

Action Plan 2014-2020

The French-language School

Central to a Societal Project



Canadian Teachers' Federation
Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants

Action Plan 2014-2020

Canada-wide representation

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) represents approximately 200,000 teachers through its Member organizations. Of these, over 10,000 work in minority French-language schools.

The Services to Francophones program area reports to the organization's Secretary General 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. Since 2014, Committee members serve two-year terms to ensure greater continuity.

The Network of Francophone Liaison Officers within CTF's Member organizations also assists in managing Services to Francophones' activities. Liaison officers are either Member organization elected officials or 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. Since 2014, liaison officers serve three-year terms in order to ensure better communications within the Network.

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 related to French-language education in minority settings.

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 this was not the case for Francophone organizations, 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 la 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 on 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.

Francophone participation within CTF and French-language education evolved 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 Hélène Saint-Denis was appointed administrative assistant.

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

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 the Canadian Francophonie. This program area provides teachers with tools and resources, and advances educational research on several fronts.

In January 2007, Ronald Boudreau assumed leadership of Services to Francophones. Johanne Deschamps was appointed administrative assistant in 2011.

The current context

We cannot fail to mention the withdrawal of an important partner in 2014, the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick (AEFNB). Much as CTF was pleased to welcome the members of the Syndicat des enseignantes et des enseignants du programme francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (SEPF) in the summer of 2013, the withdrawal of our Francophone colleagues from New Brunswick a few months later was a disappointment. Francophone education in minority settings was only reunited for a few months before splitting up again.

Operations

Since the creation of Services to Francophones, some important projects have been supported by the federal departments of Canadian Heritage and Employment and Social Development. These projects involved considerable amounts of money that allowed us to hire contract employees or expertise teams to carry them out. However, cooperation with these departments has been difficult in recent years given the current political situation.

Between 2010 and 2014, the Pédagogie à l'école de langue française (PELF) (Pedagogy in French-language schools) project received major financial support from all provincial and territorial Departments of Education, which allowed us to hire a coordinator and to benefit from various supports.

Services to Francophones receives an undeniable support from all other program areas of CTF (linguistic services, communications, graphic design, technology, printing, finance, etc.) that work hard to ensure projects are conducted successfully despite limited resources.

Communications

The world of communications has evolved considerably since the creation of Services to Francophones. While Francophone liaison officers used to receive a weekly postal mailing, today's communications are almost exclusively electronic.

Various tools now ensure better communications between liaison officers and with the general public: a blog provides updates on ongoing projects; a Facebook page provides information about specific activities attended by the program area director, like conferences and other networking events; and every Friday, an electronic press review of the latest Francophone news related to education is sent to Network and Committee members.

Professional development

Over the years, Services to Francophones has provided several training activities on a wide range of themes. This represents an important contribution by CTF to support Member organizations.

The annual Francophone Symposium is an opportunity for Network and Committee members to recharge their batteries and sometimes interact with other professional organizations through joint activities.

Research

The current federal government has drastically reduced all programs that used to fund research, making it almost impossible to submit projects. As a result, Services to Francophones had to explore other ways to maintain a research focus in French at CTF. Services to Francophones has great credibility in this area and it would be a shame to lose it.

An increased cooperation with CTF research program area could be a way to help maintain research activities, but it is crucial that themes address the needs of French-language schools.

Teaching resources

CTF can congratulate itself on having produced the most used teaching resources in Canada's French-language schools. For example, the partnership that developed over the years with ACELF led to the production of the *Dream Big* series that has sold over 70,000 copies and remains in high demand.

Other partnerships have also allowed us to keep an interesting pace of publication. Two projects arose from a partnership with AEFO: *Accueillir, c'est s'ouvrir* and *Faire le point*. Both were win-win projects as they addressed a local need while benefiting all teachers in the country. In cooperation with the Direction des ressources éducatives françaises (DREF) of the Manitoba Department of Education, we published teacher worksheets supporting the *Identité 2.0* series, and another project is already underway.

Overview of achievements

Since their inception in 2001, Services to Francophones developed two action plans designed to coordinate the program area's numerous activities: *The School at the Heart of a Thriving Francophonie* (2002-2007) and *The French-language School at the Pace of Change* (2008-2012). Each plan identified three action areas resulting in specific projects.

Action Plan 2002-2007

The School at the Heart of a Thriving Francophonie

Preparing children for school

Early Childhood: Gateway to French-language Schools — A National Vision

Invitation to Success in French-language Schools

The educational setting

Teachers and the challenge of teaching in Francophone minority settings

Pedagogical resources for Francophone minority settings

School-community linkage

DEBOUT! — A national cultural activities handbook

Knowing One's Community

Action Plan 2008-2012

The French-language School at the Pace of Change

Welcoming diversity

Dream Big, Little By Little
Dream Big, It's Elementary!
Dream Big Through Teen Years
Dream Big Together
Voir grand dans le cyberspace
Accueillir, c'est s'ouvrir

Providing teachers with tools

Favoriser la réussite : une affaire d'école
Debout!, second edition
Debout! music CD series
DVDs supporting the series Identité 2.0
Teacher worksheets supporting the series Identité 2.0

Owning the issues

L'appropriation culturelle des jeunes à l'école secondaire francophone en milieu minoritaire

Technologies et construction identitaire

Pedagogy in French-language schools

More detailed descriptions of these action plans can be found in appendices 1 and 2 herein.

Action Plan 2014-2020

General theme — The French-language school: Central to a societal project

Francophones across Canada are giving themselves the means to ensure the sustainability of their community. Initiatives are underway in various areas, from culture to immigration to economic development, to support the vitality of Francophone communities.

At the heart of the action, the French-language school seems to stand as one of the best places for intervention. Indeed, on the one hand, it works directly with youth and, on the other hand, its mandate is embedded in this community vitality that is essential to its very existence. In many ways, people see the French-language school as the driving force behind the evolution of minority Francophone communities.

In the past few years, CTF has been given the mandate to define pedagogy as it applies specifically to minority-language settings. The Pédagogie à l'école de langue française (PELF) (pedagogy in French-language schools) is the culmination of four years of work that tapped into the expertise of all researchers in education in minority settings. The strength of this pedagogy lies in the application of its theories to a practical context designed by and for teachers. While this pedagogy applies to the classroom, its reach goes way beyond as it is designed to encourage teachers and youth to think critically, and to foster their involvement and commitment.

Services to Francophones' strategic planning for the coming years must take this pedagogy into account. By applying PELF to its actions, Services to Francophones is promoting the concepts and conditions that are essential to the success of a societal project, and acting as a catalyst for change.

In the last few years, various consultations with Member organizations identified three action areas to be included in the Action Plan 2014-2020. These consultations culminated with a workshop on the PATH process facilitated by Françoise Ruban from The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) during the annual Francophone Symposium held in Ottawa in May 2014. This consultation exercise between Francophone liaison officers and members of the Advisory Committee on French as a First Language led to the adoption of three focus areas of intervention for the next few years.

Strengthening connections

The CTF Network of Francophone Liaison Officers is unique in the country. Strengthening ties within this network will benefit all French-language schools.

The consultations showed that Network members rely heavily on these connections to better play their role with their members. Various approaches could be explored to foster networking opportunities (webinars for officers, increased use of technologies, setting up Francophone delegations for various events, etc.).

The Action Plan 2014-2020 is being launched just as the liaison officers' terms are being extended to three years. This extension results from a discussion at the 2014 Symposium which received the immediate attention of the Advisory Committee on French as a First Language and CTF Executive Committee.

Considering Services to Francophones' limited resources, it is suggested that supporting committees composed of Francophone liaison officers could assist the director in various activities of the action plan.

Finally, in an effort to unite all Francophone teachers working in French-language schools in Canada, our action plan must take into account opportunities that may arise to maintain cooperation with all other teachers that are not part of CTF.

Invigorating teaching approaches

Much effort has been made to develop teaching resources. While maintaining this approach, it would be important to explore effective means of dissemination to allow maximum use of these teaching resources.

Resources that have been developed so far remain highly relevant in all environments, but some schools are still unfamiliar with them. Efforts should be made to show practical applications of existing resources through increased advertising or short webinars.

Services to Francophones could focus each year on one main teaching resource based on needs identified by members. Following the example set by AEFO, other Member organizations could also act as partners.

The consultations revealed that the local support provided occasionally by Services to Francophones remains a good way to show CTF's value. Liaison officers referred, among other things, to the importance of making CTF known among their members. Tools could be developed to support the Network in this regard.

Interprovincial discussions would help teachers to gain an awareness of the issues facing the Francophonie, thus supporting them in the daily exercise of their profession. By becoming a catalyst for discussion, CTF would have greater visibility, allowing members to gain a better understanding of its role.

It is recognized that PELF is now an integral part of French-language schools' pedagogical landscape and that it must be at the forefront of our actions. This Services to Francophones' project also promotes some of our partners' initiatives, which is something our program area should do in all future projects.

Bringing our practices up-to-date

In the context of the launch of a pedagogy adapted to French-language schools, it is crucial to pay attention to current issues and trends in education to continue to feed the Network with the most current information.

This new action plan is being launched just as the results of two pan-Canadian studies combined under one title, *Teachers in Francophone Minority Settings: Exploring Themes*, are about to be released. As these studies show that teaching in Francophone minority settings still presents challenges that require special attention, the action plan must take their recommendations into account.

With a context currently unfavorable to the allocation of research grants, the action plan suggests that surveys be conducted with Member organizations' Francophone members, either by adding questions to CTF surveys or changing existing questions, or by creating new surveys designed specifically for this group.

The action plan should also put a lot of emphasis on the importance of sharing existing research in support of teaching in Francophone minority settings.

APPENDIX 1

Overview of achievements of the Action Plan 2002-2007: *The School at the Heart of a Thriving Francophonie*

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.

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.

APPENDIX 2

Focus areas of the Action Plan 2008-2012: *The French-language School at the Pace of Change*

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:

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.

Achievements

Dream Big, Little By Little
Dream Big, It's Elementary!
Dream Big Through Teen Years
Dream Big Together
Voir grand dans le cyberspace
Accueillir, c'est s'ouvrir

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.

Achievements

Favoriser la réussite : une affaire d'école
Debout!, second edition
Debout! music CD series
DVDs supporting the series Identité 2.0
Teacher worksheets supporting the series Identité 2.0

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.

Achievements

L'appropriation culturelle des jeunes à l'école secondaire francophone en milieu minoritaire
Technologies et construction identitaire
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APPENDIX 3—Summary of action plans since Services to Francophones was created

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