



Mobilizing Knowledge from the FSL Labour Market Partnership

Case studies from
Ontario school boards

MAY 2023



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association



Introduction

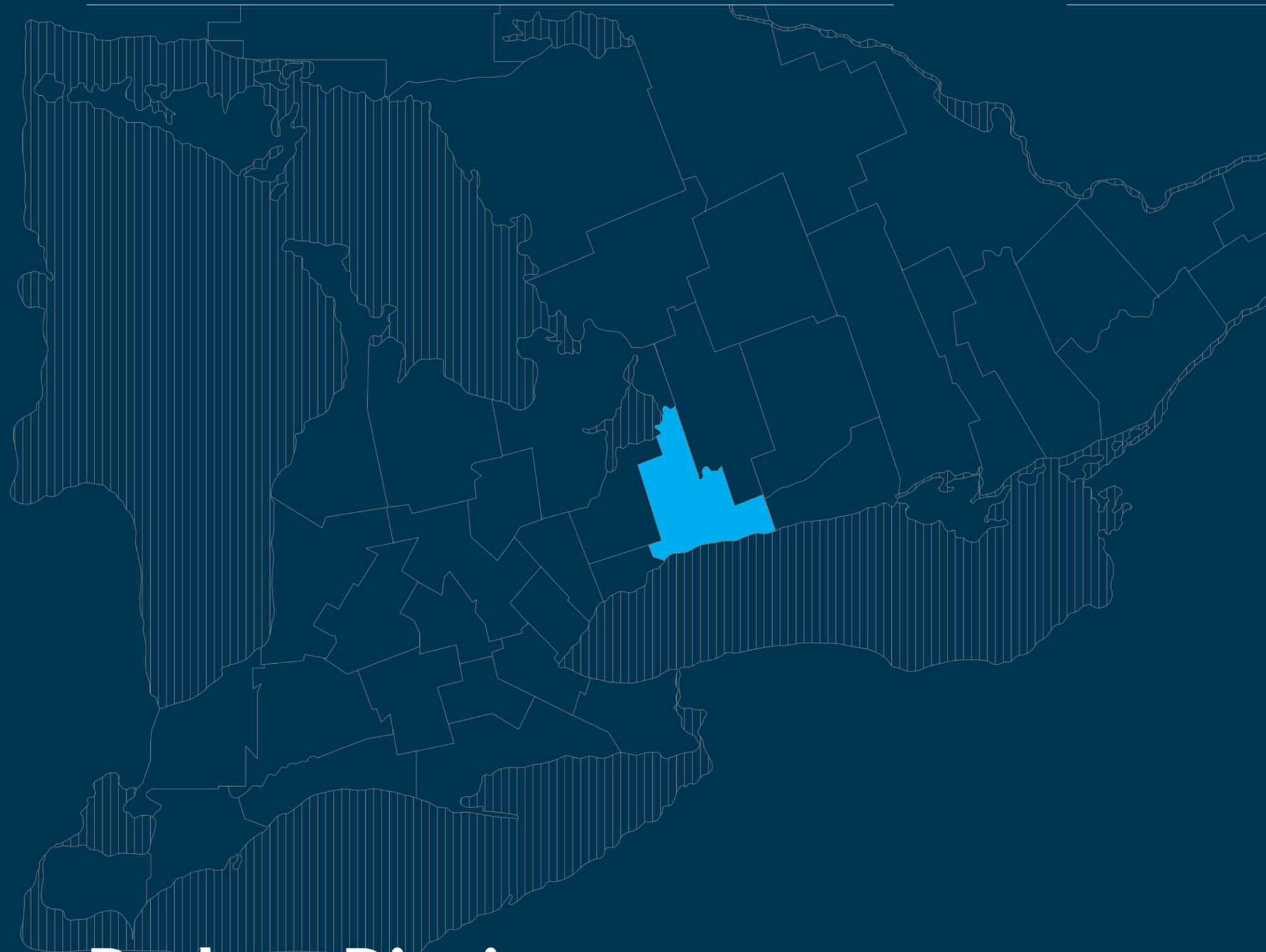
SINCE 2017, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) has been leading the work of the FSL Labour Market Partnership project in developing workable solutions to the interrelated challenges in recruiting, hiring, supporting and retaining FSL teachers in Ontario. As a result of the Partnership's work, many school boards across Ontario have made considerable effort to implement a range of strategies recommended in the [Phases I, II and III reports](#).

Throughout the project, it became increasingly clear that a successful approach to addressing the FSL teacher shortage issue would be multi-layered and include work on recruitment, hiring, professional support and retention. For example, school boards' reviewing their current recruitment strategy would (necessarily) lead to a review of their language proficiency assessment tools, which in turn, would inform how professional learning for FSL teachers is supported, and how school leaders would facilitate this support. Research by the Partnership and others points to improved FSL teacher retention as a result of a strategic, integrated approach.

Case studies are able to provide insight into how school boards have used this approach. Several boards across the provinces have been collaborating with OPSBA to revisit components of their FSL teacher recruitment, hiring, support and retention plans. Their work is documented here as case studies in order to support other school boards who are experiencing similar challenges in their recruitment, hiring, professional support and/or retention of FSL teachers. Five boards have addressed these challenges on several fronts simultaneously, and so were asked to describe their work, next steps, and results to date. Despite their efforts and successes, each school board recognizes their work is ongoing, and is committed to supporting cross-board collaboration given the provincial scope of the FSL teacher shortage. The funding for this project was provided in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.

As school boards work to make improvements in addressing challenges with the FSL teacher shortage, research by the Partnership points in the following directions:

1. Efforts in recruiting, hiring, supporting and retaining FSL teachers are inter-dependent. Increased efforts at recruitment will be compromised without corresponding work to improve retention.
2. Many board departments play a role in supporting improvement efforts; collaboration between these departments yields stronger results.
3. Credible, formative French proficiency assessment at point-of-hire that leads to ongoing French language development of FSL teachers shows promise as a retention strategy.
4. Coordination of FSL teacher professional learning reduces teacher isolation, builds confidence and conveys the positive value a school board places on second language acquisition.
5. Focussed FSL leadership support for school administrators leads to positive outcomes for FSL programs and FSL teachers.



Durham District School Board (DDSB)

CASE STUDY 1

The Durham District School Board (DDSB) is east of Toronto, Ontario and provides public education in the rural communities of Uxbridge, Brock and Scugog Townships and the cities and towns of Ajax, Whitby, Pickering, and Oshawa.

Durham DSB¹ has a well-established French Immersion (FI) program spanning Grades 1 – 12. The board has approximately 74,000 students in:

- **114 elementary schools** — 19 schools offer French Immersion beginning in Grade 1 (9 single-track schools and 10 dual-track schools);
- **19 secondary schools** — 8 secondary schools provide French Immersion programming; and
- core French begins in Grade 4.

In January 2020, the board completed a full review of the French As a Second Language Programming in Durham District School Board. “*The goal of the review was to ensure that as an English-language school board, DDSB can provide sustainable and quality FSL programming across the district, while ensuring the viability of English programming at dual track schools.*”²

¹ Map sourced from sont.ai (brocku.ca)

² <https://www.ddsb.ca/en/programs-and-learning/resources/Documents/FSL-Review/FSL-Programs-Review-Final-DRAFT-Report.pdf> p. 21

Support Structure

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS
Establish a Recruitment and Retention Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include human resources, program/curriculum, New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), communications, learning technology, teacher federations; hold monthly meetings; and provide opportunities for central staff to learn about and collaboratively solve issues related to recruiting and retaining FSL teachers.

Area of Focus: Recruitment and Hiring

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS
Expand post-secondary partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attend university recruiting fairs in person and virtual; participate in a new pre-service event with York University students; attend career fairs hosted by ApplyToEducation; maintain partnership with Trent University to offer FSL Additional Qualification (AQ) courses where the course developer and instructors are from DDSB, the students are a cohort of teachers from DDSB, and the course is tailored to local needs, strategies and resources; participate in a partnership with Queen's University where students are working in actual board positions as part of their practicum (for example, in LTO positions) which provides them with valuable FSL classroom teaching experience.



"This year has been a really exciting start to the year because we haven't had the same challenges...we haven't had the call out from schools not having an educator in place."

Reinstate pool hiring

- follow the language in collective agreements and applicable policies and procedures;
- offer interviews for pool hiring in March/April and send applicants the link to the French language proficiency assessment;
- follow internal transfer rounds in April/May, offering pool hired teachers permanent, LTO or extended supply positions based on the candidates' preferred geographic location and qualifications; and
- offer permanent positions, as they become available, to the LTO or extended supply teachers until all pool hires are placed.

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS
Update French language proficiency assessment	<p>DDSB's French language proficiency assessment is a recently revised, in-house created assessment tool delivered on-line (using RIVS-InterviewStream — an on-line interview platform) that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes harmonization training for assessors prior to conducting assessments (speaking and writing) of candidates to increase inter-rater reliability; was revised based on feedback and used for the first time in the spring of 2022; collects data from the assessment to support teachers' professional development plans; provides feedback to applicants if they are unsuccessful based on assessment results; employs a regular review and feedback cycle on the tool's effectiveness; and screens for a level of French language proficiency that is similar to the B2 level of the DELF.
Encourage Grade 12 students to complete the DELF	<p>Build a potential FSL teacher applicant stream within the board by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> offering DELF test twice a year to Grade 12 students in November and the spring; including core French and French Immersion students; and increasing the number of senior secondary students doing co-op placements in FI elementary schools.

Area of Focus: Professional Support and Retention

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS
Support FSL teachers' first five years integrated with NTIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prioritize NTIP allocations, in combination with the teacher enhanced fund, to create a network of mentors for new French teachers; provide specific professional development for NTIP French teachers including both pedagogical support and language proficiency development; provide a welcome package to communicate to new teachers system-recommended classroom instructional and assessment resources; and track how many NTIP teachers are in FSL programs (11% of new teachers in 2022 were in FSL programs).



"AQ specialist candidates are creating leaders in our schools ... who have sound knowledge, know the resources and can support FSL teachers who are sometimes struggling and not saying it"

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS
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Offer financial subsidies for FSL teachers to enrol in courses and language learning to support French language development

- offer subsidies to teachers who take an FSL AQ course upon successful completion of course;
- tailor the FSL AQ Specialist Course to produce more school leaders; and
- continue partnership with Association canadienne des professionnels de l'immersion (ACPI) to offer language proficiency coaching where teachers are grouped based on their CEFR proficiency levels (established by ACPI) to support language development.



"...it is not possible to develop your [French language] skills if you are just speaking French to your students"

Provide professional learning specific to FSL teachers

- employ a writing team to improve access to resources for new teachers to use with ease where the writing team introduces the resources to teachers through professional development sessions;
- provide a secondary writing team for inclusive Grade 9 programming including unit plans, lesson plans, and long range plans;
- offer DELF training to teachers and occasional teachers;
- conduct a resource inventory to ensure the board is well-equipped with current resources;
- offer linguistic coaching to French teachers to practice their daily conversation through a parallel internal coaching initiative following up with an impact survey for the participants;
- provide a range of cultural experiences for teachers and students, through local/notable French-speaking personalities for example, Ann-Renée Desbiens - une Québécoise and a goalie with the Canadian National Women's Hockey Team;
- provide FSL cultural events for staff, for example:
 - » a Franco-Fun Experience for FSL staff through a virtual French cooking class making traditional French-Canadian desserts;
 - » a movie night for French teachers in partnership with the Eastern Ontario Staff Development Network (EOSDN) and REEL Canada.

Collaborate with FSL professional organizations

- collaborate with ACPI for access to teaching resources, and language proficiency development coaching; and
- explore resources and information from Canadian Parents for French.

Next Steps

Recruitment and Hiring

Continue to improve recruitment and hiring practices by:

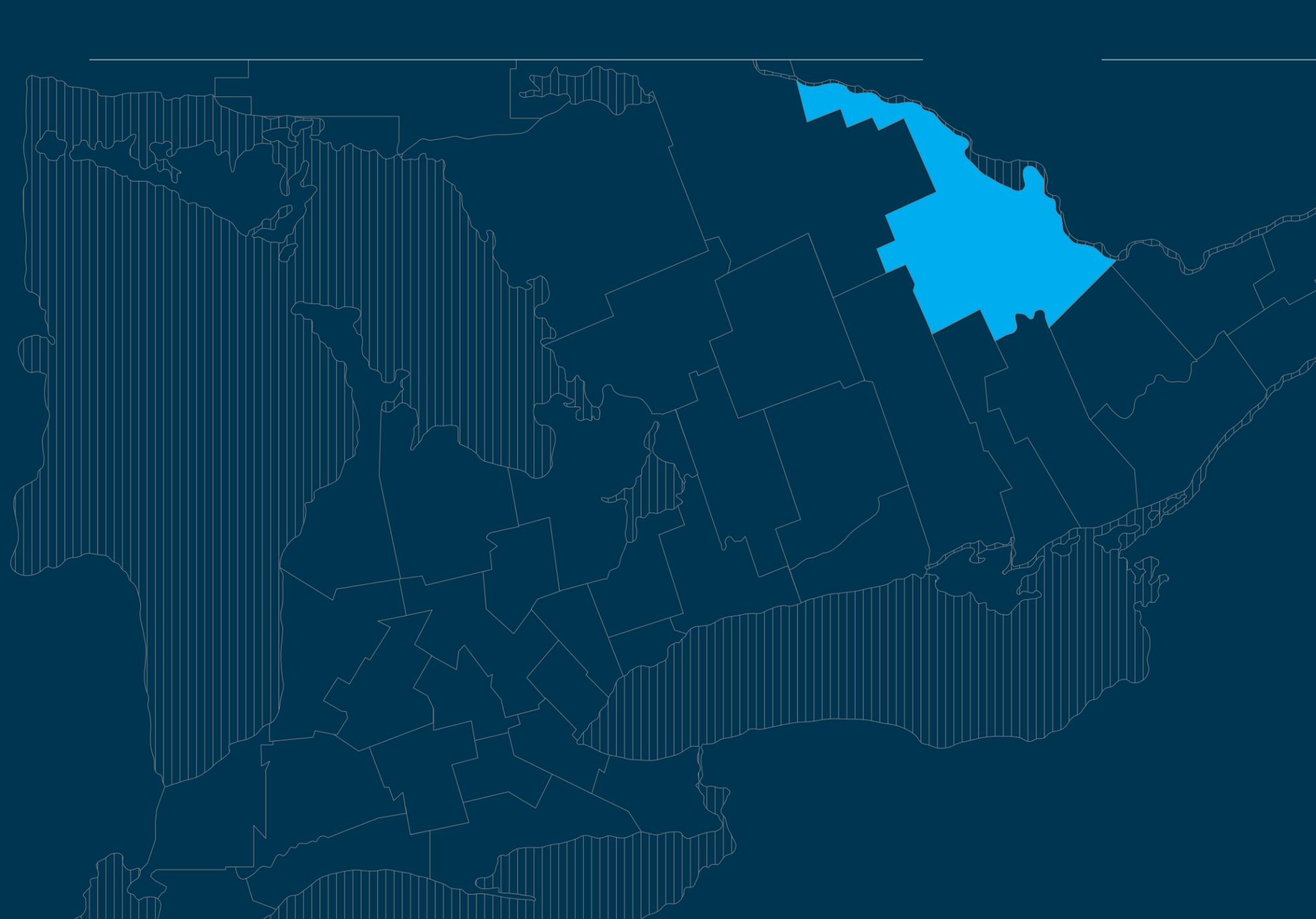
- collaborating with the Human Resources department to provide teachers, hired into the pool of FSL teachers, specific position information earlier in the placement process;
- working with our Assessment and Accountability department to develop an internal dashboard to track metrics connected to hiring and program information;
- revamping the DDSB website for recruitment and hiring support as an FSL Careers page to include:
 - » samples of what B2 DELF looks and sounds like;
 - » how DDSB supports FSL educators in linguistic and pedagogical development; and
 - » information on how to improve French language skills;
- continuing to build relationships with faculties of education;
- gathering data on the effectiveness of the revised French Proficiency Test including:
 - » a self-assessment tool for candidates to compare with board results;
 - » periodic surveys of French Proficiency Test users;
 - » gather suggestions from assessors;
- using data from language proficiency assessments to provide professional development opportunities for teacher candidates.

Professional Support and Retention

Continue opportunities for teachers to improve their French language development by:

- gathering data on the effectiveness of language coaching sessions to assess both the criteria and the guidelines.

"We all want the same goal: to hire teachers [and] we want to keep them in the position and...how we best support them in future so they stay in the FSL programs."



Renfrew County District School Board (RCDSB)

CASE STUDY 2

The Renfrew County District School Board (RCDSB) is located in the heart of the Ottawa Valley on the eastern edge of Ontario. Renfrew County DSB stretches all the way from Deep River in the north-west, to Arnprior in the south-east and Barry's Bay along the north-east edge of Algonquin Park.³ The board covers a large geographic area and is rural in nature. The Renfrew area has a vibrant French community.

RCDSB⁴ has approximately 10,000 students in:

- **23 elementary schools** — 11 with French Immersion beginning in JK or Grade 1;
- **4 schools** offer a middle immersion option for students in Pembroke, Deep River and the Madawaska area beginning in Grade 4;
- **7 secondary schools** — 5 schools with French Immersion programming; and
- core French begins in Grade 1.

In the past four years, RCDSB has expanded French Immersion (FI) programming to every family of schools in their school board. Five families of schools have bilingual Kindergarten, with French immersion beginning in Grade 1; two families of schools have a middle immersion option and one family of schools has both an early and middle immersion option.

³ Our District — [Renfrew County District School Board \(rcdsb.on.ca\)](https://rcdsb.on.ca)

⁴ Map from sont.ai (brocku.ca)

Support Structure

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS
Establish an FSL Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include the director's office, program department staff and human resources (HR) staff; review current hiring practices and branding of the school board in terms of FSL programming; and create a detailed FSL programming vision that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » includes supports needed at the district, school and classroom levels and » articulates how to ensure teachers feel valued and excited about FSL opportunities in the district.
<div style="background-color: #e0f2f1; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  <p>"What might entice a teacher to come work for us was the genesis of a really intentional approach to grow our programs responsibly and meet the needs of parents?"</p> </div>	
Expand post-secondary partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue superintendent membership in the Teacher Education Advisory Committee (TEAC) at the University of Ottawa; increase career fair presence from Ontario universities to Atlantic Canada and McGill University in Montreal; and expand participation in all virtual career fair opportunities to ensure the RCDSB brand is visible to anyone enrolled in a FSL qualification program.
Utilize pool hiring	<p>Follow the language in collective agreements and applicable policies and procedures by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> collaborating closely with the human resources department; having HR provide the Program department with FSL hiring needs in March/April; posting pool hiring positions in May; sending applicants a link and code to a language proficiency assessment EV@lang™ in May and giving 4 - 5 days to complete evaluation; interviewing in late May and early June and ranking candidates during the selection process; offering positions, to successful candidates on the pool hiring list, through HR when postings come out in June; and using the results of the language proficiency assessment and the interview to create a profile that can inform the professional and language development plan for successful teachers.

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS
Use a defensible French language proficiency assessment	<p>RCDSB's French language proficiency assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is a tool called EV@lang™ which is a French language proficiency assessment that is 100% on-line; is aligned with the six levels of the Common European Frames of Reference for Language (CEFRL) and sub-divided to an expanded twelve level rating scale for improved recruiting and decision-making; and provides a printout summarizing results for language development support planning.
Use social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> create a recruitment video about living and working in RCDSB using feedback from various stakeholders; and use social media algorithms to target specific markets (Ottawa Valley and surrounding area; Ottawa, ON; Montreal, QC; Quebec City, QC; and Saint John, NB) and individual characteristics (age, income, occupation, area of studies, hobbies etc).
Create an FSL friendly recruitment and hiring culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> translate all Human Resources recruitment documents into French; and personalize the process for potential applicants including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » obtaining contact information, with applicant consent, from Human Resources on potential applicants; » making personal phone calls in French to begin building a professional relationship with potential applicants; and » following up with e-mails through the recruitment season including links to the RCDSB video or other pertinent information to keep applicants connected.
<div style="background-color: #e0f2f1; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;">  <p>"Feedback from candidates indicated that they didn't feel the recruitment process was personal."</p> </div>	

Area of Focus: Professional Support and Retention

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS
Provide French language proficiency development supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use EV@lang™ results to register teachers in a voluntary language coaching opportunity in collaboration with ACPI.
	<p>"We know a teacher that doesn't feel like they are fluent — it impacts their confidence level. If it impacts their confidence level they are less likely to speak in class, and that will affect the whole program."</p>
Use engaging teaching resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a partnership with ACPI for teachers to access resources and receive early registration to the annual conference and scholarships for Francophonie; purchase classroom resources for additional classes created because of expansion; and seek corporate membership with the Association canadienne des professionnels de l'immersion (ACPI) for access to resources such as Teacher 5 étoiles (The Great Tour) – a cross-Canada tour designed to promote French; invite all newly hired FSL teachers to the ACPI FSL language development program. It offers a free membership to the ACPI suite of resources on their website. All resources have been validated by a committee of professionals.
Provide professional learning specific to FSL teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hire bilingual central literacy coaches to support both English and FSL classrooms; initiate a partnership with ACPI to provide large scale professional development sessions with their expert teams then follow ACPI sessions, literacy coaches support classroom teachers by co-teaching, co-planning and modelling strategies presented by ACPI; create a focus on French culture by centrally providing activities for teachers and students for example, musicians Damien Robitaille, and Les Jeunesses Musicales; shift the focus of Ontario Language Enrichment (OLE) funding to cultural activities of la francophonie; provide administrators with a resource including look-fors and strategies to promote a strong culture of French as a Second Language in schools; and provide an opportunity for teachers to attend Francophonie in Nice, France. See www.francophonie.com/universite-detete-de-francophonie/ for details.

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS
	<p>"We needed to overcome the sense of isolation often felt by FSL teachers as well as the perception that support was less than those available in larger urban school boards."</p>
Collaborate with FSL professional organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collaborate with ACPI for teacher language proficiency development and leveraging ACPI's access to research and experts in French Immersion programming; and collaborate with Canadian Parents for French, especially the Ontario chapter for input.



Next Steps

Recruitment and Hiring

Continue to improve recruitment and hiring practices by:

- expanding the FSL opportunities for students at the secondary level as students from the expanded elementary FI program move up and offering the DELF test to senior students;
- expanding opportunities to other employee groups such as EAs and ECEs especially the French conversational coaching; and
- expanding the number of FSL practicum placements.

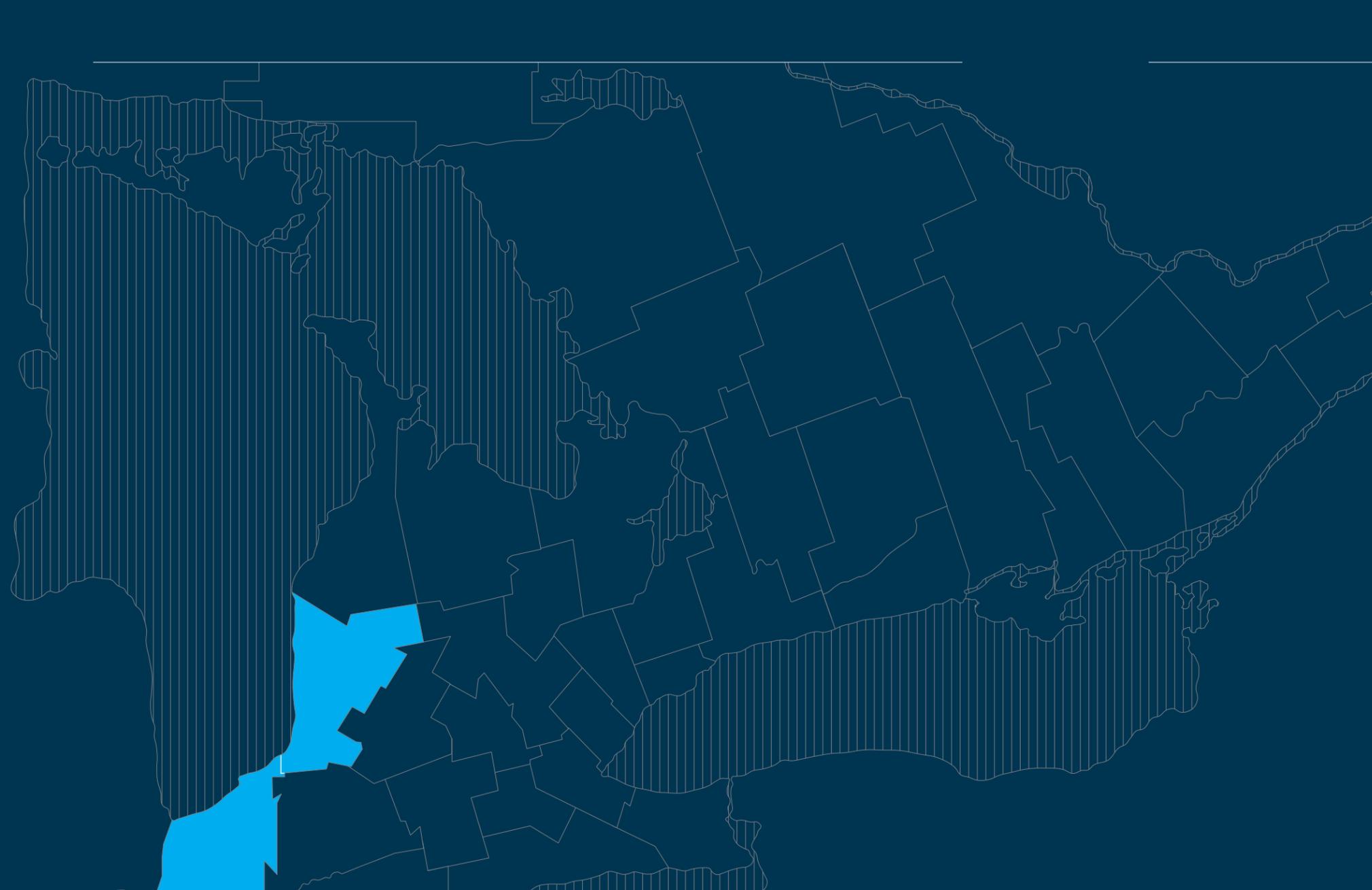
Professional Support and Retention

Continue to improve support and retention practices by:

- continuing a comprehensive approach to program expansion in the areas of recruitment, retention and development including:
 - » supplying current, culturally-responsive resources;
 - » providing language development opportunities for teachers; and
 - » maintaining the partnership with ACPI; and
- expanding support for principals through use of collaborative networks.

*"We feel when leaders are well-equipped to support their teachers, we will both **attract and retain** qualified FSL teachers to our board and create a collaborative culture where educators want to stay in French Immersion programming for their career."*





Collaboration Among Huron-Perth Catholic DSB, St. Clair Catholic DSB and Windsor-Essex Catholic DSB⁵

CASE STUDY 3

ABOUT HURON-PERTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (HPCDSB)

The Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board (HPCDSB) is located along the shores of Lake Huron. It serves the counties of Huron and Perth including the towns of Goderich, Grand Bend and Stratford. The board consists of largely small rural communities.

The board has a well-established French Immersion (FI) program spanning Grades 1 – 12. The board has approximately 4600 students in:

- **16 elementary schools** — 2 schools with FI beginning in Grade 1;
- **2 secondary schools** — both have FI programming; and
- core French begins in Grade 1.

⁵ Map from sont.ai (brocku.ca)



CASE STUDY 3

ABOUT ST. CLAIR CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (SCCDSB)

The St. Clair Catholic District School Board (SCCDSB) is in south-western Ontario that serves the county of Lambton including the city of Sarnia as well as the regional municipality of Chatham-Kent. The area is home to a vibrant French community.

The board has a well-established French Immersion (FI) program spanning Junior Kindergarten - Grade 12. The board has over 8,000 students in:

- **23 elementary schools** - 4 with FI beginning in junior kindergarten (JK);
- **2 secondary schools** - both have FI programming; and
- core French begins in JK.

A superintendent from St. Clair CDSB is a board member of the Teachers' Education Advisory Council (TEAC)⁶ from the University of Windsor, Faculty of Education.

⁶ TEACs are advisory groups hosted by some Faculties of Education to seek stakeholder input on issues related to teacher education. They may include representatives from local school board administration, teaching faculty and administration, teacher federations, teacher candidates, parents, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Colleges and Universities.



CASE STUDY 3

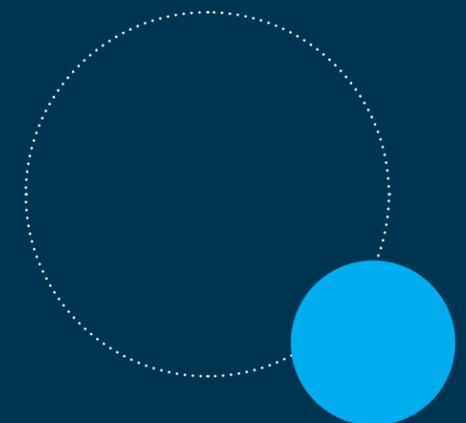
ABOUT WINDSOR-ESSEX CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (WECDSB)

The Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board (WECDSB) is in south-western Ontario that serves the city of Windsor and the county of Essex. The area has a large and active Francophone community.

The board has a well-established French Immersion (FI) program spanning Grades JK - 12. The board has over 20,000 students in:

- **35 elementary schools** - 7 schools with FI beginning in Junior Kindergarten and 1 middle school with French Immersion, Grades 7 and 8;
 - » 4 elementary schools are single-track FI;
 - » 4 elementary schools are dual-track FI;
- **8 secondary schools** with 5 secondary schools providing FI programming;
- core French begins in Grade 1.

A superintendent from Windsor-Essex CDSB is a board member of the Teachers Education Advisory Council (TEAC) from the University of Windsor, Faculty of Education.



Support Structure

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS
Establish cross-board planning team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a superintendent-led organizing team with representatives from all 3 school boards; and • establish timelines, areas of focus, goal-setting, and logistics.

Area of Focus: Support and Retention

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS
Establish a cross-board network to support FSL administrators	<p>Build a sustainable collaborative administrators' network to support FSL school communities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meeting three times per year (virtually or in-person) with each school board taking the lead for one meeting; • providing a range of topics, for FI administrators learning for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » early reading intervention strategies; » ways to support retention of FSL teachers; » learning from guest speakers (meet with presenters to set context); » discuss issues of practice and share promising strategies that support effective FI environments; • providing breakout sessions for administrators to discuss localized issues and share ideas with each other; • sharing administrator contact information to allow communication between sessions; and • building and maintaining a website to document learning, share resources, and support ongoing communication and collaboration.



"The principals reported more meaningful conversations have happened with teachers."

"We talk about French teachers being isolated but so too is the administrator."

"Qualitative feedback from the principals indicates they found the meetings to be useful to their work supporting teachers."

Next Steps

Support and Retention

Continuing supporting for the cross-board administrator network by:

- including a teacher to attend cross-board administrators' network with their administrator; and
- committing to financial support for a cross-board administrator network.

Individually, the three boards are:

- reviewing public-facing materials (e.g. website, materials in the community);
- visiting faculties of education at job fairs and taking experienced, enthusiastic FI administrators;
- moving recruitment dates forward;
- collecting specific data to support recruitment activities;
- exploring Association canadienne des professionnels de l'immersion (ACPI, or Canadian Association for Immersion Professionals) as a support for teacher language development; and
- validating and celebrating French language in schools, in churches and in communities and all partnerships to ensure we have a vibrant program.



"We emphasize the critical importance of having principals in classrooms because I think teachers feel supported having their principal in the classroom noticing and naming something awesome that is happening there."

Common Goals & Strategy Integration



Common Goals

Improve **recruiting and hiring practices** of FSL teachers to increase supply.

Improve **support systems** for FSL teachers and school administrators to increase retention.

Strategy Integration

Creation of a collaborative, integrated support committee and partnerships.
(e.g., Human Resources, Program/Curriculum, Communications, Learning Technology, Faculty of Education)

Recruiting/Hiring	↔	Support	↔	Retention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use pool hiring • use a defensible French language proficiency assessment tool • use social media • expand post-secondary partnerships • create an FSL friendly hiring and recruiting process 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FSL language development based on hiring process • FSL teachers' first five years integrated with NTIP • school administrators 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish school administrator networks • provide FSL specific professional development • collaborate with FSL professional organizations



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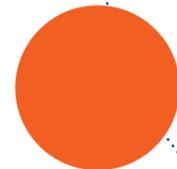
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Find this and other related FSL resources at
FSLResources.opsba.org

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