while the term "native" is used regularly in language proficiency research to express a degree, sometimes desired, of language proficiency, it is recognized that using the term "unreflectively is to engage in a gesture of othering that operates on an axis of empowerment and disempowerment" (Bonfiglio, 2013:29). The term "native" is used in this study while acknowledging uses in other contexts that privilege and oppress identified groups.

pedagogy (Aoki, 2013). In fact, there is some evidence that native speakers can be less effective second language teachers (Kissau & Algozzine, 2017).

Definitions of language proficiency specific to second language teaching have been developed over the years. For instance, CMEC (2013) has defined language proficiency for teachers with specific attention to the functional uses of language such as providing instructions, facilitating student interactions, and communicating with peers.

Farrell and Richards (2007) conceptualize language proficiency in terms of a relationship between teachers' subject knowledge and their classroom practice by delineating seven aspects of teaching. The key benefits of strong language proficiency include: the exploitation of target language resources; the provision of appropriate language models, the provision of corrective feedback; the use of the TL to facilitate classroom management; the provision of differentiated, accurate explanations; the provision of rich language input; and the ability to improvise.

Freeman, Katz, Gomez, and Burns (2015) report on the development of the "English-for-teaching" language proficiency construct by an international group of language teachers to reconceptualize what English is needed in the classroom. They include two types of proficiency in their construct: the classroom-specific English needed to explain vocabulary and provide comprehensible instructions to students, and the content or subject matter. The authors point out that in language classrooms grounded in communicative language teaching (CLT) methods, it is critical that teachers are able to use the target language in different ways. This includes modeling proper language usage, providing instructions and direction, providing feedback, modifying language use to suit the learners, and interacting with learning resources. In short, language teachers need wide-ranging language abilities.

Language proficiency guidelines have been developed by various organizations. In the United States, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines are widely used. These guidelines describe different proficiency standards (Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, Novice) for the language skills of speaking, writing, listening and reading. The ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is a recognized examination that is recognized by some Canadian university admissions departments and used extensively in the United States to assess the target language proficiency of current or future language teachers.

Canada has its own Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB). The French version of the benchmarks (Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadien) was developed in 2006 and updated in 2012. The CLB was developed originally for immigration purposes, although some authors feel it should be used for educational purposes (Saif & ElAtia, 2020). This is despite explicit cautions from the CLB developers that the benchmarks are not designed to inform educational programs (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, ND).

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is a widely used language proficiency framework. The CEFR and associated tests such as the DELF, have been influential in

Canadian FSL education (Vandergrift, 2015). Developed by the Council of Europe in 2001, the framework offers "a metalanguage for discussing the complexity of language proficiency" (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 22), a common basis to describe and measure language proficiency across a broad continuum of competences. These competencies illustrate the skills, strategies and knowledge language learners need in order to communicate effectively at different proficiency levels in tasks that involve reception activities (listening, reading and audio-visual reception), production activities (spoken and written production), interaction (spoken, written and online) and mediation (texts, concepts and communication).

Under the CEFR, language performance is evaluated by sets of criteria that describe the quality of performance, such as in expressing an opinion or writing a report (Council of Europe, 2001). Introduced in Canada in 2006, it has had far-reaching implications for education in FSL because of its alignment with Canada's aims to promote bilingualism by means of incorporating students' plurilingualism in a multicultural society (CMEC report, 2010) and because it provides opportunities for transferring proficiency levels into transparent and clear curricula and to inform teaching, learning and assessment. In addition, in 2018 the CEFR was expanded to include additional aspects such as collaborative learning and mediating concepts (Council of Europe, 2018), making it well suited to educational contexts.

Why is language proficiency essential for FSL teachers?

French-language proficiency is an essential component of successful FSL teaching. (Boutin, Chinien & Boutin, 1999; Painchaud, 1990; Richards et al., 2013). This is true for all L2 teachers because in language classrooms the subject matter is also the language of instruction (Borg, 2006; Cooke & Faez, 2018). This means that not only is knowledge of the language required for teaching purposes, but proficiency in the language is also needed for communicative purposes. The notion that language proficiency is needed for teachers of second languages is supported in the academic literature (Freeman et al., 2015). Valmori and De Costa (2016) summarize the importance of proficiency succinctly by stating that, "good language learning only takes place if there's good language teaching… (and) for that to happen, language teachers need to be proficient, confident and motivated." (p. 46).

Numerous studies have concluded that having a strong command of the language taught is a key characteristic of effective teachers (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2013; Shin, 2008; Tsang, 2017;) and how the language teacher uses the target language partly contributes to the success or failure of the learning that occurs in the classroom (Kim & Elder, 2008). Target language proficiency has long been associated with a teacher's confidence in the classroom (e.g., Murdoch, 1994), but recent emphasis on communicative language teaching may have intensified this relationship (Freeman et al., 2015; Richards et al., 2013). At the very least, this emphasis has broadened the types of language required by L2 teachers. An FSL teacher who is using French to give instructions, provide feedback, create authentic communication opportunities for students, and enforce classroom rules will require an expanded repertoire of vocabulary, register, and coping strategies compared to one who conducts their instruction mostly in English.

Not all FSL teachers, however, have developed the linguistic agility required to effectively facilitate learning French (Carr, 2007). Low target language proficiency coupled with the increased language required for communicative language teaching, can have negative consequences for teachers' feelings of competence and confidence which affects their ability to provide effective instruction (Nishino, 2012; Thompson & Woodman, 2019; Swanson, 2012). This creates problems for school districts as feelings of lower professional efficacy may contribute to higher attrition rates, compounding the FSL teacher shortage (Mehdinezhad & Mansouri, 2016).

What are the consequences of FSL teachers having low language proficiency?

School districts aim to recruit proficient FSL teachers but report that up to 25% of the applicants do not have the French-language proficiency required for employment (Ontario Public School Boards' Association, 2018). This is consistent with reports (such as Carr, 2007; Masson et al., 2019) indicating that a high percentage of teachers lack sufficient linguistic competencies in French. This issue is not new; for example, Bayliss and Vignola (2001) cited Majhanovich's (1990) study involving faculties of education and school districts reported that language proficiency was considered the most significant challenge among teacher candidates and potential hires. The consequence of not finding proficient teachers is that personnel at some school districts admit to lowering their language skill requirements to avoid having teaching vacancies and to fill positions (Kline-Martin, 2018; Masson et al., 2019; Salvatori, 2009).

Prospective and beginning teachers are aware of the importance of language proficiency in the classroom and a relatively significant number are concerned as to whether or not they are proficient enough (Bayliss & Vignola, 2001). This can lead them, with alarming frequency, to having feelings of anxiety and inadequacy (French & Collins, 2014; Richard, Czaja, Green, & Smith, 2017). In a study conducted by Cooke and Faez (2018) to understand the link between teacher candidates' self-efficacy beliefs, that is their confidence in their competencies, and their language proficiency at the end of their B.Ed. program uncovered that their feelings of self-efficacy were generally low.

Teachers' lack of confidence due to their lack of proficiency undermines their ability to teach effectively (Pachler et al., 2007). This, in turn, affects the quality of the instruction students receive (Aoki, 2013; Salvatori, 2009). Richards, Conway, Roskvist and Harvey (2013) have listed coping behaviours commonly displayed by teachers who are not proficient. Some of them include teaching in a prescriptive manner, adhering strictly to textbooks rather than integrating authentic materials into their teaching materials, and providing inaccurate corrective feedback. These teaching practices work against student engagement and effective learning outcomes (Masson et al., 2019).

The first years of teaching are critical to all teachers; those who opt to leave teaching usually do so during this period of their career (Karsenti & Collin, 2013). Canadian estimates are that about 40% of teachers leave the profession during this critical period (Clandidin et al., 2015). Among

beginning FSL teachers, a variety of reasons contribute to the attrition[3] rate, but a lack of French proficiency is one that is cited regularly (Leif & Collins, 2014). This makes sense as low language proficiency may undermine one's confidence as a teacher and teachers who do not feel confident in their ability to teach effectively are more likely to leave the FSL programs (Cooke & Faez, 2018). Other empirical research indicates that L2 teachers with higher levels of language proficiency report greater confidence in the classroom and tend to stay in the job longer (Swanson, 2012). This appears to be especially true for teachers who are just starting their career (Swanson, 2010). Note that it is possible for FSL teachers to leave FSL teaching but stay in teaching. We did not uncover any empirical research related to this topic, but our own conversations with both academics and school districts have given us anecdotal evidence that many FSL teachers leave the subject area but not the profession. This would be a topic worthy of future study. If this is true, then it may indicate that a portion of FSL teachers enjoy teaching as a profession but leave for reasons specific to FSL.

The FSL teacher attrition rate exacerbates the existing shortage of FSL teachers recognized by researchers (Kline-Martin, 2018; Masson et al., 2018; Jack & Nyman, 2018), the government (Masson et al., 2018), and the media (Bains, 2018; Dangerfield, 2019; Hunter, 2019). The shortage is so acutely felt that some school districts experiencing significant increases in the demand for French Immersion programs have introduced control systems, such as lotteries or enrolment caps, that reduce the demand for FSL teachers (Alphonso, 2020). Other school districts have even announced the potential elimination of FSL programs due to the lack of teachers (Alphonso, 2019).

French proficiency among FSL teachers is not a new phenomenon. Research conducted since the 1980s has shown teacher proficiency to be an ongoing problem in Canadian FSL education (Smith, 1989). Despite the persistence and prevalence of this issue, there is minimal research related to it. In our search for studies related to the topic of FSL teacher proficiency in Canada we found that the latest publication had been Veilleux and Bournot-Trites' research in 2005. We compared our search to the Arnott, Masson and Lapkin (2019) review of the literature articles relating to FSL education in Canada from 2000 -2017 and discovered that teachers' language proficiency was not one of the issues revealed in the study, nor was it included as an area of priority for future research.

The dearth of research related to FSL teachers' French-language proficiency combined with the importance of French-language proficiency as a foundation for effective L2 teaching reinforces the need to study the assessment of French-language proficiency in the context of teacher candidates prior to being admitted to faculties of education, and of FSL teacher applicants during the hiring process at the school district level.

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[3] Attrition is an umbrella term that includes teachers who leave the profession outright but may also describe FSL teachers who choose to teach programs other than FSL, often resulting in the same net effect on FSL teacher availabililty.

Why is French-language proficiency assessment important?

Candidates for positions in all industries are assessed during the hiring process in order to ascertain if prospective employees possess the skills necessary to perform well in the workplace (Mercer, 2012). In fact, it would be accurate to say that any hiring process constitutes an assessment. Hiring effective teachers is critical, given the impact teachers have in a student's learning. Thus, the assessments made during the hiring of teachers are an important component in the overall outcomes of an educational program. Equally important, are the assessments made by faculties of education when admitting or graduating teacher candidates. Developing an effective teaching workforce depends on both the ability of faculties of education to identify applicants who are likely to be successful teacher candidates, and the capacity of employers to select applicants who will flourish in the classroom setting (Klassen et al., 2020).

While French-language proficiency is an essential competency of successful FSL teachers (Boutin, Chinien & Boutin, 1999; Chambless, 2012), the selection process for FSL teachers examines other necessary teaching skills such as subject pedagogy, subject knowledge, and other characteristics such as interpersonal skills, motivation and personality (Klassen et al., 2020). What differentiates FSL teachers from educators of other subject areas is that in FSL classrooms the subject matter is also the language of delivery (Cooke & Faez, 2018). Given that most FSL teachers do not speak French as their first language (Bayliss and Vignola, 2007), hiring processes have evolved to often require candidates to demonstrate their proficiency in French.

What should form the basis of language proficiency assessments?

Any valid assessment is founded on a deep understanding of what is being assessed. Language assessment is no different and so language proficiency assessments need to be grounded in an understanding of language proficiency using a framework that describes different levels of proficiency and their distinguishing features (Purpura, 2016). The ACTFL proficiency guidelines, Canadian Language Benchmarks, and CEFR described in the preceding section are all examples of proficiency frameworks. In each framework, language proficiency is defined and the distinguishing features of different levels of proficiency are described. A known language proficiency framework provides assessment designers and users with a shared, common understanding of what is being assessed and what separates different levels of performance.

In the context of FSL teaching, what constitutes a meaningful definition of language proficiency is still under debate. Many examples of valid, standardized assessments of French-language proficiency exist (see Appendix F), but there is a question about which definition of French proficiency is best suited to assess language proficiency for FSL teaching. In response to this question, some organizations have developed French-language proficiency assessments specific to the teaching profession (Appendix G). If the construct of French-language proficiency for teaching includes skills such as the ability to provide instructions in French, the ability to modify language usage to suit different learners, or the ability to give constructive feedback in French, then the design of the assessment would need to be different than assessments for "general" language proficiency. Ultimately, all assessments of French-language proficiency for

teachers should help answer the question, "Is it likely that this applicant will be (or develop into) an effective teacher?" (Klassen & Kim, 2019, p. 34).

Despite the call to develop more clearly defined proficiency standards for FSL teachers, (Masson et al., 2019; Veilleux & Bournot-Trites, 2005; Arnott, Masson & Lapkin, 2019), FSL education in many parts of Canada continues to operate without such standards. While a theoretical link exists between the conceptualization of proficiency and language standards, we could find no empirical research to date examining this link. In fact, very little research has focused on French-language proficiency assessment for FSL teaching at all. Thus, it is critical that assessments are founded on explicitly communicated proficiency frameworks and standards. However language assessors implicitly or explicitly understand language proficiency, these understandings ultimately influence the type, content, and approach used in the assessment process (Maynes & Hatt, 2015).

What happens in other countries regarding language proficiency assessment for teaching?

Countries that share Canada's concern regarding teachers' second language proficiency, such as the United States, Australia, Scotland, UK, Hong Kong and Turkey (Richards, Conway, Roskvist and Harvey 2013) have, over time, investigated different assessment opportunities. For example, in the 1990s, numerous countries began to study the benefits of introducing the development of minimum standards tests for foreign language teachers in an effort to improve teaching (Coniam, Falvey & Xiao, 2017) and Australia created standardized tests for language teachers (Burke, 2015).

In the United States, minimum oral proficiency benchmarks for all teachers of foreign languages have been developed by the American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in collaboration with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) (Coniam, Falvey & Xiao, 2017). Meeting the standards is required in many states for teachers to become certified (Glisan, Swender and Surface, 2013) the assessment includes oral proficiency components that focus on classroom language use, as well as the knowledge, skills and dispositions stated in the program standards guide (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, n.d.).

Similarly, foreign language teacher candidates in Hong Kong are required to pass the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers of English (LPATE) test as a minimum requirement to become certified. One of the components includes the Classroom Language Assessment (CLA) that assesses teachers' skills in using language effectively in the classroom (Coniam, Falvey & Xiao, 2017).

Overall, the findings from the literature study mirror the situation in Canada in that despite the concern regarding foreign language teachers' proficiency worldwide (Valmori & De Costa, 2018), there is scant research into foreign language teacher proficiency assessment. Moreover, the assessments mentioned above are not easily accessible in a way that would permit an examination of the proficiency and assessment constructs employed as well as the content,

type and assessment methods used to assign proficiency outcomes. Likewise, we were unable to find details such as psychometric properties and validation studies of the assessments listed in Appendix F. Thus, while we know that language proficiency assessments for second language teachers exist, we know little about their structure, format, reliability, and validity.

What does this all mean?

FSL teachers need to be proficient users of French - be able to speak French fluently and correctly in different registers and for different purposes in order to facilitate effective student learning and foster positive relationships. The complexity of language itself poses challenges in assessing the language proficiency of those planning to teach FSL. While no language assessment model will be effective or suitable for all stakeholders in all circumstances, principles of effective language proficiency assessment have evolved from decades of research in various language teaching and learning contexts. Above all, it is vital that language proficiency assessments are informed by the constructs that constitute language proficiency for teaching (Laurier and Baker, 2015). In the Canadian context, the absence of a well-known or broadly distributed assessment that is suitable for determining whether a teacher has the necessary language proficiency to be effective has led to an assessment vacuum leaving stakeholders to develop their own language proficiency assessments.

Clear assessments of French-language proficiency have the potential to improve the hiring process of FSL teachers, inform professional learning opportunities and needs, ensure that hiring processes are fair, and provide well understood proficiency expectations for prospective FSL teacher. Given the range and impact of these benefits, it is critical that we begin to understand what assessment tools and practices are most likely to yield meaningful outcomes. This is a long-term goal, but the present study, supported by this review, starts that process by identifying the processes and tools used by faculties of education and school districts to recruit FSL teachers and teacher candidates across Canada. This will give all stakeholders an awareness of what language proficiency assessments are used in various contexts, what are current practices and tools, how effective those practices are considered to be by those implementing them, and what kinds of resources are important or needed for further development.

The data and understanding gained from this scan and analysis will inform a recommended framework for developing a common French-language assessment toolkit. The toolkit itself is anticipated to be useful to stakeholder organizations such as faculties of education and school districts to help them develop clear, valid assessment processes that will be appropriate to their particular context and lead to quality decisions relating to admissions, hiring, and professional learning.

Empirical Findings

The findings from our research are presented in the following order:

1. Findings from website data
   a. School districts
   b. Faculties of Education
2. Findings from survey data
   a. School districts
   b. Faculties of Education
3. Findings from interview data
   a. School districts
   b. Faculties of Education

Findings - Website Data

School Districts

To garner an initial understanding of what assessment tools and strategies Canadian school districts use to evaluate the French-language proficiency of applicants to FSL teaching jobs, the websites of 86 school boards across Canada were scanned. All provinces and territories except Nunavut were included in the scan (see Table 1). Where the number of districts in a province or territory was low, we sampled all the districts. The one exception was the Northwest Territories where we sampled only three districts. This was because the other districts either did not have a website, or their website had no employment or human resources information. If it was not practical to include all districts in a province, we chose a sample that included different geographical regions of the province and large and small school districts.

To find the information about French-language proficiency assessments, we examined the districts' main pages, human resources pages, employment listings, and used the search function within the website (if it had one). For each website, we limited our search to 10 minutes. We felt that if an applicant was not able to find relevant information within 10 minutes, they were likely to either give up, or the information was not available. We recognize this method leaves open the possibility that we did not find information that was available on the website, but our rationale was that if the information is not discoverable by an experienced researcher within 10 minutes, it is likely a prospective applicant would also struggle to find the information. If the district used an external agency as part of their hiring process (as did 49 districts in our sample), we searched the website of the external agency for information about French language assessments and proficiency requirements. These agencies were typically either *ApplytoEducation* (n = 26) or a provincial government job site (n = 15).

Table 1. Sampling of district websites.

Province or Territory	Numbers of Districts Sampled
Alberta	10 (17%) *

British Columbia	10 (17%)
Manitoba	10 (27%)
New Brunswick	4 (100%)
Newfoundland	1 (100%)
Northwest Territories	3 (37%)
Nova Scotia	7 (100%)
Ontario	21 (29%)
Prince Edward Island	1 (100%)
Quebec (English boards only)	9 (90%)
Saskatchewan	8 (31%)
Yukon	1 (100%)

* Number in parentheses is the percentage of districts sampled from that province or territory.

Assessment tools used in hiring FSL teachers

Of the 86 websites scanned, 75 had no information about French-language proficiency assessment tools used for hiring. Three of the 11 sites with information accepted DELF or DALF tests as an assessment tool. For the remaining districts, limited details were offered about the assessment. The information available was restricted to the fact that an assessment existed and, in some cases, what language skills (e.g., speaking and writing) were assessed. We did not find any district websites that offered detailed information about the assessment such as its length, how it was scored, or who conducted the assessment, nor did we find sample items or practice tests to help applicants prepare. Other helpful information such as whether the assessment would take place in person or online was rarely given, although one district mentioned an online assessment and another asked applicants to submit a 2-minute video. Two district websites described more than one form of assessment used to identify potential candidates for FSL positions. One of these districts allowed applicants to demonstrate French-language proficiency through DELF scores, a French language appraisal, or the completion of a French immersion practicum completed while the other used DELF scores and a board-developed instrument.

Specific proficiency requirements for FSL positions

While only 11 websites offered applicants information about the assessment tool, 28 websites gave some information about the level of French-language proficiency the district wanted applicants to have. These descriptions were usually vague. For instance, 15 websites stated that candidates need to possess fluency in oral and written French and English without offering further details about what it means to be fluent. Another district required "native-like fluency" but did not define what the term meant. Nine Ontario school district websites mentioned FSL qualifications that could be attained through a B.Ed. program or a post-B.Ed. certificate. It should be noted that a qualification or certification is not a proxy measure of French-language proficiency. Four school boards listed proficiency requirements using DELF or DALF levels (DELF B2 for core and DALF C1 for immersion).

Of particular interest to us were two school districts in Western Canada who shared documents on their websites that provided detailed, descriptive criteria for French-language proficiency levels along with the corresponding eligibility teaching level (elementary and/or secondary) and French program type (Core/Basic and/or Immersion). There were also two district websites in the Atlantic provinces that made specific reference to a provincial French-language proficiency assessment and the achievement levels required for the advertised positions, although these districts provided less detail than the Western Canadian websites.

Faculties of Education

The websites of 53 Canadian faculties of education were scanned to find information relating to French-language proficiency assessments. Of these 53, only 38 offered an FSL teaching concentration or other options leading to FSL teaching. All 38 presented some form of French-language proficiency requirements on their website. Typically, these requirements were listed as part of the admissions requirements to the program, but there were two faculties who also posted minimum proficiency requirements to complete practicum placements in French.

Assessment tools used

The assessment tools used by faculties of education are varied and include standardized test scores, course credits, prior educational attainment, and results on internally developed assessment tools. These results are summarized in the list below.

- 8 faculties accept the DELF test as evidence of French language competency. Only one Ontario university accepted the DELF, and this institution allowed a broad range of sources to be used as evidence of French-language proficiency.
- 21 faculties include a minimum number of course credits to be completed in French. This applies only to post-degree B.Ed. programs. All Ontario faculties of education except one have this requirement on their website.
- 15 faculties have their own, locally developed French language assessment. One other faculty noted that candidates' French language skills may be tested but does not indicate under what conditions this would happen.
- 2 faculties accept a standardized external test that is not the DELF/DALF, in one case this was the TESTCan French language examination and in another it was an Oral Proficiency Interview used by that province's civil service.
- 2 faculties require a specific course to be passed. In both cases, this is for concurrent B.Ed. programs where teacher candidates are admitted immediately after high school.
- 3 faculties accept a degree or prior education completed in French as evidence of language proficiency.
- 1 university accepts time spent in a Francophone environment as evidence of French-language proficiency.

- 1 Faculty of Education allows applicants who self-identify as being proficient in French to ask for special consideration. The faculty website states they reserve the right to test such applicants to ensure their French meets the required standard, but no further detail is given.

For faculties that have developed their own internal assessments, we saw few descriptions of those assessments. What language skills were to be assessed (e.g., speaking or writing) were present on the website, but other important information for applicants such as the assessment length and scoring criteria were not. One university had a 2-page document outlining the format and content of its internally developed test, but this document was difficult to find on the university website as there were no links to it from the B.Ed. program web page. Another university website revealed no details of its own internally developed examination but provided a detailed course outline for a related test preparation course, which teacher candidates could use to infer what is likely to be on the examination. We found no other examples of websites that offered candidates detailed information about the assessment items, format, or scoring.

In Appendix F, we give multiple examples of recognized tests of French-language proficiency. Of those examples, only the DELF is used by more than one faculty of education. Far more popular were internally developed assessments, almost twice as many faculties used internally developed assessments (n = 15) than used the DELF (n = 8).

Specific proficiency requirements

Of the eight faculties using the DELF, four required a level of B2 or higher, one required B1 or higher and three had different requirements depending on what level of French teaching the applicant was preparing for. In all three cases, a C1 level was required for French Immersion and a B2 level was desired for Core/Basic French, but a B1 level was accepted. Faculties that used internally developed assessments typically did not report a proficiency requirement or reported one that was difficult to interpret for people unfamiliar with the test. For example, one faculty's website states that applicants must score 70% or above on all components of its test, but without knowing the difficulty of the test, it is not possible to ascertain what level of proficiency this equates to.

Findings from Survey Data

School Districts

We received 52 usable surveys from school districts. All provinces and territories are included in the sample except Nunavut. This represents approximately 19% of the 276 publicly funded English-language school districts in Canada. We cannot claim the distribution of our sample is representative of the distribution of Canadian school districts, nor is it clear what a "representative" sample would be. We can claim that because our sample encompasses all provinces, two territories, rural, suburban, and urban districts that we feel confident we have captured a wide range of contextual factors likely to influence the hiring (and consequent

French-language proficiency assessment) processes of FSL teachers. The sample we have is suitable for an exploratory study designed to uncover the range of practices used.

Many of our survey respondents (25) came from districts with less than 10,000 students. This sample corresponds to the average student population in school districts in Canada. For example, in Ontario only about one third of school districts have more than 10 secondary schools. We had 6 respondents from districts with more than 60,000 students, and districts of every size between 10,000 and 60,000 students were also in our sample, allowing us to capture data from rural, remote, suburban, and urban school districts.

Within those districts we observed a bimodal distribution for the number of students enrolled in FSL programs (Chart 1). This is likely because different provinces have different FSL requirements for their students. In Ontario, all students in English language boards are required to take French from Grade 4 to 8 and an additional course in high school. In British Columbia, there is a second language requirement in Grades 5 to 8, but the language does not have to be French (although it usually is). In New Brunswick, FSL is mandatory from grades 4 to 10. Thus, the percentage of students enrolled in FSL appears to be linked to both provincial regulations and local factors. Provincial legislation may explain why none of the four western provinces have mandatory French in their K-12 program and 20 of the 22 respondents from these provinces had fewer than 30% of students enrolled in FSL programs. By contrast, 7 of 13 Ontario respondents had more than 50% of students enrolled in FSL and all New Brunswick respondents had more than 50% of students enrolled in FSL. Local factors may explain other differences, such as the number of students enrolled in French Immersion vs. Core French.

Chart 1. Distribution of percentage of students enrolled in an FSL program within the district.
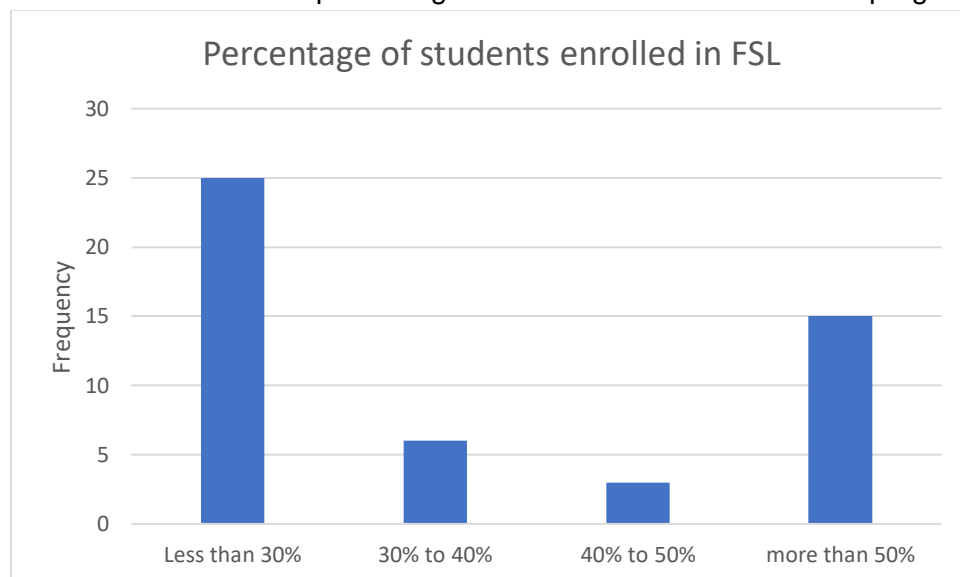
We were also interested to know how many applications districts received for FSL teaching positions (Chart 2) as we hypothesized that districts with more applications may have greater incentive to create standardized or streamlined assessments of French-language proficiency.

Thirty-two (61.5%) districts conducted a French-language proficiency assessment of applicants and another nine districts sometimes did, depending on circumstances. We should note that four of the respondents answered that no assessment is conducted in their district but later mentioned in the survey that they ask questions in French during the employment interview. We interpreted this as at least a partial assessment of the applicant's French language speaking ability. Thus, we believe that 45 of the 52 (87%) districts included in our sample have some sort of assessment of French-language proficiency during their hiring process for FSL teachers.

For those who reported they sometimes assess French-language proficiency, the circumstance most often mentioned was applicants who were francophone or had external evidence of French-language proficiency (e.g., DELF score or degree specializing in FSL teaching) were exempted from the assessment. One district mentioned they assess only for French Immersion positions, another that the assessment depends on the availability of the French language coordinator, and another assessed only if they had concerns about the applicant's level of French proficiency. A chi-squared test ($\chi^2(8) = 5.82$, $p = 0.67$) showed no significant relationship between the number of applications a district received and its practice of assessing French-language proficiency. Examining the relationship between the number of applications and the type of assessment used revealed no patterns or statistically significant differences.

Chart 2. Distribution of the number of applications received by school districts for FSL teaching positions within the last year.
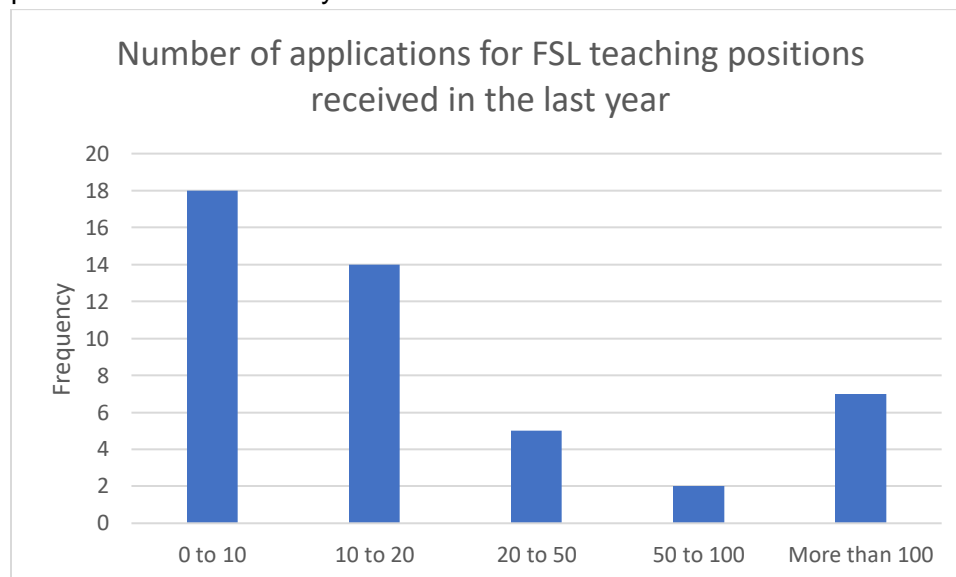
When assessments were conducted, they were usually developed internally by the school district, with 36 of 46 (78%) of districts using an internally developed instrument. Four districts reported using DELF/DALF scores (districts were located either in Manitoba or BC) and another four districts reported using an external Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). All four OPI districts came from a province where an OPI was mandated by the province for graduates from teacher education programs. One district reported using comments made in reference letters as an assessment and another used a writing test developed by an external agency.

Speaking and writing were the most common language skills targeted by assessments that were developed by the districts themselves with 28 respondents telling us they directly assess speaking skills and 20 directly assessing writing skills. Eight respondents indicated they directly assessed listening skills, compared to four for reading and two for francophone culture.

Speaking was assessed by asking questions in French by 25 of the 28 districts that gave details on how they assessed speaking skills. The degree of detailed information gathered in these assessments varied. Some districts had a single question that was posed in French and the response was evaluated using general impressions of the quality of the response and the language use. This evaluation was conducted by someone on the interview committee (usually a school administrator) who was identified as having sufficient French language skills to conduct the assessment. Other districts had more fine-grained approaches. These included asking questions designed to elicit certain verb tenses or vocabulary and using rubrics to guide evaluative judgements. Two districts used *Interviewstream*, an online tool where applicants respond orally to a live or pre-recorded prompt. The response is recorded and then assessed later by French speaking administrators.

Writing skills were almost always assessed by asking applicants to provide a short (one paragraph to one page) written response to a prompt. This method was used by 18 of the 19 districts that gave details on their writing assessment. Six of these districts either did not describe how the response was scored or scored it using general impressions of the level of proficiency. The remaining districts used a rubric, three of which were based on the CEFR. Four districts supplemented the writing task with a grammar test using multiple-choice, Cloze, or short-answer items and one district used only a grammar test with no additional writing prompt.

Only four districts described their reading assessment and in three of those cases it was integrated into the writing assessment. Comprehension of the written prompt was assessed through the applicant's response. The other district stated they used a rubric to assess reading and offered no other details. Of the eight districts that described their listening assessment, seven stated they used the conversation that took place during the interview as the assessment tool. The other district listed different experiences they look for that serve as evidence of French-language proficiency (e.g., schooling completed at a Francophone university, prior experience teaching French, FSL program in university, practicum evaluations, post certification courses or qualifications in French).

Both districts that described their assessment of knowledge of francophone culture did so by asking questions during the interview. Thus, questions asked in employment interviews often served multiple assessment purposes. That is, they were used to assess speaking and listening skills as well as cultural knowledge.

The common practice of using a portion of the employment interview to assess French-language proficiency was reflected in the fact that 31 of the 41 (76%) of the respondents who told us when they conduct their French-language proficiency assessment indicated they did so

during the interview. The next most popular responses were either after selection for interview but before the interview takes place or after the interview takes place but before hiring decisions are made (n = 10 or 24% in both cases). Eighteen districts indicated they conducted their French-language proficiency assessment at different stages of the hiring process. This occurred either because the district had more than one assessment (e.g., a written assessment and then some questions were asked in French during the interview) or because the timing of the assessment varied depending on the applicant. As an example, one district had a different assessment process for external vs. internal applicants and another indicated they preferred to assess before the interview. However, if the start date for the position was close, there may not be sufficient time to conduct a separate French-language proficiency assessment, and so the applicant's French-language proficiency was assessed during interview.

Many/most districts reported using the job interview as a platform for assessing applicants' oral language. The importance of applicants' oral French is supported by data from another item in the survey where districts were asked to rank order the importance of five different language skills (knowledge of francophone culture, listening, reading, speaking, and writing) when assessing French-language proficiency. The overall results from this item were:

Most important   Speaking

Writing

Listening

Reading

Least important   Knowledge of francophone culture
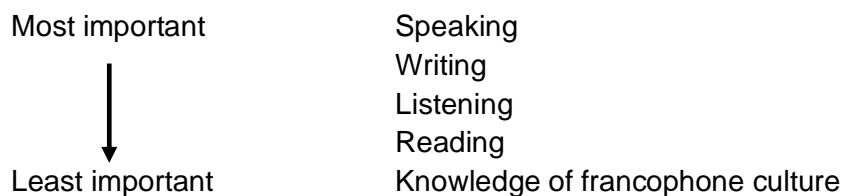
Almost all respondents believed speaking was the most important language skill for FSL teachers, with 36 of 38 (95%) ranking it as the most important and two (5%) as the 2nd most important. Both respondents who ranked it 2nd most important chose listening as the most important skill. Writing was generally seen as the 2nd most important skill, with 61% ranking it this way. Only 1 respondent (3%) ranked it least important. Of the 17 respondents who opted to rank knowledge of francophone culture, 12 (71%) ranked it as least important. Listening was seen as more important than reading. No respondent ranked reading as one of the top two language skills, whereas 13 (52%) of respondents ranked listening as one of the top two.

Recognizing there may be many other indicators of French-language proficiency, we asked respondents to tell us what other indicators of French-language proficiency they may consider when assessing an applicant's French-language proficiency. The top ten responses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Use of other indicators of French-language proficiency.

Indicator	Frequency (%)
Prior experience teaching French	28 (68%)
Schooling completed at a francophone university	25 (61%)
Post-certification courses or qualifications in French	23 (56%)
Experience living in a francophone environment	20 (49%)

Practicum evaluations	20 (49%)
Reference letters	18 (44%)
Whether they attended French Immersion in K-12 schooling	16 (39%)
Where they completed their FSL teacher education program	14 (34%)
Whether they attended a francophone school in K-12 education	13 (32%)
A stated passion for the French language and francophone culture	9 (22%)

Remaining responses tended to focus on either general qualities or skills such as enthusiasm and collaboration or mentioned the need for the person to be certified as a FSL teacher.

We asked what level of French-language proficiency was sought by the district. The descriptors used in the item were adapted from the CEFR descriptors so we could align responses to the CEFR levels. Descriptors matching CEFR levels B2 and C1 were the ones most often selected. This finding agrees with our website data.

Given that interviews were the most common locale for French-language proficiency assessment, the finding that school administrators were the district personnel most commonly responsible for assessing applicants' French-language proficiency was expected. This was the case for 25 of the 41 (61%) respondents, while 14 said their district used a French-language specialist or consultant to conduct the assessment. Six respondents indicated their district uses an external expert/consultant to conduct the assessment. In four of these cases, it was a government department, in another it was an instructor from a local college and no detail was given for the remaining district. The heavy reliance on district personnel to conduct the assessment reflects the prevalent use of locally developed assessment tools.

Respondents were asked to describe the process they used to ensure ratings of applicants' French-language proficiency were consistent among raters. The results were coded as "Not Applicable", "Rubric", "Consensus" or "Rater Training". The "Not Applicable" category applied to any response that either answered "Not Applicable" directly or had a single evaluator rating applicants' performance on the assessment. "Not Applicable" was the most common response (n = 18), with "Having different evaluators come to a consensus through discussion" (n = 11) being the most popular method of achieving consistency. Only two respondents mentioned any type of rater training to facilitate consistent decision-making.

We were curious to know how school districts came to their current assessment process. We received 38 usable responses, 17 of which were "I don't know" or some variation thereof. Another four responded that current assessment process is a continuation of past practice. The remaining responses did not demonstrate any trends, rather it appeared that assessment processes and practices evolved for a variety of reasons that were local to the school district. These reasons include complaints from parents about the French proficiency of teachers, needs created by the introduction or growth of French Immersion programs, a desire to have an objective measure of French-language proficiency, concerns from school principals, a desire to

not be dependent upon a single individual within the district for all French-language proficiency assessments, and a desire to move towards online assessment.

Fifteen respondents indicated they had a process to review or validate the assessment. Ten of these processes were internal processes and changes were made to the assessment based upon satisfaction (or lack thereof) of the current process and instrument. Two districts described review processes that could be considered validation processes. The first tracked the teaching performance of its French Immersion teachers and correlated those ratings with the language proficiency ratings the teacher was given during the hiring phase. The second district used language experts from a university to help refine its instrument. The remaining responses did not describe a review process and so we could not categorize them.

The districts without a review or validation process were asked why that was the case. Of the 23 responses received, nine indicated they had never considered doing so. Another four indicated their assessment process was working well and so there was no need to review it. Four districts noted that because they use an external instrument (or their internal instrument is based upon an external instrument) that no review was necessary. Two respondents stated they did not have the resources, and another mentioned the small size of their district. One of the districts that indicated they did not have the resources available had a student population of less than 10,000 and the other had a student population between 10,000 and 20,000 so it may be that small districts face greater difficulties in reviewing or validating assessments due to a lack of resources and/or qualified personnel.

It appeared districts were generally satisfied with the performance of their French-language proficiency assessments. Respondents indicated their level of satisfaction with their assessment process on a scale of 0 to 100 and only 8% of responses were below 50. Conversely, 19% of responses were 90 or above. Thirteen respondents gave a rating between 50 and 69 and 14 between 70 and 89. Converting these numerical scores to satisfaction levels (e.g., Likert scales) is an imprecise and subjective judgement, but we feel comfortable concluding that most respondents were satisfied with the performance of their process. Note that satisfaction is not the same as effectiveness, nor should it be used as a proxy for effectiveness. It is possible to be satisfied with a process that does not work well.

Given the high demand for FSL teachers, we were curious to know how often districts opted not to hire an applicant based upon their French-language proficiency. The responses ranged from 0% to 50 %, with a median of 20%. This does not mean that 20% of FSL teachers are unable to find work because of low language proficiency. Applicants apply to more than one district, so an applicant that is not successful in one district may be hired in another.

Another survey item asked if employment interviews for FSL positions were different than for other teaching positions. Eleven respondents said there was no difference. Of the 38 who indicated a difference, the most common difference was the inclusion of questions or conversation in French (n = 31). There were no consistencies in the remaining responses, although one district mentioned that interviews for FSL positions were conducted at the district office instead of at schools because of the French-language proficiency assessment.

Summary of school district survey findings

Our survey sample covered all provinces and two territories, representing a broad range of districts across Canada. Almost all districts assess French-language proficiency before hiring teachers into FSL positions, and this assessment is typically designed and administered by district personnel—usually school administrators who are identified as being proficient in French. Speaking and writing are assessed most often, and these are the language skills respondents identified as most important. The most common form of assessment is to ask questions in French and require a response in French during the employment interview. Few respondents were able to articulate a review or validation process for their assessment, but despite that fact, most appeared to be satisfied with how well their assessment process and tools worked for hiring purposes.

Faculties of Education

We received 23 usable survey responses from faculties of education. This sample accounts for 61% of all the Canadian faculties of education we identified as offering a teacher education program for prospective FSL teachers. Almost half (10) of the participating faculties were from Ontario. Three faculties were from British Columbia and the remaining provinces had one or two faculties of education that responded to the survey.

Ten respondents reported their faculty admits between 10 and 30 FSL teacher candidates per year. It is likely that FSL teacher candidates at these institutions take a common curriculum course. The six universities that accept more than 30 FSL teacher candidates would have a large enough population to offer different streams and curriculum courses such as elementary vs. secondary or Core/Basic vs. French Immersion.

The most common type of program offered among our survey respondents was a post-baccalaureate B.Ed. program (n = 19), although ten faculties offered concurrent education programs that granted entry after high school or first year university. As will be shown later, the type of program offered is important because different programs offer different opportunities for faculties to support the language development of teacher candidates, changing the focus and requirements for the French-language proficiency assessments conducted during the admissions process. There were four programs that offered no discrete FSL stream or curriculum courses. Teacher candidates in these programs took general pedagogy and curriculum courses as part of their initial teacher education.

More faculties offer preparation for French Immersion (n = 18 and n = 17 for elementary and secondary respectively) than Core/Basic French (n = 11 and n = 12 for elementary and secondary respectively). This may be because four francophone universities were included in the sample and another two universities were bilingual and offered teacher education only for French Immersion or francophone schools.

Most of our survey items focused on the tools and processes used by faculties of education to assess the French-language proficiency of applicants to their program and teacher candidates within their program. Course credit histories, internally developed written tests, and oral interviews were the most popular assessment methods (Table 3). These data are consistent with the website data we harvested. Faculties of education assessed speaking and writing (n = 16 for both) more than reading (n = 12) or listening (n = 10), but the prevalence of reading and listening assessments was higher for faculties of education than school districts. Four faculties of education reported assessing applicants' knowledge of francophone culture, but only one of these did so directly (by asking a question related to the topic during the admissions interview). Two faculties assessed knowledge of francophone culture by the types of French courses present in the applicant's transcript and the remaining faculty used the applicant's DELF score as a proxy measure.

Table 3. Responses to "Which of the following are included in your faculty's assessment of the French-language proficiency of applicants to your teacher education programs?"

Response	Number of responses
Number of French course credits the applicant has completed	12
Internally developed written test	10
Oral interview to determine fluency and speaking ability	10
Score on the DELF or DALF examination	7
Degree from francophone university	5
Score on a standardized, external test that is not the DELF/DALF	3
French Immersion high school diploma	3
French language high school diploma	2
We do not assess	1
Other	4

Assessment most commonly took place after the application was submitted but before admission. This likely reflects how the application process worked (it would be difficult for faculties to assess someone who has not yet applied). Three faculties noted they assess after courses have started. In all three cases, this was for a concurrent education program and the assessment was used to place teacher candidates in appropriate French language classes as they started their concurrent B.Ed. program. Assessments were most often conducted by a French-language instructor at the faculty (n = 9), although four faculties used someone in admissions with strong French language skills and another five used another person in the faculty with strong French language skills (Chart 3). Five faculties outsourced the French-language proficiency assessment to another department within the university (e.g., the French department).

Chart 3. Person responsible for conducting French-language proficiency assessments.

Who conducts the assessment?
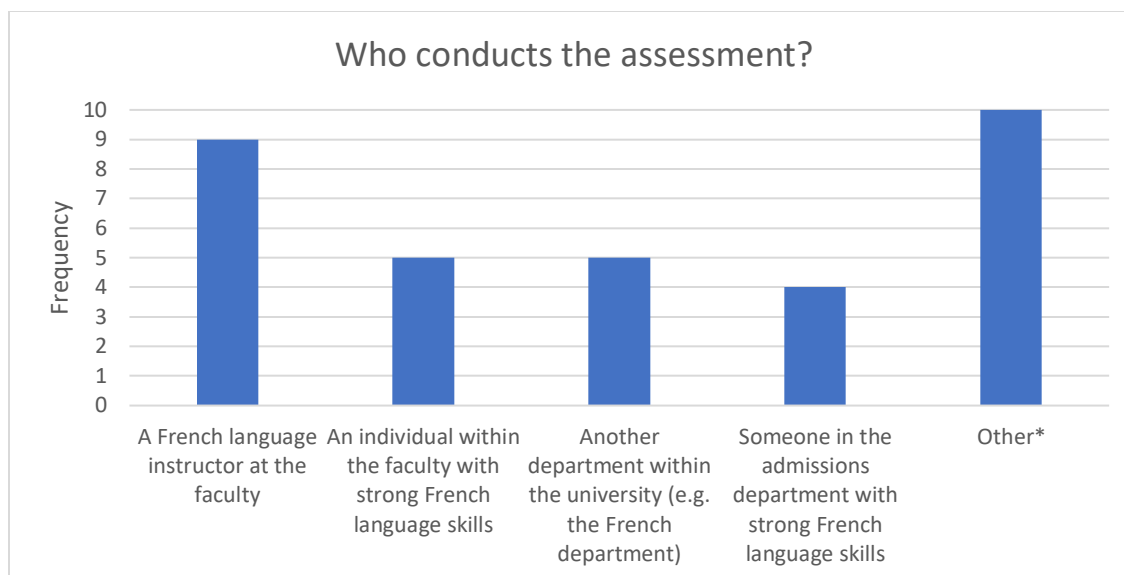
* 4 of the "Other" responses include faculties that use the DELF so no one at the faculty completes the assessment.

While French-language proficiency was mostly assessed for admissions purposes, other purposes emerged from the data (Table 4). The most common was a placement test at the beginning of the program to determine what French language courses would be appropriate for the teacher candidate during their program. This was done for concurrent programs only. Another four respondents reported they formally assessed a teacher candidate's French proficiency only if instructors in the program came forward with concerns about the candidate's French language abilities. Three of these four offered a concurrent program, where there is time and opportunity to support a teacher candidate's language development.

Four faculties had French-language proficiency assessments at the end of their programs: one was graduation requirement at a francophone university, another was a graduation requirement from an English-language university in Quebec, and a third was graduation requirement from an English-language university with a program for students aiming to teach in francophone schools. The fourth university had an oral proficiency interview as part of its teacher certification. Five faculties conducted assessments before teacher candidates went on practicum and four had different proficiency requirements for different programs (e.g., Core/Basic vs. French Immersion, or Elementary vs. Secondary).

Table 4. Responses to "Apart from assessments conducted for admissions purposes, do you assess the French-language proficiency of FSL teacher candidates during their program?"

Response	Number of responses
No	9
Yes, at the beginning of the program for placement or support purposes	5

Yes, if we identify gaps or concerns with a student's language proficiency	4
Yes, before students are allowed to teach French on practicum	5
Yes, as a graduation requirement, students are required to demonstrate a minimum level of French proficiency	4
Yes, at some other point in the program or for a different purpose*	5

* 2 responses indicated that French-language proficiency was assessed on an ongoing basis during the program for development purposes.

Most faculties of education had a single proficiency standard for admission into FSL teacher education programs. When the CEFR was referenced by the respondent, the levels most often selected were B2 and C1. This is consistent with the Faculty of Education website data. Respondents who did not directly reference the CEFR selected a description of the desired level of French proficiency for admission into their program. The descriptions most often selected corresponded to CEFR levels B2 and C1. Generally, few applicants were not admitted into teacher education programs because of low French proficiency level, with 12 of 18 responses saying less than 10% of applicants were not admitted because of concerns with their French-language proficiency. Only one faculty rejected more than 50% of applicants because of their French proficiency. Unfortunately, we do not have any information as to why this was the case for this particular faculty.

Roughly half (11 of 20) of the faculties had a review or validation process in place for their French-language proficiency assessment, which is more than was found for school districts. The review process appeared to depend on the perceived need and local expertise available. As an example, the person responsible for the assessments at one faculty also conducted them for a local school district. She was able to use review and validation tools provided by the Ministry of Education for assessments in both contexts. Another faculty hired a research assistant to collect and analyze assessment data and still another used their provincial accreditation process as an impetus and framework for reviewing their French-language proficiency assessment. Of the 11 review/validation processes described, three included a quantitative form of validation such as item analysis, Rasch modeling, or correlations with practicum performance. Five of the eight faculties with no review process gave further detail. One faculty satisfied with the performance of their assessment and the other four used the DELF, offsetting the need for additional review and validation of the assessment.

The survey asked respondents to relate the history of how the faculty came to their current method of assessing French-language proficiency. There were no obvious trends in the data, a variety of different stories were presented that included past negative experiences with FSL teacher candidates on practicum, an attempt to increase the language proficiency of their FSL teacher candidates, a response to accreditation or certification requirements, and a desire to use a recognized, standardized instrument The fact that most faculties engage in some type of French proficiency assessment for FSL teacher candidates reinforces the finding that no other

factor has as much influence on admissions decisions as French-language proficiency (Table 5).

Table 5. Responses to "What are the top two factors you consider when admitting someone to your teacher education program who wants to become a FSL teacher?"

Response	Number of responses
French-language proficiency	13
Schooling completed at a francophone university	2
Experience living in a francophone environment	1
Prior experience teaching French	0
Complete K-12 schooling in French Immersion	2
Stated passion for the French language and francophone culture	3
Reference letters	2
Performance during the interview (if an interview is part of the admissions process)	2
The factors depend upon which level of French they are applying for	3

Generally, faculties were satisfied with the performance of their assessments for admission or graduation purposes, with 14 of 23 respondents rating their level of satisfaction as 75% or above. Of the five lowest ratings, two were for course credits only, one was for an oral interview, another was for an internally developed writing test, and the fifth was for the DELF.

Also included in the survey were items asking respondents how their faculty of education supports the French language development of their teacher candidates. Only five respondents (of 22) indicated their faculty provided no opportunities or supports for French language development (Table 6). Opportunities for language development most often took the form of extra courses (whether credit or non-credit). Seven of the ten faculties offering a concurrent B.Ed. program reported offering courses to further develop French-language proficiency compared to five of the fourteen faculties that did not offer a concurrent program. Given there is less time to develop language proficiency during a one- or two-year post-baccalaureate program, this finding was expected. Six faculties reported offering study or conversation groups and another six offered undescribed informal opportunities. These informal opportunities existed in roughly equal measure in both concurrent and consecutive B.Ed. programs.

Table 6. Responses to "What opportunities or expectations do you have for teacher candidates to improve their French-language proficiency if needed?"

Response	Number of responses
None	5
For credit courses to be taken during their teacher education program	8
Informal opportunities offered on an "as needed" basis	6
Not for credit courses offered in addition to the regular course load	6

Study or conversation groups	6
Experiences in francophone environments (e.g., semester at a francophone university)	2
Other*	3

* All 3 "Other" responses included coursework in some form

Summary

Our survey sample included 61% of Canadian faculties of education that offer FSL teacher education pathways. All respondents indicated their faculty conducts some form of assessment of applicants' French-language proficiency. Faculties of education used a range of indicators of French-language proficiency, including course credit histories, oral interviews, internally developed written tests, and multi-component standardized tests. Most often, it was the French curriculum instructor who administered the assessment, although some faculties outsourced this responsibility to another department within the university. Faculties of education typically wanted applicants to have a proficiency level equivalent to DELF B2 or C1, and for most faculties there were no differences in proficiency requirements regardless of the level or program of teaching the teacher candidate was preparing for. Compared to school district respondents, faculty of education respondents were better able to articulate the history and rationale behind their assessments, and there were more examples of review, validation, and quality control processes. Most faculties of education offered opportunities for teacher candidates to develop their French-language proficiency within the program, and this was especially true for post-secondary admission concurrent B.Ed. programs. Faculty of education respondents were generally satisfied with their assessment process.

Findings from Interview Data

Interviews were conducted with 21 school districts and 12 faculties of education. While the sample size for the interview data is the smallest of our three methods of data collection, these data are richer and more detailed than the survey or website data. They provide an in-depth examination of how and why the interview participants assess French-language proficiency in their organization. Our interview sample includes participants from nine provinces and two territories, so we were able to incorporate geographically diverse participants operating in a variety of legislative and policy contexts.

School Districts

Assessment tools

Of the 21 districts in our sample, 16 use a French-language proficiency assessment that was developed within the district. Another four use an external examination and one conducts no French-language proficiency assessments when hiring FSL teachers. Of the four districts using standardized tests, one accepts either a DALF C1 or a CEFRANC diploma and another requires a DELF B2 exam with a minimum score of 70% (the pass score is 50%). The other two districts using a standardized assessment both used the Oral Proficiency Interview for New Brunswick bilingual civil service positions. This is a 20-minute assessment of oral proficiency conducted

over the phone. The lone respondent whose district did not conduct language proficiency assessments stated that because the district is small (with a very small FSL program), few FSL candidates apply to this district. Those that do apply can almost be guaranteed a FSL position provided the person is willing to teach in French and demonstrates a sound understanding of effective teaching pedagogy during interview. Therefore, an assessment would have minimal impact on hiring decisions.

What is assessed?

Of the 16 districts that administer in-house assessments, six assessed speaking skills only and ten included both oral and written components. Almost all participants stated that an applicant's speaking skills were rated using overall impressions made upon the interviewers. In general, the level of formality of the assessments varied widely. One participant from a remote school district conducted no formal assessments of French but all communication with the applicants, whether by phone or email, was conducted in French. Because this communication incorporated multiple events and not a single interaction, she felt it served as a better assessment of language proficiency than asking some questions in French during the interview. It should be noted that this participant had full responsibility and control over the hiring of FSL teachers in her district, so she was able to control the entire hiring process.

At the other end of the formality spectrum were two districts who used online interview platforms with standardized questions and evaluation tools. These platforms offered several advantages. The first was the removal of the French-language proficiency assessment from the employment interview. This meant that interviewer panels need not include a French speaker or assessment person, allowing them to maintain the same composition as panels for other teaching positions. The online interviews also eliminated the need for applicants to travel to the board office for the assessment. This reduced barriers to applicants who lived far from the district and allowed a greater number of candidates to be considered for the position. Finally, the recordings of the applicant's responses could be viewed multiple times allowing multiple raters to rate the performance at their convenience and enhancing their ability to review portions of the response to ensure their rating was accurate.

Other participants described using a rubric or evaluation framework. One of those admitted the final ratings were heavily influenced by overall impressions and the rubric was not applied consistently. As she put it, "Not all assessors are using the same standards even though they are using the same tool." Another district outsourced the assessment to a government department that assessed grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Although this assessment was used with all civil service employees needing to work in French, it was originally designed for teachers. The assessment consisted of an interview conducted by two people who rated the applicant independently. Items related to general topics and to education and were constructed so the respondent needed to use multiple verb tenses in their responses. The third district used a 5-point scale to rate different aspects of speaking such as grammar, pace, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

In most cases, oral proficiency was assessed during the employment interview. Alternatively, there were five districts who assessed French-language proficiency before the employment interview. Three of these districts were in remote locations where travel to the board office could be logistically and financially difficult. These participants felt there were some advantages to this approach as early identification of applicants with substandard French can be eliminated from the pool of candidates to be interviewed further. It also allows the employment interview to focus on factors other than language proficiency such as pedagogical knowledge.

Like the assessments of speaking skills, writing assessments also ranged in terms of their formality. In addition to the process in one rural district whose informal assessment of writing through email exchanges we already described, we had a participant whose interviews had recently moved to Microsoft Teams because of COVID-19. In this case, the writing task changed from a 250-word piece of writing on an assigned topic to conducting a written conversation using the chat feature of Teams. This participant felt the real time chat was a better assessment of writing ability than the prior written task because the interactive nature of the chat function allowed her to ask follow-up questions. The most common assessment task for writing was a 200 to 250-word written piece on a topic specified by the district. In some cases, applicants could select from a few topics. Other assessments of writing skills were mentioned by our participants but were unique to a single district. These included a spelling test, a grammar test wherein errors in a text need to be identified and corrected, and a Cloze test. An approach taken by one district was to give interviewees a choice of topics to write about, and during the interview the written answer is discussed orally.

Who developed the in-house assessments?

Except for one district, all assessments described by our interview participants were developed by district personnel. Most commonly it was principals who had worked in schools with FSL (typically French Immersion) programs who developed the assessment, but some assessments were developed by FSL teachers or district FSL coordinators. The one participant who described a collaborative approach, said their district worked with a team of university professors along with personnel at another district in the same province to produce an assessment using a rigorous and defensible process. Their goal was to improve the quality of their current assessment, but also to make it available in more than one district, providing some measure of standardization for applicants to FSL positions in the province.

Developing valid language assessments is a complex task. Few districts have the resources and expertise to create validated assessment tools, and so assessment tool development was accomplished by those who were identified as best at being able to do so within the district. This could be a reasonable approach, but we did note that the lack of communication and collaboration among districts meant that resources and expertise could not be pooled to create higher quality assessments.

Evaluating applicants' performance

Of the 16 participants whose districts use in-house developed assessments, 12 said the rating of the applicant is based on the overall impression the applicant's French-language proficiency formed by the evaluators during the interview. Three participants said they use a rubric that was designed in-house. Two of these participants said their rubric was CEFR based, with one of them having been developed by a vice-principal who had experience as a DELF examiner. One participant admitted that while a rubric was available and to be used, evaluators often rated the candidates based on the overall impression they formed during the interview.

Participants whose district did not have a rubric often used the term 'holistic' to describe their district's approach to rating participants. This is a different use of the term than what is presented in academic literature. In this literature, holistic assessment is described as, "making a global synthetic judgement. Different aspects are weighted intuitively by the assessor….by us(ing) a holistic rating strategy (i.e., match what you can deduce from the performance to the definitions, and make a judgement)" (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 190-191). An overall rating is provided by referring to determined performance definitions. This is different than the rating procedure described by our participants. The description they offered was assessors making evaluative judgements of a candidate's French-language proficiency based on an overall impression that was created during the interview. What forms these impressions is not known. Clearly, language proficiency would be one factor, but other factors such as appearance, accent, or personality may come into play. There is an extensive body of research that shows impressions made during job interviews include many factors unrelated to performance (Judge, Cable, & Higgins, 2000), and so impression-based ratings of French-language proficiency are likely to be problematic.

The process of collecting overall impressions of the applicants as the basis for assessing and hiring candidates in lieu of a rubric is in line with research into general hiring practices. This is despite findings that when rubrics are ignored in favour of assessors' own judgement, the overall quality of the hires is diminished (Capelli, 2019). While overall impressions may not be the most effective method to assess suitability for a position, it is the most common (Capelli, 2019). It may be that districts are applying the same evaluative processes to French-language proficiency assessments as they are to the other elements of the employment interview.

Challenges faced by school districts

The most significant challenge cited by all participants was the low number of applicants for FSL teaching positions. This included districts in Quebec and New Brunswick where, on the surface, it would seem there should be a plentiful supply of FSL teachers. A related challenge was that a substantive portion of those who did apply to FSL positions had low levels of French proficiency. Estimates of the proportion of teachers deemed to have insufficient French-language proficiency varied among our participants from 0% to 50%, with a median of 20%.

The need to fill positions resulted in hiring teachers with less than adequate proficiency levels. One participant told us that "most FSL teachers who apply are successful, but we've lowered our [French-language proficiency] standards in the past few years". Four districts mentioned that teacher retention is an issue and two of these stated that teachers with low levels of French-

language proficiency have the highest level of turnover among staff. According to an HR manager in one district, 18% of the districts' FSL teachers are not permanent contracts because their French-language proficiency is inadequate, and these individuals take up 80% of the French consultants' and HR personnel's time. This time is spent handling parent complaints and providing additional resources and support to help these teachers be more effective in the classroom.

An issue unique to Ontario is 'Temporary Letters of Approval'. These letters are extended to teachers who lack the certificate required to teach French. They are hired on a temporary basis because no other teachers are available to fill the position. If these teachers do not obtain their FSL teaching qualification, but have a permanent contract, they can migrate out of teaching FSL, exacerbating the FSL teacher shortage in the district. Two Ontario participants raised additional concerns regarding the FSL Additional Qualification (AQ) certification in Ontario. This is a post B.Ed. FSL teacher certification process whereby teachers certified with the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) can earn qualifications to teach FSL teacher after taking a single course AQ course. One participant was concerned that no distinction is made regarding which level of FSL instruction the qualification targets and also about the lack of French-language proficiency requirements to obtain an AQ certificate for FSL teaching.[4]

History and Rationale Behind the Assessment Tools and Processes

We asked participants to describe the history and rationale behind their assessment process and tools, but most were not able to articulate a specific response to this item. Answers consisted of phrases such as, 'developed organically', 'developed over time', and 'just happened'. Participants were also unable to describe validation procedures, although some described review processes intended to improve the assessment tool. It should be noted that participants were typically from the human resources department and not assessment experts. Thus, just because a participant was unable to describe the development and validation of the assessment tools, does not mean that such a process did not take place. Where participants were able to describe changes to the assessment, these changes were in response to an identified problem. No change was due to a regular review of the assessment.

Supporting teachers' French language development

Seven of the 21 participants interviewed mentioned their district supported the development of teachers' French-language proficiency in some way. For instance, one district partnered with the local university in an initiative to help practicing teachers improve their French by assigning them a mentor. This mentor designs an individualized French language learning program for the teacher and helps them with the program. At the end of a two-year period the teachers can retake the OPI and earn certification.

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[4] We note that most FSL AQ courses have a French-language proficiency requirement which must be met for entry into the course.

Another district supports teachers' French language development in three ways. The first is through their district French specialist who addresses both pedagogy and language development. The second is funding summer experiences in Quebec, while the third was hiring French language mentors from France. This participant mentioned that few teachers register for the summer experiences in the Quebec. The French language mentors from France were very well received and perceived to be an effective support for the FSL teachers in the district, but the mentors did not stay in the district and returned to France once their contract was finished.

Four districts mentioned they regularly hire teachers who do not possess the desired level of French. They are hired on a part-time contract and offered the opportunity to develop their French language skills and retake the district's French-language proficiency assessment so they may earn a full-time contract. One participant listed supports he felt were key to having proficient, effective FSL teachers who remain in their positions. These were: offering support, resources, a community feel, spending 4-5 days a year with a mentor, access to professional development, and the opportunity to work collaboratively with other school boards. According to the participant, these measures create an atmosphere that is open and warm and keeps turnover low. He offered the high retention rate among the French teaching staff in his district as evidence of their effectiveness.

An interesting example came from a participant who said that most teachers in the district did not require support as they must have a DELF B2 level to be certified and so are demonstrably proficient in French. However, because this system is relatively new, some teachers hired more than five years ago had not attained their DELF accreditation. It also appears that in rural areas of the province, the proportion of non-DELF certified teachers is higher. While the DELF B2 is required to be a certified FSL teacher in this province, there exists a clause in the provincial collective agreement stipulating that if a district is unsuccessful in finding a candidate with the required level of French, the position may be given to a candidate who does not meet the proficiency requirement, but opportunities to enhance their language skills must be provided. This district partnered with the Second Language Council to offer French pedagogical counselling and courses to prepare for the DELF exam. Sessions are offered online which was described as helpful, since numerous teachers needing this support are located in remote areas. These supports are free of charge to the teacher.

Analysis

Every district in our sample, minus one, conducted their own assessments of French-language proficiency for applicants to FSL positions. This indicates that districts believe that an FSL specialization from a B.Ed. program or other pathway such as the AQ in Ontario, may not be a reliable indicator that a candidate possesses a level of French-language proficiency that allows them to be effective in the classroom, prompting them to conduct their own assessment of French-language proficiency before hiring.

It appears that assessments were developed on an as needed basis to address problems with hiring FSL teachers. This is a rational first step for districts to take, as school districts are making sincere, reasonable attempts to address a genuine problem in Canadian FSL education.

However, our findings indicate some likely concerns about the quality and utility of the assessment tools and processes used by most districts.

Without samples of the assessments used, it is not possible for us to offer a detailed critique of their content and fitness for purpose. However, we can offer some important questions worth considering. For example, would one or two questions asked in French during the interview provide an adequate sampling of candidates' French language speaking abilities? Is it possible to cover the wide range of language abilities that L2 teachers need to be effective with such an approach? Even in cases where much of the interview is conducted in French, there are questions about whether such an assessment will yield useful information. Some applicants may be skilled at guiding the conversation in such a way as to hide weaknesses in their language skills, making them seem more proficient than they are. There is some evidence for this as one participant commented on instances where teachers who had been hired displayed French-language proficiency in the classroom that was weaker than that observed during the employment interview. Alternatively, it may be that some applicants are nervous during the interview, resulting in a performance that offers assessors a pessimistic view of their French-language proficiency.

The jurisdiction whose interview questions were designed to force applicants to speak about past, present, and future events as a way of assessing the applicant's use of different verb tenses demonstrates that thoughtful design of the interview questions can require applicants to demonstrate a broad range of relevant language skills. We cannot definitively comment on the quality of the items used to assess French-language proficiency during employment interviews, but the fact that most interview questions were developed by school administrators and not language or assessment experts, combined with the fact that almost no participants could describe the rationale or development of the French-language proficiency assessment, leads us to believe that most items are not created with the goal of targeting specific language skills or proficiencies. The fact that most evaluation was impression based, and not done according to set standards, indicates that even if items were designed with a specific function (i.e., targeting a specific language skill or competency), the way the responses are rated would subvert that function.

There are also questions about the suitability and validity of the writing tasks used by most districts. Referring to Bachman's (1991) notion of situational authenticity, we can think of few situations where FSL teachers will be writing a single page of text in French on an unknown topic. More situationally authentic tasks such as correcting examples of student work or giving written feedback in French will likely provide more useful information to school districts to inform their hiring decisions. Our data tell us that two districts use situationally authentic tasks, leading us to be optimistic that if two districts can do it, so can others.

Despite the increased presence of the CEFR in the FSL landscape (Arnott et al., 2017), the CEFR was only mentioned in two of the interviews with districts who develop their own assessments. No other language proficiency frameworks or models were mentioned by our participants. Districts without a framework to describe language proficiency are left with an

informal definition of language proficiency created by their assessment tools. For most districts, this definition was the ability to answer a few questions in French and the ability to write one page on a topic. While both these abilities are indicators of French-language proficiency, they fail to capture the many different language skills required of L2 teachers.

This is not to say these assessments were ineffective, our data do not allow us to make conclusions about the effectiveness of the assessments, but we can say that the defensibility of these assessment processes is suspect. From the standpoint of equity and fairness, using assessments which have not been validated is problematic. For instance, most of our interview participants revealed that assessors are not given training in how to use the assessment tool and rate the responses. This means assessors are free to apply their own interpretation of the items and apply their own standards to the responses. This situation is very likely to lead to inconsistencies in hiring decisions that not only reduce the effectiveness of the hiring process at selecting the best candidates, but also potentially leave the district open to legal, human rights, or labour code challenges.

It may be that for some districts, developing a valid and reliable French-language proficiency assessment is not a priority. Districts struggle to find sufficient numbers of FSL teachers, and some have admitted to reducing language proficiency expectations for the applicants to those positions. It should be noted that unless a district has proficiency standards in place, it is not clear what reduced expectations means. It is possible that for some districts, the main purpose of the assessment is to determine whether the applicant can meet some bare minimum level of French-language proficiency and that detailed information about the applicant's language skills, while interesting, would not influence hiring decisions. That is to say, for some districts, maybe the assessment needs to answer the question, "Can you speak some French?" and little more.

Faculties of Education
Assessment tools and purposes
Of the 12 faculties[5] interviewed, five use standardized tests to assess candidates' French proficiency. Three faculties require candidates to include a DELF diploma in their application package. The stipulated scores differ; at one university the accepted level is a B2 with a minimum score of 70% whereas at another the required level is B1 and with a preferred level of B2 at the third university. At this university, an applicant may be admitted with a DELF B1 level if they agree to register and take non-credit courses to improve their level of French during the program. The only faculty that used a standardized test that was not the DELF asked applicants to submit results from the New Brunswick OPI, but also accepted results from other standardized tests such as the TCF as evidence of French-language proficiency.

Two faculties admit applicants based on the number of university level French courses completed. One of these universities recognized that not all proficient, and thus potential, FSL teachers may have taken courses in French so a second pathway is now

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[5] The number of faculties is 12, but the total number of descriptions of the types of assessment is 16. This is because some faculties offer a range of pathways to enter the B.Ed. program as an FSL teacher candidate.

offered whereby the candidate can take an in-house assessment prior to admission to the B.Ed. program. A participant from another university described a similar alternate pathway to admission for the same reason. If it was noted during the general admissions interview that a candidate was francophone or had successfully completed French courses and could potentially be admitted to the FSL program, a continued interview in French was suggested. Success on this interview this was accepted in lieu of a standardized test score for admission into the FSL teacher education program. For both these universities, the desire to increase the number of FSL teacher candidates was the rationale behind providing an alternate path to admission.

Eight of the 12 faculties developed their own in-house assessments. Five participants stated their program accepts candidates who score lower than the minimum standard because the faculties offer support to help the candidates to continue their language learning during the program. This was especially true for concurrent education programs, where there were four or five years available to further develop the teacher candidate's French-language proficiency. Those who were admitted with lower French-language proficiency levels completed their practicum either in English classes or in a FSL classroom where language proficiency requirements were seen to be lower, such as a grade 1 basic French class. Once the candidate's French-language proficiency had improved to an acceptable level, they could complete practicum placements in FSL classrooms.

One participant said their university's concurrent education program accepts all admitted teacher candidates that decide to take the French option. The teacher candidates then take a placement test in a separate department and based on the results of the test, are streamed into different non-credit courses to improve (where necessary) their French level. At the end of the B.Ed. program the teacher candidates who wish to receive the FSL distinction on their diploma are required to pass the government developed CEFRANC or the DALF C1 level exam. According to this participant, this system allows school districts to forgo assessing potential teachers during the hiring process.

Both districts and faculties of education use their French-language proficiency for making decisions about whether an applicant should be admitted into their organization (i.e. whether a job applicant should be hired or an applicant to a B.Ed. program should be admitted) but with faculties of education we saw a stronger emphasis on a diagnostic or formative purpose to the assessments. This was especially true for applicants to four- or five-year concurrent B.Ed. programs, where there was ample time to develop French-language proficiency. Some universities had course offerings and pathways targeted to different levels of French proficiency to maximize the likelihood that teacher candidates had adequate French-language proficiency before going on practicum or graduating with FSL certification.

What is assessed

Six of the eight in-house developed assessments contained written and oral components. The two exceptions were one university that assessed oral language only by asking candidates open-ended questions in French as part of a longer interview in English, and another that assessed writing skills only via a writing assignment and a multiple-choice grammar and vocabulary exercise.

One participant described an assessment that contained five parts, with 60% of the final mark devoted to writing and the remaining 40% to speaking. An interviewee from another faculty described how their test was developed to reflect the language required of teachers in realistic and authentic situations such as providing oral feedback to students' work. The test enabled the faculty to pinpoint the areas that teacher candidates needed to improve and to assign them to non-credit language courses. The new test and subsequent course placements have helped students obtain higher levels of French-language proficiency and reduced associate teachers' concerns of teacher candidates' language abilities.

Who developed the assessments?

Compared to the school district participants, the faculty of education participants had a stronger awareness of how and why the assessment was developed, and who created the assessment tool, although it was still only half of the 12 who were able to offer commentary on these questions. One of the assessments was created by a team that consisted of an assessment expert and French professors, and three were developed by university departments separate from the faculties of education (e.g., French department). Another was devised by a PhD student specializing in assessment who worked in collaboration with three French school districts and the provincial Ministry of Education. Finally, one participant related how dissatisfaction with their in-house developed assessment led the faculty to abandon it and use the DELF instead.

Delivery and scoring of the internally developed assessments

The delivery of the assessments varied across faculties of education. Two universities have DELF centres on campus and two universities have separate departments that administer and score the assessments. Another two universities requested that applicants plan their own standardized tests and include the results in their application packages. The remaining faculties offer assessments either on-site in the faculty, but participants reported that many assessments were delivered online this year due to COVID-19. They reported this change also enhanced access to applicants.

Questions about the scoring of the assessments revealed that most faculties of education use a rubric to evaluate performance, and one interviewee mentioned their scoring rubric is informed by the CEFR. Few details were shared regarding the process

used to score the assessments however it appears that for most faculties using internally developed assessments, more than one evaluator is used to score the applicant's performance. In two instances one person both administers and scores the assessment but in general, different raters are involved in the process. In one faculty, a discussion between the two interviewers, both are well-versed in the OPI and CEFR, produces an overall score for the applicants. Similarly, in another faculty, the in-house developed test is administered by two retired teachers who are DELF trained. Finally, in another example, the tests are double scored and if a common result is not obtained, a third person acts as third rater. It appeared that in general, faculties made an effort to ensure scoring was reliable and defensible.

Little detail was given about the standards applicants needed to meet to pass the assessment. In one instance a 70% mark on the test is required to pass the test, and in another case 76% is noted as the pass mark. Without knowing the test items and their level of difficulty, descriptions of proficiency such as 70% are not meaningful. Most interview candidates did not provide information about how applicant performances were rated, although one answered that a general sense of proficiency during the oral component of the test is sufficient to be admitted to the B.Ed. program.

Challenges

Three participants were concerned that French-language proficiency levels among teacher candidates was lower than desired. Both participants from the faculties whose only assessment of French-language proficiency is course credits said that university French courses are not an effective measure of candidates' French proficiency and related stories of teacher candidates who had the requisite number of French course credits but had weak French-language proficiency.

According to one faculty member, the greatest challenge is changing the mindset of HR personnel, school staff and parents regarding lifelong learning. She believes that until French teachers are given the resources and time to further develop their French, they will continue to leave the profession because of their feelings of inadequacy. This, in turn, compounds the perennial teacher shortage. Thus, school districts must be willing to hire someone whose French-language proficiency is below their desired level, and then support this person in their language learning.

History and rationale behind the assessment tools and processes

The rationale for developing and using assessments differed among faculties. Rationales included ensuring minimum language proficiency standards, identifying best pathways for future language learning, providing additional pathways into the B.Ed. program for proficient French speakers, and ensuring the faculty adhered to provincial accreditation requirements. As no trends were evident in the data, it appears that how and why Faculties of Education develop French-language proficiency assessments is a result of local factors.

Two participants stated that the purpose of their assessment was to help improve the French of the teacher candidates by identifying their current proficiency levels. In both cases, this was for a concurrent program. Another faculty stated the English admissions interview enables them to verify the candidates' general suitability for teaching, and if the candidate demonstrates an interest in continuing the conversation in French then the interviewers can ascertain the candidates' proficiency. Following this procedure resulted in attracting more candidates to the FSL program. A participant from another faculty reported using an external department to develop, administer and rate the results of an assessment to improve the efficiency of the admissions process. In addition, the external department advises course options for the teacher candidates to take during the B.Ed. program to improve their French and take the exit CEFRANC or DALF C1 exam.

A participant from Ontario described how her faculty developed an internal test to provide a second pathway to admission to attract more candidates to the program. In this case, the French-language proficiency test was not meant to exclude applicants with weak French, but to allow for another way of including applicants with strong French-language proficiency, but no or few university courses in the subject. Examples of such applicants would be bilingual students who opted to attend university in English, or francophones who completed a degree at a French language university but did not take very many French courses (e.g., they completed a chemistry degree). The rationale for another Ontario faculty to develop a French-language proficiency assessment was to meet accreditation requirements. This participant designed their assessment to be similar to the one conducted by a local school district in the hopes it would prepare teacher candidates for future job interviews.

Finally, two participants gave multiple reasons for why their faculties require applicants to take the DELF exam for admission. These reasons included "improving the

Collaborating for change

A faculty was spurred to change its French-language proficiency assessments in response to concerns from local school district leaders and program graduates. After self-study, the faculty decided the language proficiency standards for admitting FSL teacher candidates lacked clarity and cohesion. A collaboration ensued between the faculty, local school districts, and the provincial teacher federation. This process led to the requirement that all candidates obtain a DELF B2 diploma, with a minimum score of 70%, prior to applying to the B.Ed. program. To prepare potential applicants for the change, faculty personnel informed undergraduate students in French programs of the change and courses were offered free of charge to students to help them prepare for the DELF exam. This change shifted conversations among students from the number of required French courses to how to improve their French-language proficiency. Since the introduction of the DELF B2 requirement, admission numbers have not diminished, and school districts are satisfied with the improved French proficiency of their newly hired teachers.

pathway for future teachers", promoting clarity and transparency in the application process and instilling a philosophy of lifelong learning in the teacher candidates.

A participant whose faculty outsourced the assessment of applicants' French-language proficiency to the French department remarked that this manner of assessing applicants' French-language proficiency meant the cumbersome work of assessing teacher candidates' proficiency levels was now removed from the faculty of education and given over to a group trained in conducting language assessments. This practice is in its initial stages, but they reported it already appears to be well received. Part of the reason may be that the new assessment process provides a pathway for students to identify their language learning needs, receive course counselling, and recommendations to improve their French.

Two faculties reported that introducing more stringent assessment tests have resulted in admitting teacher candidates with higher levels of French proficiency. In both cases, the new tests were constructed to evaluate a range of language skills, whereas the old tests had a focus on grammar. Participants from these two faculties reported their teacher candidates now receive fewer negative remarks from associate teachers regarding the quality of their French. This is an important point because only four participants stated that supervising teachers of FSL practicums do not make negative comments about teacher candidates' French-language proficiency. Negative comments were reported to be especially common from supervising teachers in French Immersion classes, or who were francophone. One participant mentioned that sometimes supervising teachers themselves have weak French-language proficiency and will make positive comments about the language proficiency of the teacher candidate.

Four years ago, in response to shortcomings identified in their in-house developed assessment, a faculty opted to require a DELF B1 level for all program applicants. When using the in-house developed assessment, it was found the test administrators lacked training in how to conduct fair assessments, the assessment process and evaluations lacked consistency, and the standards were not recognized beyond the faculty. Having the DELF as part of the entrance requirements introduced transparency, consistency, and clarity. Applicants are now informed of the process and can take active

steps towards improving their French in a systematic and standardized manner to prepare for the DELF exam.

Another faculty made a similar change, citing two reasons to replace their in-house assessment with the DELF. First, the in-house assessment items were not related to education, so it was not an effective measure of the French language skills needed in the classroom. Second, the test reinforced the message that success on a test is the end product of language learning because students who were not successful in passing the test were not accepted into the program. Under their current system, applicants are aware that a DELF B2 level is required in the application package. The onus is now on the applicants to prepare for the DELF exam. This participant told us that applicants with a DELF B1 are also being accepted into the program with the goal of assisting them in improving their French-language proficiency during the program. A supplemental course that integrates the use of a language portfolio designed for teachers is offered to all students. The belief is that with active, ongoing learning in a supportive environment, confidence is increased and progress in language learning is made. In other words, teachers are not 'ready to go' once they finish the B.Ed. program, so language learning needs to be a constant during their career. The changes are recent, but the participant related that feedback so far has been positive.

An alternative approach described by one participant, is to accept all FSL teacher candidates who have already been admitted to the B.Ed. program. All teacher candidates take a placement test and, where required, level-appropriate courses. At the end of the program, the 'hard' requirement is that teacher candidates pass the DELF C1 exam to receive FSL accreditation on their teaching certificates. The advantage of such a system, according to the interviewee, is that districts need not assess the French-language proficiency of potential teachers during their hiring process.

What are the supports for teacher candidates?

Of the 12 faculties interviewed, five do not offer supports for candidates to help them improve their proficiency. Two participants felt that supports were not necessary as the admission criteria are sufficient to ensure that teacher candidates have the requisite level of proficiency and so no further development is needed. The other three participants did not articulate a reason.

The remaining 7 faculties offer a variety of supports. For example, in three faculties, the teacher candidates' proficiency levels are identified upon entry into the B.Ed. program. Depending on the test results, the teacher candidates are streamed into level appropriate French language courses. In one faculty a mandatory course is designed to enhance French language skills related to teaching, and in another faculty a non-credit course is available for students that incorporates the use of a language portfolio to develop pedagogy and social aspects of communication.

Three faculties accept teacher candidates who received the equivalent of a B1 level on a standardized test and offer programs to promote language learning. For example, one faculty received funding to host weekly lunch discussions. The discussions about educational or current topics are informal and encourage vocabulary learning, which (according to the participant) is often why teacher candidates' proficiency levels are lower than desired. Individual feedback is provided during the discussions, and teacher candidates are encouraged to set goals for themselves. The program was so successful that for the 2020-21 school year, two groups were formed: one for those at the B1 level and another for those at B2. Participants receive a certification at the end of the program, as well as a grant to retake the New Brunswick OPI if desired.

Two faculties offer individualized help to teacher candidates who express the need and desire to developing their French. These appear to be informal supports offered on an as-needed basis. Finally, one faculty's 2-year pilot language support program to help teacher candidates prepare for a rewrite of the DELF B1 exam has just ended. Due to the success of the class, both in preparing the teacher candidates and in forming a bridge between the faculty and school district, the course will become a recognize credit as of September 2021.

Analysis

Interview participants from faculties of education described a variety of assessment practices that ranged from counting course credits to formal tests founded on language use for teaching. Compared to school districts, there was also a larger proportion of participants whose organization was willing to outsource the assessment—either by using a standardized test such as the DELF or having another department within the university conduct the assessment. Where assessments were developed by the faculty, they were usually designed and delivered by the French curriculum instructor, although other French-speaking personnel were sometimes involved. About half the interviewees were able to describe review and validation processes for their assessment.

It was interesting that only one faculty represented in our sample administers a proficiency assessment for graduation. As researchers, we see a rationale for assessing French-language proficiency for both admission and graduation purposes. For admissions, it would be important to ascertain that an applicant has a sufficient command of the language to benefit from the instruction offered during their B.Ed. program. During that program, one would expect that specific language learning would take place related to teaching French, giving feedback, education vocabulary, etc. and so there is a rationale for an exit assessment that examines teacher specific uses of the language.

Faculties of education assessed French-language proficiency not just for admissions purposes, but also to better offer support for teacher candidates' language development. This was especially true for concurrent education programs. Given these programs are typically 4 or 5 years in length, there are more opportunities for language development in these programs than in a 1- or 2-year post baccalaureate B.Ed. program. The increased emphasis on formative uses of the French-language proficiency assessments compared to school districts may also reflect the foundational purposes of education faculties and school districts. Students are admitted to universities with the understanding they are there to learn, whereas school districts expect to hire teachers who are already competent in their subject area. This is not to say that teachers do not engage in professional learning once hired, only that it is not their primary function within the organization. As noted by one of our participants, it may be that school districts need to better consider how they can facilitate the development of French-language proficiency for beginning teachers. This would mean using French-language proficiency assessments in a formative fashion rather than as a yes/no decision-making tool during hiring.

One unexpected purpose of language assessment was to increase access to the B.Ed. program. High stakes assessments are typically seen as serving a gatekeeping function, but in the case of two faculties they provided an alternate pathway to admissions. These pathways were for people who had strong, but unrecognized, French-language proficiency. This is a novel way of thinking of assessment and one that is worthy of sharing as it has the potential to enhance both the supply of FSL teachers and equity in the admissions process.

Many faculties of education have access to language and assessment experts both within their faculty and within the larger university community. This would explain why our data show that assessments created by faculties of education are more likely to be part of a formal review or validation process. It should be noted that half the participants were not able to describe a review or validation process, so this practice is not universal among faculties. Still, we see some evidence that faculties are leveraging the expertise and resources at their disposal to maximize the quality of their assessment process and tools. In only one instance did a participant discuss faculties cooperating with each other or with school districts to standardize assessments. This is perhaps not surprising in provinces with only one Faculty of Education, but in provinces with multiple faculties of education graduating FSL teachers to the same certification standards, it might be expected that FSL teacher candidates would need to meet the same language proficiency standards for admission and/or graduation purposes.

Across our sample, we found novel and worthwhile approaches to French-language proficiency assessment for teacher candidates. As with school districts, it appeared these approaches developed in response to local conditions, resources, and expertise. It is our view that faculties of education and school districts alike would benefit if French-language assessment tools and processes were designed in a proactive rather than reactive fashion. This would mean following accepted principles of test development and implementation (e.g., define the construct, define the standards, validate the items, train the raters, implement quality control processes, etc.). Many faculties of education have staff or faculty members familiar with these principles and so implementing them should not be an undue burden.

Discussion of Empirical Findings

Whether sourced from websites, surveys, or interviews, our data provided consistent findings regarding French-language proficiency assessments conducted by school districts and faculties of education. These findings included the prevalence of internally developed assessment tools, desired proficiency standards equivalent to DELF B2 or C1, a focus on speaking and writing skills, and general satisfaction with the assessments and their performance. Our survey and interview data showed that almost all school districts conduct French-language proficiency assessments when hiring FSL teachers, even if such assessments are not mentioned on their websites. All three data sets showed that faculties of education assess French-language proficiency of applicants.

Most district websites give little detail about their French-language proficiency assessments and required levels of proficiency. There are drawbacks to not publicizing this information. Firstly, knowledge about the French proficiency skills required for a position, allows prospective FSL teachers to self-assess and judge whether their level French-language proficiency makes them a suitable candidate for the position. These self-assessments could also inform further language development to improve both their hiring potential and their future professional practice as an FSL teacher. Secondly, being open and transparent about the French-language proficiency assessments and required levels of proficiency could communicate to other stakeholders (e.g., faculties of education) how to better prepare FSL teachers for entry into the profession. Finally, it is considered good assessment practice to be clear about the assessment content and format, how it is administered and how it is scored.

Faculties of education were more transparent in this regard, with all faculties outlining what French-language proficiency assessments were part of the application process. The number of accumulated course credits an applicant has is the most common assessment of French-language proficiency used by faculties of education. This is a proxy measure and not a direct assessment and evaluation of French-language proficiency. Two of our interview participants told us directly that there are cases where teacher candidates have the requisite course credits but low French proficiency, calling into question their efficacy as a measure of language proficiency.

Still, it is understandable why faculties of education would use them as an entrance requirement. Firstly, faculties of education require applicants for any teachable subject area to have a minimum number of course credits in that subject. The requirements for French are consistent with those for other teachable subjects such as mathematics or history. As an example, in Nova Scotia, provincial regulations require that secondary teachers have 30 credit hours for their first teachable subject and 18 credit hours for their second[6]. These are exactly the requirements we see listed on the websites of Nova Scotia universities. At many universities, the course requirements for French are identical for other subject areas such as chemistry or history. Another potential reason for the prevalence of course credits may be economical. Using course credits as an indicator of French-language proficiency does not incur

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[6] https://certification.ednet.ns.ca/undergraduate-studies

the expense of developing and scoring an assessment, while examining transcripts is reliable, easy, and a standard process already done by the admissions department. On the other hand, it begs the question why most of the faculties surveyed have a French-language proficiency assessment protocol that does not rely solely on accumulated course credits.

Website descriptions of assessments developed internally by the university lacked detail, such that potential applicants would struggle to know the format and length of the assessment, what the proficiency requirements were, and how the scoring works. The prevalence of internally developed assessments may reflect some hesitancy to use tests like the DELF because of the associated costs for applicants. Three of our interview participants mentioned the DELF is expensive, which can limit applicants and introduce equity issues into the application process.

Despite the high cost of the DELF, it was the only internationally recognized French-language test that was used by more than one organization. This may be because the CEFR has become increasingly influential in Canadian FSL education (Arnott et al., 2017) and the DELF appears to be generally well received by Canadian educators as a fair and reasonable assessment of French-language proficiency (Vandergrift, 2015). Given that the CEFR has influenced both FSL policy and curriculum across Canada (Piccardo, North, & Maldina, 2019), it is reasonable that school districts and faculties of education using a recognized test would choose a CEFR based assessment tool such as the DELF. Another factor favouring the use of the DELF may be that 12 Canadian universities are also DELF testing centres.

Compared to school districts, faculties of education demonstrated more diversity in their assessment tools and purposes, and survey respondents articulated a greater understanding of the history and rationale of the assessment. This could be expected as expertise related to assessing adults' language proficiency is likely more readily available in universities than in school districts. Despite this likelihood, we were surprised that only about half of the faculties reported having a review or validation process for their assessment—especially given the value that faculties placed upon French-language proficiency for their FSL teacher candidates. Unfortunately, there were too few responses to the follow-up item that asked why there was no review or validation process for us to draw any conclusions.

In concurrent education programs, where teacher candidates begin their professional education during their 1st or 2nd year of university, these candidates have up to 4 years to develop their French language before graduation. As such, we expected faculties offering concurrent programs to offer different pathways and supports for FSL teacher candidates to improve their French. What was interesting was that most consecutive (post baccalaureate) B.Ed. programs also offered opportunities to develop French-language proficiency within the program, even though these programs are only 1 to 2 years long. This appears to be unique to French as teacher candidates in other subject areas such as geography or biology are not given supports to further develop their subject knowledge.

School districts rarely use French-language proficiency assessments for formative purposes (i.e., to help FSL teachers improve their French). Our data collection did not explore why this

was the case, so we cannot offer concrete explanations, although we do note that the most common form of assessment enacted by school districts (asking one or two questions during the employment interview) would not provide sufficiently detailed information about a person's language proficiency to serve as a good basis for informing future language development efforts.

The fact that no patterns were observed in how school districts or faculties came to their current assessment process may indicate that a broad variety of factors come into play. These may include provincial certification requirements and legislation, availability of language assessment expertise, and the number of FSL applicants to the program or district. One explanation is that combinations of these factors are unique to each district or faculty leading to the emergence of different assessment processes and tools. We saw limited evidence of collaboration among organizations (e.g., districts collaborating with each other, or districts collaborating with faculties of education) and this lack of collaboration may also play a role in the emergence of diverse assessment practices. In the three cases where evidence of collaboration existed, we saw common French-language proficiency standards used by school districts and faculties of education, as well as common assessment instruments. Our participants in all three cases expressed satisfaction with the collaborative efforts and felt the consistent standards and tools led to greater clarity for teacher candidates and higher overall French-language proficiency standards for teachers.

While there is some consistency in the stated French proficiency expectations required for admission into teacher education programs, we were surprised that *any* difference in expectations existed given that teacher candidates within a province must conform to the same certification standards and faculties of education must meet the same accreditation requirements. This means that qualifications are standardized but language proficiency levels are not. This situation was most evident in Ontario, which has the greatest number of faculties of education. The range in proficiency requirements for admission, combined with the broad range of assessment practices likely means the French-language proficiency of teacher candidates varies widely. While there is a rationale for setting different French-language proficiency standards for teacher education programs aimed at preparing candidates for French Immersion or Core/Basic French, our survey results showed that most faculties have a single standard for FSL teacher candidates.

For both school districts and faculties of education, most French-language assessments described in our sample were internally developed and not informed by a language proficiency framework. Therefore, it is not possible for us to determine how well they function in discriminating among applicants who meet, or do not meet, the desired level of French-language proficiency. Evidence from school districts suggests that ratings of the applicants are often dependent on the person(s) conducting the employment interview and that even if a rubric is used, it is not always interpreted in a consistent manner. The minimal evidence of training in how to use the assessment tool further suggests that French-language proficiency assessments, as enacted by school districts, struggle to measure applicants' French-language proficiency in a consistent manner. This is not to say that districts or faculties of education are

not concerned with reliability in their assessments. Both the survey and interview data revealed that using two or more raters to evaluate performance on the assessment is commonly done.

Alignment with research and known effective practices

Among our sample of respondents, we identified practices that aligned with effective practices identified in our review of prior research. For example, we identified three participants who made a specific effort to target language skills required for teaching in their assessment. These skills include giving feedback, responding to student questions, and being able to identify errors in language usage. As noted earlier, many districts and faculties of education use two or more raters to promote consistency and reliability in the evaluation of applicants' performance on the assessment tools. We also noted that for both districts and faculties, the most assessed language skill is speaking, followed by writing. This is appropriate in language assessments for L2 teachers, especially in the current climate of language teaching for communicative purposes.

As researchers, we were heartened to see thoughtful, research-informed examples of French-language proficiency assessment within our sample. Perhaps the most interesting finding in our study is the formative use of language assessment. The general and teacher specific language examinations shown in Appendices D and E are all summative in nature[7]. Faculties of education frequently use French-language proficiency assessment results for development purposes and not simply as an admissions criterion. The practice of using assessment results formatively is less common in school districts, but our interview data revealed that some school districts are using assessment information in this way.

Using the results of French-language proficiency assessments for language development purposes could be a sensible option in a labour market where it is difficult to find FSL teachers. This is a recognized strategy in other industries (Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill, & Pemberton-Jones, 2015). Developing FSL teachers' language proficiency while on the job was heavily endorsed by one faculty of education interview participant and appears to be gaining some traction with school districts. If assessments are to be used in this way, some thought will need to be given to their design. Accurately measuring whether someone's language proficiency is above or below a certain threshold requires an operationalization of proficiency as well as a different approach and set of assessment tools that diagnose a (potential) teacher's strengths and weaknesses in their language proficiency and informs a reasonable strategy for their future language development. The formative use of language proficiency assessments for teachers is not discussed in the research literature and so Canadian school districts and faculties of education have an opportunity to be leaders in this area.

While there were positive findings from our data, we do not wish to ignore the problematic findings. Most of the assessments in our sample were not grounded in a known language proficiency framework, and the tools themselves rarely reflected the range of language skills FSL teachers need in the classroom. Assessments' focus on oral language is appropriate for language teaching, but many school districts use one or two items in an employment

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[7] We note that DELF results are often used in a formative manner by educational institutions (Rehner, 2018).

interview—a process that is unlikely to provide evaluators with valid, reliable data on which to make decisions about an applicant's French-language proficiency and the high stakes decisions related to employability. At the very least, it leaves districts vulnerable to challenges regarding their French language assessments practice when hiring.

Another potential problem was the range of assessment tools and processes used by faculties of education and school districts. This broad range allows for tools and processes to be developed that are suited to local conditions, but also creates a scenario where potential FSL teachers can shop around for districts or B.Ed. programs with low standards. The range of assessment tools and practices may also contribute to the current hiring climate where school districts do not trust that FSL certified teachers are proficient enough in French to be effective in the classroom, so they conduct their own assessment of certified FSL teachers' French. Better cooperation and standardization of assessment tools, processes, and language proficiency standards may reduce the need to assess FSL teacher candidates' French-language proficiency multiple times before they are hired into a teaching position.

Pilot Projects

As indicated previously, the assessment of French-language proficiency for FSL teaching shows considerable variation across the two key groups assessing language proficiency: faculties of education (with teacher candidates) and school districts (with FSL teachers seeking employment). While differences in proficiency assessment are not inherently problematic, some differences were found to be inconsistent with fair assessment practice (e.g., practices based on achieving valid and reliable outcomes). Furthermore, our findings indicated that faculties of education and school districts rely largely on assessment tools and protocols developed independently from one another creating possible misalignment between the proficiency expectations for teacher candidates and FSL teachers entering the job market.

To this end, financial support was made available to school districts and faculties of education to develop pilot projects aimed at two key outcomes:

1. greater collaboration in the review and/or development of French-language proficiency assessment tools used by school districts or faculties of education
2. greater alignment between current research existing practices related to French-language proficiency assessment.

The pilot projects provide a platform for developing, implementing, and refining language proficiency assessment tools and protocols that may ultimately be included in the toolkit.

In total, 14 pilot projects were received from faculties of education and school districts across the country. Twelve projects were supported; six led by school districts and six by faculties of education. Given the expected outcomes, most pilot project leads are collaborating with at least one other organization. Each pilot project is required to provide regular updates. Table 7 summarizes the pilot projects and their specific goals.

Table 7. Pilot projects funded as part of this initiative

Organization(s)	Pilot Project	Project Goal(s)
Durham District School Board	*Teach French @ DDSB*	1. Review and revise the current French-language proficiency scoring tool used in Durham DSB for a more standardized approach across assessors, taking inspiration from the DELF. 2. Offer harmonization training for assessors before applicants are assessed.

University of Alberta, Faculté St. Jean **In collaboration with St. Albert Public Schools**	*Assessment of Language Proficiency in French Immersion Schools in Edmonton: État de lieux*	Assess the needs and challenges faced by FSL/French Immersion as a result of their current level of French-language proficiency.
District School Board Ontario North East **In collaboration with Laurentian University, Faculty of Education**	*FSL Language Proficiency of Concurrent Education Teacher Candidates: A Targeted Approach in Yr. 1-2 of a 5 Year Program*	1. Collaborate with the DSB of Ontario North East to provide authentic French-learning opportunities for B.Ed. students by facilitating practicum placements in French-speaking communities. 2. Use Ev@lang language assessments to identify potential FSL teacher candidates.
McGill University, Faculty of Education, Department of Integrated Studies **In collaboration with local French Immersion schools**	*A case study investigating the impact of an online immersion graduate certificate program on development of in-service teachers' immersion-specific competencies*	1. Collect clear indicators of what supports in-service teachers require regarding their French language development. 2. Determine the strengths and weaknesses of McGill's PIF graduate certificate program in developing immersion-specific competencies among in-service teachers. 3. Raise school administrators' awareness of the importance of immersion-specific teacher education for effective immersion teaching.
Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Clarington Catholic District School Board **In collaboration with Premiere Class Language School, Toronto.**	*Increasing Teacher Efficacy by Increasing Teacher Confidence*	Support early-career FSL teachers with French language development based on proficiency assessment results.

Renfrew County District School Board **In collaboration with the Canadian Association of Immersion Professionals**	*Pre-service French-language proficiency Assessment Protocol*	Create language development plans for newly hired FSL teachers and facilitate access to appropriate language learning supports.
Tyndale University, Education Department **In collaboration with local districts hosting teacher candidates**	*Coordinating pre-service to post-hiring French-language proficiency assessment for FSL educators*	Review the existing French-language proficiency assessments used by Tyndale University for pre-admission into FSL teaching stream and by participating school boards for FSL teacher hiring for possible realignment.
University of Calgary, Werklund School of Education **In collaboration with the Calgary Board of Education**	*Providing support for French Immersion BEd students with linguistic insecurity*	1. Articulate the expectations of WSE and CBE in terms of French-language proficiency by preparing and deploying a common instrument for assessing French proficiency at two points – entry into the B.Ed. program, and during the hiring interview two years later; 2. Provide targeted opportunities for students to develop their proficiency over the course of their 2-year B.Ed. degree to increase their confidence during field practicum experiences and upon entering the classroom as professionals.
University of Prince Edward Island, Faculty of Education **In collaboration with local schools/districts**	*Building Confidence Through Community: Creating authentic opportunities for language engagement within a B.Ed. (FSL) program*	Engage students in the Department of Modern Languages to facilitate authentic French language development opportunities for current FSL/B.Ed. students alongside practising FSL teachers in the area.

Upper Canada District School Board Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Peel District School Board	*A review of French-language proficiency assessment screening tools and protocols*	Tri-board collaboration to review, refine and re-align French-language proficiency assessment tools used when screening/hiring FSL teachers.

As can be seen from Table 7, the projects vary in scope and purpose. All were chosen on the following criteria:

- Alignment with the aims of this initiative
- Aligned with effective assessment practices identified in research
- Collaborative
- Scalable

Pilot project teams will provide regular updates that will be used to inform the development of the assessment toolkit.

Developing an Assessment Toolkit

Our review of prior research and empirical findings allows us to create some initial ideas and founding principles for an assessment toolkit that could be used by school districts and faculties of education to inform their French-language proficiency assessments. Firstly, we note that all educational organizations operate within a context. For districts, that context includes provincial legislation, local factors such as district size, popularity of FSL, and availability of certified teachers for hiring. For faculties of education that context includes accreditation requirements, the pool of applicants to the program, and availability of quality FSL practicum experiences and mentorship for their teacher candidates.

Given the importance of context, we are not promoting a universal solution, or common approach, to French-language proficiency assessment for school districts and Faculties of Education. Instead, we propose a range of ideas, tools, and concepts for educational organizations to consider when creating or reviewing their French-language proficiency assessments. These ideas are presented here as a bulleted list. They will be further developed in years two and three of this initiative. Critical to the development of these ideas will be the data and experiences gathered through the pilot projects described in this report. Initial ideas for an assessment toolkit include:

- Assessments should be grounded in a language proficiency framework that is suited to the teaching profession. Such a framework should include general language skills such as speaking and writing, but also teacher specific skills such as selecting resources, identifying language errors, and offering feedback.
- Assessment formats, length, item types, content, and scoring rules should be communicated clearly and in advance of the assessment being conducted.
- Assessment tools and processes should undergo scheduled periodic reviews. These reviews should be informed by empirical evidence from the current version of the assessment. Such evidence could be psychometric properties of the items, comments from those taking the assessment and assessors, and longitudinal data relating assessment results to outcomes such as teaching effectiveness or practicum evaluations.
- Collaboration should be encouraged among stakeholders in the development of the assessment tools and language proficiency standards. Such stakeholders would include faculties of education, school districts, accreditation bodies, ministries of education, parental advocacy groups, and teacher organizations. Collaborations could be used to provide clarity and consistency with regards to assessment tools and language proficiency standards. For example, school districts and faculties of education could collaborate to examine how practicum placements may be used as authentic French-language proficiency assessment

opportunities for teacher candidates. We have initiated this aspect of the toolkit already with our pilot projects.

- Cost considerations should be included for both fiscal and equity purposes.
- Assessment items should have both situational and interactional authenticity. This means items should reflect language skills that FSL teachers are likely to need and those taking the assessment should interact with the items in a manner that reflects the reality of teaching.
- Separate French-language proficiency assessments from other types of assessments (e.g., employment interviews).
- Develop a common framework or language to describe proficiency standards. The CEFR is one such framework as are the Canadian Language Benchmarks. Because the CEFR is influential in FSL teaching and curriculum, it is worthy of serious consideration.
- Consider how French-language proficiency assessments may be used to enhance the French language development of teachers or teacher candidates. Diagnostic assessment, self-assessment, and informal assessments may all play a role in enhancing language development. How assessments could be designed to facilitate feedback could also be investigated.
- Examine how training assessors could enhance the validity and reliability of the assessment tools and processes.
- Investigate whether emerging technologies (e.g., online interview tools, automated scoring of assessments) may offer promising avenues for language proficiency assessments.

In years two and three of this initiative, we will use these ideas, alongside experiences gained from the pilot projects and collaborations, to develop an assessment toolkit. The toolkit will include frameworks for defining and discussing language proficiency for FSL teachers, guidelines to review current proficiency assessment practices, and sample tools. It is anticipated that educational organizations could use these tools as is or modify them to better suit their purposes.

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Appendix B - Team Members and Collaborators

***FSL Teacher Recruitment Guide for English-Language School Boards* Initiative**	Project Lead: Wayne Joudrie* Project Manager: Debra Krutila* Project Researcher: Dr. Heather Braund* Writing Team: Debra McFadden, Andre Labrie, Claudia Parker and Gary Strother
***French-Language Proficiency Assessment Toolkit and Resource Guide* Initiative**	Project Lead: Dr. Stefan Merchant* Project Manager: Dr. David Jack* Project Researcher: Dr. Laura Hermans-Nymark* Research Assistant: Dr. Ayman Massouti
***Supporting Principals to Address Challenges in Retention and Professional Support of FSL Teachers* Initiative**	Project Lead: Brenda Blancher* Project Manager: Judith Nyman* Project Researcher: Rebecca Stroud Stasel* OPC Lead: Nadine Trépanier-Bisson CPCO Lead: Luciana Cardarelli Research Assistants: Dr. John Bosica, Becca Evans, and Dr. Ayman Massouti

*indicates members of the Initiative Coordinating Team
Note: OPSBA contact Judith Nyman, Director of Program Policy jnyman@opsba.org

Appendix C - Survey for School Districts

Preamble

Information and Consent Form for Research Participants - Survey of French Language Assessments in School Districts

This survey is part of a project is funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Government of Ontario and led by the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. The intent is to gather information about how the French-language proficiency of potential French teachers is assessed. All responses will be confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research. You are under no obligation to participate and can refuse to answer any questions you do not wish. You may withdraw from the study at any point without facing any negative consequences now or in the future. If you provide no identifying information in your responses, they will be anonymous and data you have already provided cannot be deleted should you decide to withdraw from the study,

Your answers to open-ended questions may be used verbatim in presentations and publications but neither you nor your school district will be identified directly or indirectly. To further protect confidentiality, results will be published in pooled (aggregate) format.

Your decision to complete and submit this survey will be interpreted as an indication of your consent to participate. The survey should take 10-15 minutes to complete. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. Once you have completed the survey, please click Submit at the end of the survey.

Benefits: It is anticipated that by collecting and reporting on the different ways that French language skills are assessed, school districts can learn about the existing range of assessments in use, and use that information to inform their own FSL teacher hiring processes. We further anticipate that Faculties of Education may use this information to better align their FSL teacher training to the needs of school districts.

Information about the Study Results: As per our funding agreements, results from the survey will be published in the annual report to the department of Canadian Heritage, the Government of Ontario, and subsequently published on the Ontario Public School Boards' Association

website at www.opsba.org .

If you have any questions, require more information about the study, or wish to withdraw you may contact Dr. Stefan Merchant at sdm11@queensu.ca or Dr. David Jack at djack@opsba.org

The following section contains questions about your school district.

Q1. What province or territory is your school district located in?

Q2. How many K-12 students are enrolled in your school district?

Q3. What percentage of K-12 students are enrolled in all FSL programs?

Q4. How many external teacher applications for FSL positions did your district receive last year?

This section contains questions about French language assessments you may conduct for applicants to teach FSL in your district.

Q5. Does your district conduct a French-language proficiency assessment as part of the recruitment/hiring process for those applying to teach FSL?

○ Yes (1)

○ Maybe - It depends on circumstances (2)

○ No (3)

Branching logic in place. Skip to Q18, if answer to Q5 is no. Skip to Q5M if answer is "Maybe". Go to Q6 if answer is "Yes".

Q5M. You selected "Maybe - It depends on circumstances". Please describe the circumstances that may lead you to conduct or not conduct an assessment of the applicant's French-language proficiency.

Q6. Please indicate below the components of the assessment that best match the process used in your district. Indicate all that apply.

☐ Applicants complete an assessment developed by the district

☐ Applicants must show results from the DELF (Diplôme d'études en langue française) or DALF (Diplôme approfondi de langue française)

☐ Applicants must show results from the TCF (test de connaissance du francais)

☐ Applicants must show results from the TEF Canada (Test d'evaluation de francais pour le Canada)

☐ Applicants must show results from an Oral Proficiency Interview that is conducted by an outside agency

☐ Applicants' reading skills in French are assessed using an externally developed reading test

☐ Applicants' listening skills are assessed using an externally developed instrument

☐ Applicants' knowledge of francophone culture is assessed using an externally developed instrument

☐ Applicants' writing skills are assessed using an externally developed instrument

☐ Other

Branching logic – Display Q6O if "Other" is selected for Q6.

Q6O. You selected "Other". Can you please describe how applicants' French-language proficiency is assessed and what assessment tools are used (if any).
Branching logic – Display Q7 if "Applicants complete an assessment developed by the district" is selected for Q6.

Q7. You indicated that your French-language proficiency assessment was developed by your district. Can you please tell us which language skills you directly assess and evaluate. Select all that apply.

☐ Knowledge of francophone culture (1)

☐ Listening (2)

☐ Reading (3)

☐ Speaking (4)

☐ Writing (5)

Branching logic – Display Q7KFC if "Knowledge of francophone culture" is selected for Q7.

Q7KFC. You indicated that you use a tool developed by your district to directly assess and evaluate knowledge of francophone culture. Please describe the assessment tool and how the applicant's knowledge is evaluated.
Branching logic – Display Q7L if "Listening" is selected for Q7.

Q7L. You indicated you use a tool developed by your district to directly assess and evaluate listening skills. Please describe the assessment tool and how the applicant's performance is evaluated.
Branching logic – Display Q7R if "Reading" is selected for Q7.

Q7R. You indicated that you use a tool developed by your district to directly assess and evaluate an applicant's reading skills. Please describe the assessment tool and how the applicant's performance is evaluated.
Branching logic – Display Q7W if "Writing" is selected for Q7.

Q7W. You indicated you use a tool developed by your district to directly assess and evaluate an applicant's writing skills. Please describe the assessment tool and how the applicant's performance is evaluated.
Branching logic – Display Q7S if "Speaking" is selected for Q7.

Q7S. You indicated that you use a tool developed by your district to directly assess and evaluate an applicant's speaking skills in French. Please describe the assessment tool and how the applicant's performance is evaluated.

Q8. We acknowledge that all of the language skills listed below are important. However, we would like you to rank order the skills in order how they are weighted in your overall evaluation of the applicants' French-language proficiency. Please put (drag and drop) the most heavily weighted skill at the top of the list and the least heavily weighted skill at the bottom.

Rank order of weighting (most heavily weighted skill on top).

Knowledge of francophone culture
Listening
Reading
Speaking
Writing

Q9. At what stage in the hiring process is the applicant's French-language proficiency assessed? (select all that apply)

☐ Before any formal application is submitted

☐ They must submit proof of proficiency with their application

☐ After the application is submitted but before they are selected for interview

☐ After they have been selected for interview but before the interview

☐ During interview

☐ After interview but before hiring

☐ After hiring but before they start teaching

☐ After they have started teaching

☐ We do not assess the French-language proficiency of FSL teacher applicants

☐ Other

Branching logic – Display Q9O if "Other" is selected for Q9.
Q9O. You selected "Other". Can you please tell us at what stage in the hiring process applicants' French-language proficiency is assessed?

Q10. What additional indicators of an applicant's French-language proficiency are considered when hiring someone to become an FSL teacher? Please check all that apply.

☐ Schooling completed at a francophone university

☐ Experience living in a francophone environment

☐ Prior experience teaching French

☐ Where they completed their FSL teacher education program

☐ Whether they attended French Immersion in K-12 schooling

☐ Whether they attended a Francophone school in K-12

☐ A stated passion for the French language and francophone culture

☐ Practicum evaluations

☐ Reference letters

☐ Post-certification courses or qualifications in French

☐ Other

Branching logic – Display Q10O if "Other" is selected for Q10.

Q10O. You selected "Other". Can you please tell us what additional indicators you use to assess applicants' French-language proficiency?

Q11. Who is usually responsible for conducting the French language assessments in your district? (Select all that apply)

☐ French language specialist/consultant within the district

☐ Assessment specialist within the district

☐ A human resources person with strong French language skills

☐ A school administrator with strong French language skills

☐ An external consultant or examiner

☐ Other

Branching logic – Display Q11O if "Other" is selected for Q11.

Q11O. You selected "Other". Please tell us who conducts the French language assessments in your district.

Q12. If different people are assessing applicants' French-language proficiency, do you have a process or method to ensure ratings and decision-making are consistent? If only one person in your district assesses French-language proficiency or you use an external test, please respond N/A.

Q13 Can you please tell us a little bit about the history of how your district came to your current method of assessing (or not assessing) the French-language proficiency of applicants. If you don't know, please write "Don't know" rather than leaving the question blank.

Q14. Which of the following Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels best describes the expectations your district has for the French-language proficiency of your teacher applicants?

○ Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple

terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need. (1)

○ Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. (2)

○ Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. (3)

○ Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices. (4)

○ Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations. (5)

Q15 Are you aware of a process to review or validate the French-language proficiency assessment conducted at your district?

○ Yes (5)

○ No (6)

Branching logic – Display Q15Y is "Yes" is selected for Q15. Display Q15N if "No" is selected for Q15.

Q15Y. Can you please tell us how the review or validation process works. For example, what gets reviewed? Who is involved? How often? What prompts a review?

Q15N. You indicated you do not have a review or validation process. Can you please indicate why not.

Q16. In the past 3 years, roughly what percentage of FSL teacher applicants have not been hired because they did not possess sufficient French-language proficiency?

Q17. Overall, how satisfied are you with the French-language proficiency assessment process used when hiring FSL teachers?

Q18. Is there anything different about interviews for FSL teaching positions compared to interviews for non-FSL position? If yes, please describe the difference, if not please answer N/A

Q19. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your French language assessment practices (or decision to not assess French-language proficiency) surrounding applicants to teach FSL in your district?

Q20. **Would you be willing to participate a follow-up interview?** The interview will be about 20 minutes and ask more questions about assessing the French-language proficiency of teacher applicants to your district.

If so, please give your name and email. Thanks!

Appendix D - Survey for Faculties of Education

Preamble

Information and Consent Form for Research Participants - Survey of French Language Assessments in Faculties of Education

This survey is part of a project is funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Government of Ontario. It is led by the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. The intent is to gather information about how the French-language proficiency of potential French as Second Language (FSL) teachers is assessed by faculties of education and school districts. All responses will be confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research. You are under no obligation to participate and can refuse to answer any questions you do not wish. You may withdraw from the study at any point without facing any negative consequences now or in the future. If you provide no identifying information, your responses will be anonymous responses and cannot be deleted should you decide to withdraw from the study,

Your answers to open-ended questions may be used verbatim in presentations and publications but neither you nor your faculty will be identified. To further protect confidentiality, results will be published in pooled (aggregate) format.

Your decision to complete and submit this survey will be interpreted as an indication of your consent to participate. The survey should take 10-15 minutes to complete. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Once you have completed the survey, please click Submit at the end of the survey.

Benefits: It is anticipated that by collecting and reporting on the different ways that French language skills are assessed, that faculties of education can learn about the existing range of assessments in use, and use that information to inform their own demission processes for applicants into their FSL teacher education programs.

Study Results: As per our funding agreements, results from the survey will be published in the annual report to the department of Canadian Heritage, the Government of Ontario, and subsequently published on the Ontario Public School Boards' Association website at www.opsba.org. If you have any questions, require more information about the study, or wish to withdraw you may contact Dr. Stefan Merchant at sdm11@queensu.ca or Dr. David Jack at djack@opsba.org.

Q1 What province is your faculty located in?

Q2 How many FSL teacher candidates are admitted into your initial teacher education or B.Ed. programs every year? (Across all programs)

Q3 Which programs do you offer to become a certified French (FSL) teacher? (Please select all that apply)

☐ Concurrent education FSL teacher program (entry after high school or first year university)

☐ One- or two-year post-degree program (entry after completion of a university degree)

☐ Post certification courses (e.g. Additional Qualifications courses) for certified teachers who want to become French (FSL) teachers

☐ Other (4)

Branching logic – Display Q3O if "Other" is selected for Q3.

Q3O. You selected "Other". Please tell us about the different programs and pathways your faculty offers to become a certified French (FSL) teacher.

Q4 What level of French teaching do your teacher education programs offer preparation for? (Please select all that apply)

☐ We do not offer a discrete FSL program – our general teacher education programs include qualifications to teach FSL

☐ Core / Basic French (Elementary)

☐ Core / Basic French (Secondary)

☐ French Immersion (Elementary)

☐ French Immersion (Secondary)

☐ Francophone schools

Q5. Which of the following are included in your faculty's assessment of the French-language proficiency of applicants to your teacher education programs? (click all that apply)

☐ Number of French course credits the applicant has completed

☐ Oral interview to determine fluency and speaking ability

☐ Internally developed written test

☐ Score on the DELF or DALF examination

☐ Score on a standardized, external test that is not the DELF/DALF

☐ Degree from a francophone university

☐ French immersion high school diploma

☐ French language high school diploma (i.e. high school diploma from a francophone school system)

☐ We do not assess French-language proficiency of those applying to become French teachers through our teacher education programs

☐ Other (please specify)

Branching logic – Display Q5O if "Other" is selected for Q5.

Q5O. You selected "Other". Can you please describe how you assess applicants' French-language proficiency when applying to your program.

Q6 Which elements of French-language proficiency are directly assessed? (Select all that apply)

☐ Speaking

☐ Listening

☐ Reading

☐ Writing

☐ Knowledge of francophone culture

Branching logic – Display Q6S if "Speaking" selected for Q6. Display Q6W if "Writing" is selected for Q6. Display Q6L if "Listening" selected for Q6. Display Q6R if "Reading" is selected for Q6. Display Q6KFC if "Knowledge of francophone culture" is selected for Q6.

Q6S. You indicated that you directly assess speaking skills. Can you please tell us how you conduct this assessment. Details about the assessment tool, how it is scored, and who conducts the assessment would be appreciated.

Q6W. You indicated you directly assess writing skills. Can you please tell us how you conduct this assessment. Details about the assessment tool, how it is scored, and who conducts the assessment would be appreciated.

Q6L. You indicated you directly assess listening skills. Can you please tell us how you conduct this assessment. Details about the assessment tool, how it is scored, and who conducts the assessment would be appreciated.

Q6R. You indicated you directly assess reading skills. Can you please tell us how you conduct this assessment. Details about the assessment tool, how it is scored, and who conducts the assessment would be appreciated.

Q6KFC. You indicated you assess directly knowledge of francophone culture. Can you please tell us how you conduct this assessment. Details about the assessment tool, how it is scored, and who conducts the assessment would be appreciated.

Q7. Of the assessments you conduct, which one (or two) is(are) most influential in making your decision to admit someone into your teacher education program to become an FSL teacher?

Q8. At what stage is the applicant's French-language proficiency assessed?

Q9. Who conducts the French language assessments in your faculty? (Select all that apply)

☐ Someone in the admissions department who is francophone or has strong French language skills

☐ A French language instructor at the faculty

☐ An individual within the faculty with strong French language skills

☐ Another department within the university (e.g. the French department)

☐ Other
Branching logic – Display Q9O if "Other" is selected for Q9.

Q9O. You selected "Other". Please tell us who conducts the French language assessments in your faculty.

Q10. If more than one person assesses the French-language proficiency of your teacher candidates, how do you ensure ratings and decision-making are consistent? If only one person conducts the assessments, or you use an external assessment please enter N/A.

Q11. Apart from assessments conducted for admissions purposes, do you assess the French-language proficiency of FSL teacher candidates during their program? Please select all that apply.

☐ No

☐ Yes, at the beginning of the program for placement or support purposes

☐ Yes, if we identify gaps or concerns with a student's language proficiency during their teacher education program

☐ Yes, before students are allowed to teach French on practicum

☐ Yes, as a graduation requirement, students need to demonstrate a minimum level of French proficiency

☐ At some other point in the program or for a different rationale

Branching logic – Display Q11O if "At some other point in the program or for a different rationale" is selected for Q11.

Q11O. You responded that you assess FSL teacher candidates' French-language proficiency at a different point in the program, or for a different rationale, than the ones listed. Can you please

describe for us when you assess French-language proficiency and why you conduct the assessment at this time.

Q12. Do you have different language proficiency requirements for different French language or FSL teacher education programs? (Please select all that apply)

☐ No, we have a common set of language proficiency requirements across all our programs (or only have one program).

☐ Yes, we have different requirements for secondary and elementary French

☐ Yes, we have different requirements for Core/Basic French and French Immersion/Extended French

☐ Yes, we have different requirements for francophone programs

☐ Other
Branching logic – Display Q12O if "Other" is selected for Q12.

Q12O. You selected "Other". Please tell us how your French-language proficiency requirements change depending on the program being applied to.

Q13. Which of the following Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels best describes the expectations your faculty has for the French-language proficiency of your teacher candidates?

○ Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g., very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

○ Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events,

dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

○ Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

○ Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

○ Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.

Q14. In the past 3 years, roughly what percentage of applicants have not been admitted to your program because they did not possess sufficient French-language proficiency?

Q15. Are you aware of a process to review or validate the French-language proficiency assessment currently conducted in your faculty? For example, do you have a committee or expert that looks at the assessment results or makes changes to the questions/tasks?

○ Yes

○ No

Branching logic – Display Q15Y if "Yes" selected for Q15. Display Q15N if "No" selected" for Q15.

Q15Y. Can you please tell us how the review or validation process works.

Q15N. You indicated you do not have a review or validation process. Can you please indicate why not?

☐ We have reviewed and refined our assessment over time and are satisfied with how the assessment performs

☐ It is not something we have considered

☐ We use an external assessment (e.g., DELF)

☐ We use an internal assessment based upon a known, validated assessment

☐ We do not have the resources to complete a review and validation process

☐ I don't know

☐ Other

Branching logic – Display Q15NO if "Other" selected for Q15N.

Q15NO. You selected "Other." Can you please describe why you do not have a review or validation process.

Q16. Can you please tell us a little bit about the history of how your faculty came to your current method of assessing (or not assessing) the French-language proficiency of applicants. If you don't know, please write "Don't know" rather than leaving the question blank.

Q17. What are the top two factors you consider when admitting someone to your teacher education program who wants to become a FSL teacher?

☐ French-language proficiency

☐ Schooling completed at a francophone university

☐ Experience living in a francophone environment

☐ Prior experience teaching French

☐ Whether they completed French Immersion in K-12 schooling

☐ A stated passion for the French language and francophone culture

☐ Reference letters

☐ Performance during interview (if an interview is conducted as part of your admissions)

☐ The factors differ depending on what level of French teaching they are preparing for

Branching logic – Display Q17DF if "The factors differ depending on what level of French teaching they are preparing for" is selected for Q17.

Q17DF. You indicated the factors differ depending on what level of French the candidate is wanting to teach. Can you please tell us how those factors change? (e.g. what are the two most important factors for those applying to teach FSL elementary vs. secondary vs. French Immersion)

Q18. Overall, how satisfied a your French-language proficiency assessment practices are for admitting/graduating those wanting to become FSL teachers?

Q19. What opportunities or expectations do you have for teacher candidates to improve their French-language proficiency if needed? (Please select all that apply)

☐ None

☐ Informal opportunities offered on an "as needed" basis

☐ Not for credit courses offered in addition to the regular course load

☐ For credit courses to be taken during their teacher education program

☐ Summer institutes

☐ Experiences in francophone environments (e.g. semester at a francophone university)

☐ Study or conversation groups

☐ Other

Branching logic – display Q19O if "Other" is selected for Q19.

Q19O. You selected "Other". Can you please tell us how you support the development of French-language proficiency in your FSL teacher candidates.

Q20. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your French language assessment practices surrounding applicants to, or teacher candidates in, your teacher education programs?

Q21. Thank you so much! Your responses are very helpful.

We would appreciate an opportunity to speak with you in person to discuss related topics not covered in the survey. If this would be possible, please provide your name and an email address where we can reach you to set up a convenient interview time. The interview will take about 20 minutes.

Appendix E - Interview Protocols

School Districts - Participants who have not completed the survey

Introductory notes

Thanks for agreeing to speak with us today. We are talking with Districts all over the country to better understand how FSL teachers are hired and how the assessment of their French proficiency is part of the hiring process.

Tell us a little bit about your district, the FSL programs you have, FSL teacher hiring needs, interest in FSL programs, etc. We sent you a short summary of the survey findings: Were you surprised by any of the results? How would you say your district squares with these results?

Questions
1. Can you tell us about how you go about conducting assessments of French language skills when hiring French teachers?
   a. What does that assessment look like? (e.g., oral interview, grammar test, Cloze test, DELF)
   b. How is the assessment scored? Is there a rubric? Holistically?
   c. Who conducts the assessment? How and why is this person selected?
   d. Are there different standards required for elementary, secondary, French immersion?

2. Do you prioritize some language skills over others (e.g., fluent oral language is more important than reading comprehension)? Why?

3. How did you come to the process you currently use? Has it changed over time? Are you able to tell me anything about the history and rationale behind your current process?

4. Have you coordinated or partnered with other organizations in developing or implementing your assessment? This might be other school districts, French language departments, testing companies, etc.

5. How well do you feel your French-language proficiency assessments help you determine whether an applicant will be suitable for the position? What might improve the assessment or process?

6. What's your sense of the proportion of FSL teacher applicants deemed to have insufficient language abilities to work in FSL teaching? Any idea about the percentage of FSL teacher applicants who identify as francophone?

7. Do you struggle to find FSL teachers with strong language skills? What is your back-up plan? Have there been any discussions about policy/program changes in response to this struggle?

School Districts - Participants who have completed the survey

Introductory notes

Thanks for agreeing to speak with us today and completing the survey. We are talking with Districts all over the country to better understand how FSL teachers are hired and how the assessment of their French proficiency is part of the hiring process.

Tell us a little bit about your district, the FSL programs you have, FSL teacher hiring needs, interest in FSL programs, etc. We sent you a short summary of the survey findings: Were you surprised by any of the results? How would you say your district squares with these results?

Questions
Is there something about this topic that specifically interests you that you could share with us? (Note: If yes, provide air time; if no, move to questions below):

1. What are the top three traits/qualities you are most looking for when hiring a FSL teacher?

2. Are these traits/qualities different depending on FSL teaching assignment (e.g. French Immersion vs. Core or Elementary vs. Secondary)?

3. Can you remind me of what French-language proficiency assessments you conduct when looking to hire an FSL teacher.
   a. What does that assessment look like? (e.g., oral interview, grammar test, Cloze test, DELF)
   b. How is the assessment scored? Is there a rubric? Holistically?
   c. Who conducts the assessment? How and why is this person selected?
   d. Are there different standards required for elementary, secondary, French immersion?

4. Do you prioritize some language skills over others (e.g. fluent oral language is more important than reading comprehension)? Why is this so?

5. How well do you feel your French-language proficiency assessments help you determine whether an applicant will be suitable for the position? What might improve the assessment or process?

6. Are you able to tell me anything about the history and rationale behind your current process?
    a. Were there other assessment processes or tools you considered? If so, how did you settle on your current process?
    b. What might you recommend to improve this process?

7. Have you coordinated or partnered with other organizations in developing or implementing your assessment? This might be other school districts, French language departments, testing companies, etc.

8. Who are the different people that conduct the assessments? How and why are they selected?

9. What's your sense of the proportion of FSL teacher applicants deemed to have insufficient language abilities to work in FSL teaching? Any idea about the percentage of FSL teacher applicants who identify as francophone?

10. Do you struggle to find FSL teachers with strong language skills? What is your backup plan? Have there been any discussions about policy/program changes in response to this struggle?

Faculties of Education - Participants who did not complete the survey

Introduction

Thanks for agreeing to speak with us today. We are talking with Faculties all over the country to better understand how FSL teacher candidates are admitted/graduated and how the assessment of their French proficiency is part of this process.

Tell us a little bit about your Faculty, and the FSL programs you offer. We sent you a short summary of the survey findings: Were you surprised by any of the results? How would you say your Faculty squares with these results?

Questions
1. Do applicants to your FSL teacher program undergo an assessment of their French-language proficiency as part of the admission requirements? E.G., Course credits, language test, native speaker, French immersion, time spent in francophone environments?
    a. Follow up questions will be for detail about the assessments. For example…
    b. What does that assessment look like? (e.g., oral interview, grammar test, Cloze test, DELF)
    c. How is the assessment scored? Is there a rubric? Holistically?
    d. Who conducts the assessment? How and why is this person selected?
    e. Are there different standards required for elementary, secondary, French immersion?

2. (If course credits are identified as an assessment, ask:) Can you please give me more detail about the course credits you mentioned. Does it matter what level (e.g., 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th year)? Are they focused on oral proficiency? Grammar? Literature? How important are the grades in these courses?

3. Among the assessments you conduct, are there some you weigh more heavily than others? Why?

4. Are there different requirements for different program options? (e.g. a person wants to teach French immersion vs. core French)

5. Which language skills are assessed? Are there some skills that are weighted more than others? E.g., Writing is weighted more than speaking.

6. Can you tell me about the history and rationale of your assessment process? Have there been any changes over time?

7. How well does your current process ensure that the students you are accepting have the language proficiency required to be effective French teachers? How do you know this? Do you gather data about the assessments to help you judge their effectiveness? Do you gather data from your FSL teacher graduates?

8. Might your assessment processes be discouraging some potential applicants to your program? Please elaborate.

9. Do you struggle to find applicants to your program with strong French-language proficiency? What percentage of FSL teacher applicants are rejected because they do not have adequate French language skills?

10. What happens if it becomes apparent a teacher candidate has weak French language skills?

11. Is there any attempt to develop their language abilities during the B.Ed. program? For example, non-credit courses, opportunities to study in a francophone environment, summer institutes?

12. Do you have any assessment procedures for graduation? Please elaborate.

13. Do supervising teachers on practicum comment about the French language skills of teacher candidates? What are those comments?

If time permits (questions about support with French proficiency development):

14. Are applicants with lower-than-standard French proficiency ever admitted conditionally?

15. What happens if it becomes apparent during the program that a teacher candidate has weak French language skills that weren't reflected in earlier assessments?

16. Is there any attempt to develop their language abilities during the B.Ed. program? For example, non-credit courses, opportunities to study in a francophone environment, summer institutes? If not, why is this the case?

17. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Faculties of Education - Participants who completed the survey

Introduction

If the participant's survey responses are known, they should be reviewed to look for any clarifying questions we may need to ask. These questions should be a priority so the interview and survey data together provide a rich data set for this participant.

Questions

1. Could you please remind me about the process to determine if someone applying to your program has adequate French language skills.

2. Are there different requirements for different program options? (e.g. a person wants to teach French immersion vs. core French) Are there other factors you take into account?

3. What are the traits/qualities you are most looking for when deciding to admit someone into your program who wants to become an a FSL teacher?

4. Do you feel your assessments work well to ensure the students you are accepting have the language proficiency required to be effective French teachers? How do you know this? Do you gather data about the assessments to help you judge their effectiveness? Do you gather data from your FSL teacher graduates?

5. Can you tell me about the history and rationale of your assessment process?

6. Do you think your assessment processes may be discouraging some potential applicants to your program?

7. Do you struggle to find applicants to your program with strong French-language proficiency? What percentage of FSL teacher applicants are rejected because they do not have adequate French language skills?

8. What happens if it becomes apparent a teacher candidate has weak French language skills?

9. Is there any attempt to develop their language abilities during the B.Ed. program? For example, non-credit courses, opportunities to study in a francophone environment, summer institutes?

10. Do supervising teachers on practicum comment about the French language skills of teacher candidates? What are those comments?

11. Do you have any assessment procedures for graduation? I.E. Are teacher candidates required to demonstrate a certain level of proficiency before leaving the program?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Appendix F - Examples of General French-language Proficiency Assessments

Name of Test	Description	Comments	Source
Test de français pour étudiants et stagiaires au Canada (TESTCan)	Listening, reading, writing, and speaking are assessed. **LISTENING:** Made up of about 40 multiple-choice or short-answer questions based on recorded material delivered at normal speed. The listening passages include dialogues, announcements, interviews, and short lectures. The test lasts about one hour, and listening passages vary in length from about one to five minutes. **READING:** Measured by two tests. First is a 10- to 20-question Skimming and Scanning test, requiring candidates to read quickly to find specific information in authentic texts such as newspapers, university calendars, web pages, and bibliographies. The second test is one hour and measures reading comprehension. Test-takers read passages of 400-700 words and answer multiple-choice and short-answer questions about the passages. They also complete a 20- to 30-item multipl-choice cloze test, in which words are deleted from a passage. **WRITING:** Candidates write a composition on a topic which is provided. The time for this test is 45 minutes. **SPEAKING:** A face-to-face 15-minute interview with one or two evaluators who ask questions about the candidates'	Developed by the University of Ottawa. Scores are reported on a 6-point scale that goes from 1 to 5+. TESTCan is the test used by the Ontario College of Teachers to assess the French-language proficiency of internationally trained teachers. No validation information found.	https://testcan.uottawa.ca/en https://testcan.uottawa.ca/en/policies https://testcan.uottawa.ca/sites/testcan.uottawa.ca/files/info_book.pdf

	personal and professional life, as well as more general topics.		
Test de l'Office québécois de la langue française (OQLF)	Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are assessed. Reading comprehension is assessed using a group discussion that also serves to assess listening and speaking. Candidates are given 15 minutes to read two texts. The texts will form the basis of the group discussion. We could find no mention of how a reading comprehension score is derived. Listening and speaking are assessed using both a group discussion (maximum of 8 people) lasting 20 to 60 minutes and an individual conversation lasting 15 minutes. Criteria used to grade speaking skills are vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, and correct conjugation of verbs. Also assessed is the candidate's ability to adapt during the conversation. The writing test is 60 minutes and candidates are expected to write a minimum of 150-200 words related to a given problem or case study. Assessment criteria include vocabulary, syntax, verb conjugation, gender agreement, and spelling.	No information found about validation or scoring. This is a test designed for all professions within Quebec. Reading, writing and discussion topics may be customized to individual professions for each sitting of the test.	https://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/francisation/ordres_prof/ordres.html https://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/francisation/ordres_prof/documents/FAQ-nouvel-examen.pdf https://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/francisation/ordres_prof/documents/guide-information-nouvel-examen.pdf
New Brunswick Language Proficiency Evaluation: French	Reading, writing, and oral language proficiency may be assessed (the candidate can choose which constructs to be assessed). Reading is assessed using an 80-minute pencil and paper test. Items are either True/False or Multiple Choice. Writing is assessed using a 65-minute pencil and paper test. There are four types of questions. The first requires completing a sentence by selecting the appropriate	Evaluators and Markers are trained and certified by Linguistic Services of Finance and Treasury Board. They conduct and rate evaluations according to their standard procedures. A 9-point rating scale is used that goes from "unrateable" to "superior". Point 6 on the scale ("Intermediate	https://www2.snb.ca/content/dam/snb/language/linguistic_services-e.pdf https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/services/services_renderer.201468.Language_Proficiency_Evaluation.html#:~:text=of%20the%20public.-,Description,telephone%20

	answer/letter. The second requires identifying the error and writing the correct one. The third verifies general comprehension of a text and requires supplying missing letters. The fourth requires writing short essays on different topics. Oral language is assessed using a 20- to 40-minute phone conversation. The conversation is recorded. The assessment criteria include the candidate's ability to ask questions, relate events, give explanations, express opinions, and justify a position. Candidates are also on the "acceptability, quality and precision of the message conveyed." Accuracy features associated with each major proficiency level are grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Fluency and the ability to communicate are also taken into account.	Plus") is used by the NB education system as the benchmark for FSL teachers. This point is described as, "Able to participate fully in informal conversations in social and work-related contexts. Control of language structures may vary, but communication of facts and ideas is usually clear. At times, a speaker at this level will demonstrate some functions at the Advanced level but will not be able to sustain the conversation at that level." No validation information found.	conversation%20with%20an%20Evaluator.
Test of Oral Proficiency Test of Reading Comprehension Test of Written Expression (Government of Canada)	The speaking test is conducted either in-person or over the phone. The test consists of four parts and lasts 20 to 40 minutes in total. The four parts are: 1. Questions and answers about work or familiar activities 2. Listening and speaking in response to short audio clips 3. Talk with follow-up questions 4. Listening and speaking in response to a longer audio clip The reading comprehension test is conducted online and consists of a variety of texts (e.g., emails, research papers, reports, letter). Candidates must answer 60 items in 90 minutes. The test of written expression is conducted online. Candidates must answer 65 items in 90 minutes. Items are	These tests are designed for federal civil servants across all departments. Scores are reported using a 5-point scale (X, A, B, C, E). Level C is described as "Understands linguistically complex speech that deals with work-related topics and is spoken in standard dialect at normal speed." Level E is above level C. No validation information found.	https://www.canada.ca/en/public-service-commission/services/second-language-testing-public-service/managers/sle-oral.html https://www.canada.ca/en/public-service-commission/services/second-language-testing-public-service/second-language-evaluation-reading/the-test.html

	multiple choice and either "fill in the blank" or "error identification".		
Test de français international (TFI)	This 2.5-hour test assesses listening and reading comprehension. All items are multiple choice. Each section (listening and reading) has 90 items for a total of 180 items.	Designed as a "measure of French proficiency for academic and business institutions." Reported on a scale going from 10 to 990. ETS have likely conducted validation and reliability studies, but we did not find them.	https://www.ets.org/tfi/about
Examen de maîtrise suffisante de la langue française (Belgium)	This examination measures writing and oral proficiency. The written portion is 3 hours long and asks candidates to write a 1-page summary of a 3-page magazine article. The speaking portion is 10 minutes long and asks candidates to discuss their summary with an examiner.	Minimal information could be found about this examination.	https://www.ulb.be/fr/conditions-d-acces/maitrise-de-la-langue-francaise-master
Diplôme d'études de langue française (DELF, Diploma of French Language Studies)	The DELF examinations assess listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Separate examinations exist for each level (A1, A2, B1, B2) with a cut score of 50 out of 100 needed to be certified at that level. At the B2 level (the one most commonly required by faculties of education in Canada) the listening test is 30 minutes long and consists of answering short answer and multiple-choice items related to an audio clip. The reading test is 1 hour long and consists of two 1-page readings. Candidates answer a mix of multiple-choice and short answer items. The writing test requires candidates to write an argumentative of at least 250 words. The speaking test uses a short reading as a prompt and candidates must present and defend an argument. The test lasts 20 minutes.	There are several different versions of the DELF examination. The information reported here is for the "DELF Tout Public" and DALF examinations. The DELF/DALF examinations use the CEFR as their conceptual framework. Validation information is not available, but the test was developed in accordance with standards outlined by the Association of Language Testers in Europe (alte.org).	https://www.france-education-international.fr/en/delf-dalf

Diplôme approfondi de langue française (DALF, Diploma of Advanced French Language Studies)	The DALF examination is based upon the same framework as the DELF examinations but is for more advanced proficiency levels. The entire test takes 4.5 hours (not including breaks and preparation time) and includes reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The structure and items are similar to the DELF but longer and more complex.	The DELF/DALF examinations use the CEFR as their conceptual framework. Validation information is not available, but the test was developed in accordance with standards outlined by the Association of Language Testers in Europe (www.alte.org).	https://www.france-education-international.fr/en/dalf
Test de connaissance du français (TCF)	This test has several versions (including versions specific to Quebec and for immigration to Canada), but the most general version is the one reviewed here. The test has five components, of which three (listening, reading comprehension and grammar) are mandatory. The optional components are speaking and writing. The listening portion consists of 29 multiple-choice items related to short audio clips and the reading portion also contains 29 multiple-choice items. The grammar test contains 18 multiple-choice items. The optional speaking test is a 12-minute conversation with an examiner and the optional writing test requires candidates to write three texts of approximately 150 words or more. The test may be completed online or via pen and paper in a testing centre.	No specific validation information is provided but the website states the test development took over 3 years and that the psychometric and reliability analyses are good.	https://www.france-education-international.fr/en/tcf-test-connaissance-francais
Test d'Evaluation de Français (TEF)	Different versions of the TEF exist (including versions for immigration to Quebec and Canada), but the most general version is reviewed here. Five constructs are assessed: oral comprehension and expression, written comprehension and expression, and grammar. The oral and written comprehension tests are multiple choice, as is the grammar test. The oral expression test consists of 2 conversations (lasting a total of 15 minutes) which are audio recorded. The written	Results are reported on a 7-point scale. The website provides comparisons to the 6-point CEFR scale and the 12-point CLB scale.	https://www.lefrancaisdesaffaires.fr/en/tests-diplomas/test-for-evaluating-french-tef/

expression test has two writing items. Candidates must write a minimum of 80 words on the first item and 200 words on the second.		

Appendix G - Teaching-Specific French-language Proficiency Assessments

Name of Test	Description	Comments	Source
Test de certification du français écrit pour l'enseignement (TECFÉE)	The test contains two portions. The first is a 60-item multiple-choice test on grammar, syntax, punctuation, vocabulary, and spelling. Candidates have 1.5 hours to complete this portion. The second is a minimum 350-word writing task where candidates listen to an audio recorded interview and then summarize the interview and write an opinion or reflection related to the interview. Candidates are given 2.5 hours to complete the writing task. The passing score for both portions of the test is 70%.	This test is designed by the Quebec Ministry of Education to ensure that certified teachers in Quebec are good "language role models." The test is designed for francophones.	https://www.cspi.qc.ca/cefranc/tecfee.php
French Language Appraisal (FLA)	This test consisted of a 20-minute oral proficiency portion and a separate writing and reading test. The oral proficiency portion contained a 7-minute role play and 10 short scenarios (lasting one minute) to test listening comprehension and vocabulary. The written portion used a 150-word (minimum) writing task, Cloze test, and a short reading to examine reading and writing skills.	This is a legacy test no longer in use. It was used by two universities (UBC and SFU) for admission into their B.Ed. program. It has been replaced by the DELF at these two universities. It is included here to provide additional data about French-language proficiency assessments related to teaching.	Informal conversations with current and retired faculty members at UBC.
University of Moncton Francophone Exams	No information at this time.[8]	Examination may be taken 3 times. Must be passed to continue in the Faculty of Education at University of Moncton.	https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/university-moncton-french-exam-1.3438201
Taped Interview (Alberta	Speaking skills are assessed through a 20-minute video recorded interview. The interviewer must be an Alberta certified teacher who is francophone. Suggested topics for the interview include general	This assessment is aimed at internationally trained teachers hoping to be certified in Alberta.	https://www.alberta.ca/teacher-certification.aspx

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[8] Our empirical study later revealed more information about this examination. This is presented in the research portion of the report.

Ministry of Education)	interests, educational background, knowledge of teaching strategies, and techniques, teaching experience, and pedagogical beliefs		
Test Developed by Université des sciences appliquées de Zurich-ZHAW	Test assesses writing and speaking skills. The written component is 2.5 hours long. It assesses vocabulary and the ability to correct and give feedback on writing mistakes. The oral component is 15-20 minutes long. Candidates are given a 1-page reading (containing graphics) on a pedagogical issue. Candidates must summarize the text, explain the graphics, and talk about the issue in detail.	The test is designed to assess language skills at the CEFR C2 level. The test is designed for teachers who completed their training outside of Switzerland.	https://www.zhaw.ch/storage/linguistik/institute-zentren/iued/upload/dienstleistung/merkblatt-franzoesisch-fuer-paedagogische-berufe_01.pdf

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