



IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES



Canadian Teachers' Federation
Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants

www.ctf-fce.ca

IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

The success of Canada's education system in addressing the needs of an increasingly diverse population has been well documented. In its last Education report the OECD recognized Canada as a leader in addressing the needs of diverse learners. Statistics Canada reports¹ that "immigrants who arrive in Canada at age 12 or younger are more likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to obtain a university education by the time they were aged 24 to 34". This study examined students who started in Canadian elementary schools. Students who enter later in their academic life may not be as successful as the acquisition of academic language takes time. According to one source² "it takes between one to two years for everyday language to develop, and between five to seven years for academic language to be strong, particularly in reading in writing." There also remain a number of additional concerns expressed by educators related to addressing the needs of Canada's immigrant/refugee population.

Statistics Canada has reported³ that for some time now, "Canadian population growth has been based more on migratory increase (i.e., excess of immigrants over emigrants) than on natural increase (excess of births over deaths)". They go on to point out that this situation is expected to continue over the next few decades. The fact that population increase is driven by immigration is leading to an increasingly diverse Canadian population with associated benefits and challenges.

The number of immigrants annually entering Canada has been identified by Statistics Canada as 270,581 in 2009/2010 and is projected to rise to 333,600⁴ by 2035. Funding provided for the settlement of and integration of newcomers has been forecast by Citizenship and Immigration Canada⁵ at \$991.2M in 2011/2012 and planned to decrease to \$977.6M in 2014/2015.

Challenges related to education and an increasingly diverse population may be categorized in two main areas – social and economic and pedagogical. Pedagogical issues are primarily a result of students in school who are not able to adequately communicate in the language of instruction but also include a need for teacher training related to addressing the specific concerns of a diverse student population. In French as first language schools, these students are referred to as French Language Learners (FLL) and in English schools as English Language Learners (ELL).

PEDAGOGICAL CONCERNS

A CTF study⁶ of 3,777 teachers, including 3,023 from English schools (including immersion) and 754 from French schools was conducted in the spring of 2012. Demographic information was gathered

- 1 Statistics Canada. *Study: Education and Earnings of childhood immigrants*. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/110125/dq110125b-eng.htm>. January 25, 2011
- 2 Cameron, Marlo. 2012. Immigrant Students Struggling in Class. Ottawa Sun. First posted January 31, 2012. <http://www.ottawasun.com/2012/01/31/immigrant-students-struggling-in-class>.
- 3 Statistics Canada, Demography Division *Population Projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories 2009 to 2036*. June 2010, Catalogue no. 91-520-X
- 4 Ibid, Medium Growth Scenario, Table 1.4.
- 5 Citizenship and Immigration Canada. *2012–2013 Report on Plans and Priorities*
- 6 Riel, Richard and Boudreau, Ronald (2012). *English and French language learners account for an important share of public school enrolments*. www.ctf-fce.ca/Priorities/default.aspx?ArtID=1990&year=2012&index_id=56187&lang=EN

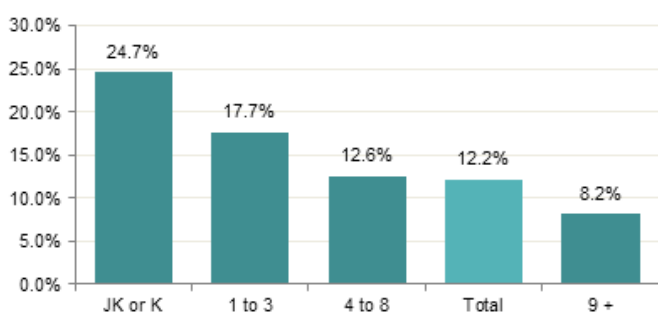
RECOMMENDATIONS

We call on the Government of Canada to:

- Adjust the settlement funding formula to include additional resources for schools targeted at addressing the specific needs of immigrant and refugee children.
- Establish a national agency to coordinate the delivery of services to immigrant and refugee children in Canadian schools.
- Commit to a comprehensive federal poverty reduction strategy for Canada that includes realistic targets and timelines developed in broad consultation with provincial and territorial governments, Aboriginal governments and organizations, non-governmental organizations and people living in poverty.
- Restore and expand eligibility for Employment Insurance to better support individuals separated from their employment. This would involve easing eligibility requirements, extending benefit durations, and increasing benefit rates.
- Develop a national strategy on housing and the elimination of homelessness, and that such a strategy reference the right to adequate housing, and have targets, timelines and accountability measures.
- Replace the current Universal Child Care Benefit with a universal child care and education system providing dedicated funding for high quality care and early intervention and school readiness initiatives for all children.

for a total of 9,894 classes including 8,237 classes reported in English schools (including immersion) and 1,657 classes reported in French schools. Results for ELL and FLL students are illustrated in Chart 1. On average, over 1 in 8 students were reported by their teachers as being ELL or FLL. Delivery of services to ELL or FLL varies across the country. In many cases these students will have sporadic access to specialized help from itinerant ELL/FLL teachers and the burden will fall on the classroom teacher who is also addressing numerous other educational needs of her/his students.

Chart 1: ELL and FLL Students As a Percentage of Total Number of Students, by Grade Level



The variety of curricula and language delivery models not only between provinces and territories, but within the provinces and territories, creates another problem for immigrant students who move to another province. These children may find themselves without settlement resources and are forced to essentially start over with their language learning. For example, children of families settling in Quebec are required to study in French language schools. If, after two years, the family moves to Ontario, these same children who were FLL in Quebec will attend an English school and now be ELL. Further, it is likely that settlement funding will not follow the family and the burden will be placed on an already overburdened school system.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONCERNS

Immigrant children face numerous challenges beyond adapting to a new language. They are more likely to be victims of bullying and discrimination. Refugee

IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

children are often in poverty with parents who have difficulty finding employment paying a living wage. These social problems manifest themselves in various ways in the schools and can result in an increase in the workload of already overloaded teachers. Federal funding for settlement and integration, including language training, is provided to each province and territory based on a funding formula. Funding is then provided to community agencies who partner with schools to deliver services. Government sponsored programs assist with this socialization process, however limited resources create often insurmountable problems. Current funding levels of only \$3,700⁷ per immigrant, which are projected to decrease by 20%, will exacerbate this situation.

MEET MARIA

Maria is a recent immigrant from the Philippines. She is a single mother living with her three children who are 3, 7, and 15 years old respectively. Sadly, her husband died in the floods a few years ago. Maria speaks little English and would like to take advantage of the English language courses being offered at the local school board. She is also hoping to get a job at the local school as a night custodian. Unfortunately, with one child still at home, and with no money for child care, she is unable to attend the free classes. Further, she cannot seem to pass the necessary Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) training and cannot get hired. She has applied for many jobs but her inability to speak fluently in either official language is preventing her from getting past the interview. She is not sure what to do. Perhaps when her eldest is able to leave school in another year, she will be able to go to work to provide income for the family.

7 Recognizing that the formula for provision of funding is more complicated, \$991.2M divided by 270,581 immigrants provides just over \$3,663 per person.