

Action Plan 2008-2012



The French-language School at the Pace of Change

**Results of consultations with Member organizations
as part of the strategic planning of the
Services to Francophones
of the Canadian Teachers' Federation**



Canadian Teachers' Federation
Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants

Brief history

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) was founded in 1920 out of a need for teachers to unite. Teachers clearly wanted to establish ties across the country and to help each other with the many challenges facing the teaching profession. These needs are still at the heart of the organization's mission. In those early years, there were approximately 57,000 full-time teachers working in public schools in Canada.

It is difficult to say at what point CTF began representing the interests of French-as-a-first language teachers, given the ups and downs in provincial and territorial French-language education.

During the 1950s, CTF helped organize the Canadian Conference on Education. The Conference was geared to organizations that had counterparts in all jurisdictions. Since Francophone organizations were not represented, the Conference was restructured to allow them to participate. It first welcomed the Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française (ACELF) (Canadian Association for French-language Education) and later the Association canadienne-française d'éducation d'Ontario (ACFEO) (French-Canadian Association for Education in Ontario), the Fédération nationale des associations parents-instituteurs (FNAPI) (National Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations) and the Association des commissaires d'écoles bilingues d'Ontario (ACEBO) (Association of Bilingual School Trustees of Ontario).

In the minutes of CTF's 1958 Annual General Meeting, the Secretary General specifically commented on the Francophone presence at the Conference: "The Secretary [...] observed that there had been a very large delegation of French-speaking Canadians in attendance at the Ottawa Conference and he felt the meetings had done a great deal to cement relations between French and English educationists."¹

The Commission de langue française was created in 1968 as part of CTF's organizational structure. The Commission discussed issues related to teaching French both as a first and a second language. In 1982, its mandate was refined in favour of French-language teaching to Francophone students. A few years later, in 1988, a task force studying the quality of services to Francophone members recommended the establishment of the Advisory Committee on French as a First Language and established a mandate and operating procedures that still meet the organization's needs. In its report, the task force also recommended creating a network of liaison officers and suggested initiatives to encourage Member organizations to unite Francophone teachers within their own structures.

¹ Minutes — Thirty-Seventh Conference of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, p. 12

Brief history *(cont'd)*

Francophone participation within CTF and the development of French-language education advanced at the same pace. For some 30 years, Maurice Bourque acted as both Director of Communications and Director of French Programs. When he retired, Liliane Vincent replaced him and managed the programs in addition to her duties as Head of Linguistic Services.

With the progress of French-language school governance and rapidly growing needs, CTF created Services to Francophones in June 2001. Liliane Vincent became the first director and H  l  ne Saint-Denis was appointed administrative assistant.

At the outset, Services to Francophones developed *The School at the Heart of a Thriving Francophonie*, a multi-year plan that favourably positioned CTF in Canadian Francophonie. This department provides teachers with tools and resources and advances educational research on several fronts.

In January 2007, Ronald Boudreau assumed leadership of the Services.

Canada-wide representation

Through its Member organizations, CTF now represents approximately 220,000 teachers, 10,000 of whom work in French-language schools in minority settings.

Services to Francophones reports to the organization's General Secretary and its work is directed and supported by the Advisory Committee on French as a First Language. The Advisory Committee reports to CTF's Board of Directors through the Executive Committee. The Board of Directors appoints the Advisory Committee members once a year.

The network of liaison officers within CTF's Member organizations also assists in managing the Service's activities. Liaison officers are either elected officials, Member organization employees or teachers designated by Member organizations. In addition to advising Services to Francophones and sharing information, liaison officers disseminate information issued by CTF on French-language education.

The Advisory Committee on French as a First Language and the network of Francophone liaison officers meet at an annual symposium to discuss emerging issues on French-language education in minority settings.



Overview of achievements

Since its creation in 2001, Services to Francophones has launched numerous initiatives as part of a multi-year action-research plan, *The School at the Heart of a Thriving Francophonie*.

The plan identified three action areas, each resulting in specific projects.

Phase I — Preparing children for school

Early childhood: Gateway to French-language schools — A National Vision

Developed in partnership with the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Citizenship and Minorities (CIRCEM), this resource describes early childhood care and education services in minority Francophone communities. It also looks at what links these services to French-language schools, reviews existing practices in various settings and suggests ways to use early childhood education as a tool to integrate children into French-language schools.

Invitation to Success in French-language Schools

As a logical follow-up to the early childhood resource, CTF undertook a bold project, that is to draw a picture of language and cultural prior learning that all children entering French-language schools would benefit from before they reach Grade 1. This picture is the basis of a series of initiatives, programs and services, which would help situate the various stages of early childhood development within a learning continuum directly tied in with the school.

Phase II — The educational setting

Teachers and the Challenge of Teaching in Francophone Minority Settings — Research Study

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the complex issue of teaching in Francophone minority settings and thus provide a better understanding of the realities facing Francophone teachers. The research is supported by a survey of teachers from various areas of the Canadian Francophonie and by a national forum with partners. Given that teacher recruitment and retention is a problem facing schools in general, this study paints an accurate picture which informs the action of many stakeholders.

Overview of achievements *(cont'd)*

Phase II — The educational setting *(cont'd)*

Pedagogical resources for Francophone minority settings (kit)

Whereas the study on the challenge of teaching in Francophone minority settings provides an assessment of the teaching situation, the kit provides a literature review of teaching methods most likely to meet student needs and a tool to promote discussion on this difficult issue. Together, they constitute key references to better understand the relationship between teaching and learning and to develop strategies that will enhance students' academic success and identity-building.

Phase III — School-community linkage

DEBOUT! — A national cultural activities handbook

This cultural activities handbook supports teachers in their efforts to integrate a French culture component into their teaching. The project allowed for a countrywide distribution of the handbook in French-language schools. The handbook was extremely popular, which attests to the importance of this initiative. A musical compilation CD was provided with the handbook.

Knowing one's community

As part of this project, CTF undertook to critically analyze the content related to the images of the community projected in provincial and territorial curriculum guidelines. In addition to the analysis, CIRCEM's research team involved in this project suggested possible courses of action for transmitting and building Francophone identity through teaching, as stated during a Canada-wide consultation that brought together various partners in French-language education (to be published in the fall of 2007).



Background

In the spring of 2005, the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones (FNCSF) (National Federation of Francophone School Boards) brought together key stakeholders from Canadian Francophone communities during the *Sommet des intervenants et des intervenantes en éducation dans la mise en œuvre de l'article 23 en milieu francophone minoritaire* (education stakeholders' summit on the implementation of section 23 in Francophone communities). The summit was the culmination of many months of preparation and resulted in a memorandum of understanding ratified by nine organizations that agreed to implement a joint action plan designed to complement the French-language education system in Canada. CTF was one of the signatories of the agreement.

Better known as *Plan d'action – Article 23* (action plan – section 23), the integrated planning that resulted from the summit organizes all needs, projects and activities into six priority areas:

- 1) Promotion of the French-language school
- 2) School infrastructures
- 3) Human resources
- 4) Pedagogy
- 5) Culture and identity
- 6) Early childhood

The appendix presents courses of action for each of these areas. With the exception of school infrastructures, CTF is participating in all task forces that were set up after the action plan was adopted. Not only has CTF's Services to Francophones conducted its past activities in line with the action plan, but its strategic planning for the next few years also supports these priorities, which will foster a French-language education system that fully meets its obligations.



Strategic planning for 2008-2012

As the action plan that guided Services to Francophones during its first five years drew to an end, the newly designated director held consultations with Member organizations to identify the issues for the coming years.

The consultations confirmed that the formula combining research and action continues to best meet our Members' needs. Participants also hope that certain projects will continue to support reflection since the challenges still exist and the needs are becoming increasingly urgent.

An analysis of the consultations with CTF's Member organizations held in February and March 2007 revealed that participants want continuity between the planning stages. The table below compares the themes as addressed since the creation of Services to Francophones and the action plan as recommended for 2008-2012:

Action Plan 2002-2007 <i>The School at the Heart of a Thriving Francophonie</i>	Action Plan 2008-2012 <i>The French-language School at the Pace of Change</i>
Preparing children for school	Welcoming diversity
The educational setting	Providing teachers with tools
School-community linkage	Owning the issues



Themes

General theme: The French-language School at the Pace of Change

Overall, the education system is going through major changes and schools are trying to adjust to new social realities as best they can. French-language schools cannot avoid major pedagogical and psychoeducational trends. They must meet the same challenges as schools in majority settings while recognizing that the latter often have a considerable head start. Every major assessment, for example, is a reminder that the standard is very high for French-language schools in minority settings.

All acknowledge the dual mission of French-language schools: ensuring academic success (like all other schools) and building a Francophone identity in their students. Over the past few years, it has become increasingly evident that the future of Francophone communities depends on the success of this ambitious project, that is, to build a Francophone identity in students. The identity-building component must be strong enough to motivate youth to actively participate in various aspects of their community's development.

In the coming years, Services to Francophones' strategic planning must take into account the pace at which schools are changing. CTF could not have chosen a more appropriate theme to support efforts to match its initiatives and research.

Three focus areas

From the consultations with Member organizations emerged three equally important focus areas on which we wish to concentrate our efforts over the next few years to adequately meet the needs of Francophone teachers.

1) *Welcoming diversity*

A diverse clientele represents one of the major components of change in French-language schools. The use of the English language by an increasing number of families is clearly another challenge facing French-language schools as they all operate, at various levels, in a predominantly Anglophone environment.

French-language schools also open their doors to ethnocultural diversity. Today, it is not at all uncommon to find many different languages spoken in households while French is the language at school. This is a reality in all schools, regardless of the teaching language. However, the efforts of French-language schools to ensure the academic success and identity-building of their students are thwarted by the prevalence of English in all areas of community life.

Themes *(cont'd)*

Three focus areas *(cont'd)*

2) *Providing teachers with tools*

Teachers understand and take on their responsibilities as “cultural transmitters”. Countless initiatives attempting to create a link between the school, home and community have been implemented. However, once in the classroom, teachers clearly have few tools to help students build their Francophone identity. The school’s ability to promote a dynamic academic life in French is closely linked to student retention at all levels. French-language schools can be attractive to students and parents through their uniqueness, and not by attempting to imitate the model for majority schools. Teachers therefore need to be given tools designed to help them play a proactive role in transmitting and building identity.

3) *Owning the issues*

An efficient action plan must explore new avenues. For CTF, this also means bringing teachers to surpass themselves and to remain at the leading edge of progress in pedagogy for minority-setting schools.

Owning the issues therefore means staying at the forefront of all areas that are likely to influence teaching and learning. While CTF’s initiatives have prompted numerous actions in French-language education, we must continue to explore the issues over the next decade in our quest to achieve excellence in teaching French as a first language in minority settings.



Courses of action

CTF's consultations with Member organizations identified several courses of action in the three focus areas.

Participants give a very high priority to pedagogy in minority settings in all its dimensions. During consultations, they indicated that they would like CTF to foster partnerships with other organizations committed to the advancement of French-language education. They would also like CTF to keep abreast of pilot projects to ensure these benefit more people.

Early childhood education is another issue highlighted by participants since it is closely connected to francization issues. However, according to the survey, there is still much to do to really link Francophone preschool services with French-language schools. Participants would like CTF to pursue its initiatives to advance this fundamental component of French-language education in minority settings.

Participants are also very interested in projects that further address the characteristics of education in minority settings. They indicated that managing the vital home-school-community partnership remains a major challenge.

Through the main themes proposed in our new strategic plan, participants shared their concerns which we will undoubtedly deal with in our activities. For example, they would like CTF to continue its work on cultural activities and to critically look at the use of information and communication technologies in schools.

Participants would also like CTF to take action to address the concept of identity-building. In the broader perspective, CTF should identify, analyze and thoroughly study professional development models.

Lastly, the impact of the dual mission of French-language schools on all school activities remains at the heart of participants' concerns and should serve as a backdrop to all initiatives undertaken by Services to Francophones.



APPENDIX

Action Plan - Section 23: Six Priority Areas

- 1) **Promotion of the French-language school:** School boards and community organizations emphasized the urgency of attracting the greatest number of eligible students under section 23. To that end, CTF must find ways to recruit, welcome and integrate eligible children and new immigrants, support exogamous parents, and develop activities and resources to support the francization of students in schools.
- 2) **School Infrastructures:** School boards identified improving school infrastructures as a priority. This means building new schools or renovating existing ones. The overall goal is to acquire infrastructures and materials equivalent in quantity and quality to those of the majority. Because not all provinces and territories have the resources to meet this need, some form of federal contribution must be considered to support this joint responsibility.
- 3) **Human resources:** School boards clearly stated the difficulty they have in recruiting, training and retaining teachers, specialists and administrators. Joint action must be taken immediately to promote the teaching profession, train staff and provide them with the tools they need to perform the duties specific to Francophone minority settings.
- 4) **Pedagogy:** School boards and other educational stakeholders noted that students in Francophone minority settings do not have access to study programs as diversified and tailored to their needs as students in majority settings. Overall, the pedagogical model of French-language schools is still based on that of majority schools. We must therefore reexamine teaching methods, develop and share pedagogical resources among school boards throughout the country, and draw on research, development and innovation as well as on resources and opportunities available through information and communication technologies.
- 5) **Culture and identity:** School boards and community organizations stressed the importance of building identity in youth to promote the cultural vitality of minority communities. To that end, we must understand how the identity-building process works, the issues involved, and review curricular and extracurricular practices. We must also integrate art education and sociocultural activities in and around the school, and draw the school and the community closer together. Francophone culture in its diversity must be at the forefront and even renewed through the school's cultural and identity-building initiatives.
- 6) **Early childhood:** School boards and community organizations understand that early childhood intervention is vital not only to children's development, but also to the renewal of the Francophone minority. Research clearly shows that the language a person speaks later on in life depends on the language learned in early childhood. We must therefore develop early childhood programs and services for Francophones, including early childhood and family resource centres connected to French-language schools and integrated into the French-language education system. We must act in continuity with early childhood initiatives already undertaken by the Commission nationale des parents francophones (national commission of Francophone parents).

