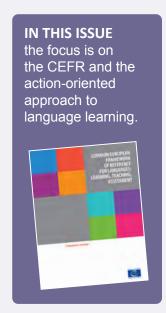
FSL for School Administrators FROM AWARENESS to ACTION

From Awareness to Action is a professional learning publication to support school administrators in the strengthening of French as a Second Language.



ISSUE 2

The Common European Framework of Reference and its role in second-language teaching and learning



What is the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)?

The CEFR is a research-based framework conceived in the early 1990s under the direction of the Council of Europe in response to the challenge of creating a common description of second-language proficiency that could be used internationally. The CEFR is neither a program nor a curriculum/syllabus; it is a tool that describes the competences needed by second-language learners to be able to communicate effectively. In 2018, a companion volume was released that updates and adds new descriptor scales that provide clearer access to the research. This document represents for educators, learners, and parents a common language to describe acquisition and progression.

Why the CEFR?

A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools, K–12 underlines the value of using the CEFR. It states: "In Ontario, this reference tool is recognized as a valuable asset for informing instruction and assessment practices in FSL education" (p. 4). As educators gain an understanding of the CEFR, they pause and reflect on teaching strategies that result in improved proficiency for students.

What are the key components of the CEFR?

The CEFR describes competences of the second-language learner through four modes of communication: comprehension, production, interaction and mediation. In addition, the six levels of proficiency are described in terms of "can-do" statements. The following chart provides simplified descriptions of the six levels. The learner can:

A1 Comprehend and use familiar simple words and expressions.

A2 Understand and communicate in frequently used isolated sentences

in their immediate environment (e.g., shopping, life at school and

family).

B1 Understand the main points of everyday communication and deal

with most situations that are familiar or of personal interest.

B2 Understand concrete and abstract concepts and interact with a

degree of ease and spontaneity in the target language.

C1 /C2 Understand with ease virtually everything heard or read and express

himself/herself spontaneously, fluently, and precisely in complex

situations.

Click for full description

"The CEFR has become for FSL educators. administrators. parents and especially learners, the ultimate tool to understand language acquisition. It is shaping a culture where the oral skills, comprehension, production and interaction are at the centre of developing a much stronger sense of confidence in this additional language."

Denis Cousineau, FSL Educator

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It is important to note that there is no correlation between the levels of proficiency of the CEFR and grade level. There is also no correlation between the levels of the CEFR and the levels and categories of the provincial achievement chart. However, as teachers delve into the descriptors of the CEFR learners will use them to help identify their current proficiency level and to set goals to move forward. This aligns with *Growing Success*, which establishes goal setting as a fundamental element of assessment and evaluation. Students need to develop their "self-assessment skills to enable them to assess their own learning, set specific goals, and plan next steps for their learning" (*Growing Success*, p. 6).

"The DELF is a great experience. I now want to study French throughout university.

Student, Durham
Catholic District School
Board

What is the Action-Oriented Approach?

According to the CEFR, the act of learning a second language is viewed as a social undertaking. "The action-oriented perspective is described as one that views language users and learners as social agents who must accomplish tasks relevant to their life experiences" (CEFR, p. 9). Action-oriented tasks are designed to engage the learner in meaningful, authentic communication to solve a problem or achieve a goal. Until recent years, language instruction

placed a greater emphasis on oral presentations (often memorized or rehearsed) rather than on spontaneous oral interaction. The CEFR challenges us to go beyond the communicative approach and emphasizes active language to develop the six language competences.

WHAT'S MY ROLE?

What might school administrators experience in a CEFR-inspired classroom?

Oral language, specifically oral interaction is at the forefront of second-language learning. In a CEFR-inspired classroom, French is the language of communication and grammar is presented in context, not as grammar checklists or vocabulary lists.

French Grammar learning is intended to help learners improve their ability to communicate in an authentic context and it should never be perceived as the content to learn or to teach. Increased student talk time is maximized through spontaneous oral interactions in situations connected to students' lives. Students are exposed to a variety of French oral, written, and visual texts. A strong oral foundation prepares students to be effective writers.

What is the DELF?

The **DELF (Diplôme d'études en langue française)** is an official international diploma given by the French Ministry of Education and is based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The test is composed of four components: oral comprehension and written comprehension, the two receptive skills, and oral production and written production, the two productive skills.

The DELF is offered at specific times during the year determined by the French Ministry of Education. Once successful at a level, the diploma received is valid for life. Only certified assessors (correcteurs) can mark the exam. Many school boards across Canada work with accredited DELF centres to offer the test during the designated dates. The DELF represents international recognition of a student's French-language skills in a way that supports future learning, careers, and other life aspirations.



One article to read, one quote to consider, one link to click

- 1. Effective Practices in FSL: Connecting Growing Success and the CEFR: This document is intended to support educators in using the CEFR to inform assessment practices in alignment with Growing Success.
 - Effective Assessment Practices in FSL: Connecting Growing Success and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)
- 2. "The patterns suggest that CEFR/DELF-related professional learning is having a wide-reaching, meaningful impact on the planning practices of teachers across the spectrum." *The CEFR in Ontario: Transforming Classroom Practice*, 2017 Rehner p. 10
- 3. **CEFR in Ontario:** The purpose of this website is to share professional learning materials from CEFR provincial initiatives with school boards, to support effective planning, instruction and assessment in French as a Second Language (FSL) programs. **Click for more**.