

Phase III Report

Meeting Labour Market Needs for French
as a Second Language Instruction in Ontario



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Implementation of Evidence-Based Strategies



**EMPLOYMENT
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The efforts of many individuals have contributed to the work involved in creating this report. While some have represented the perspectives of a specific organization or association, each voice reflects genuine commitment to the mandate of this project: to ensure sufficient numbers of teachers and French-speaking education workers are able to support quality French as a Second Language (FSL) instruction to Ontario students.

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Finally, we wish to acknowledge and thank the Ontario Public School Boards' Association and its staff for their leadership in this project, their in-kind contributions and assistance with a host of tasks that enabled this work to progress.

Please note: The views expressed in this report are the views of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association and do not necessarily express those of the Province of Ontario.

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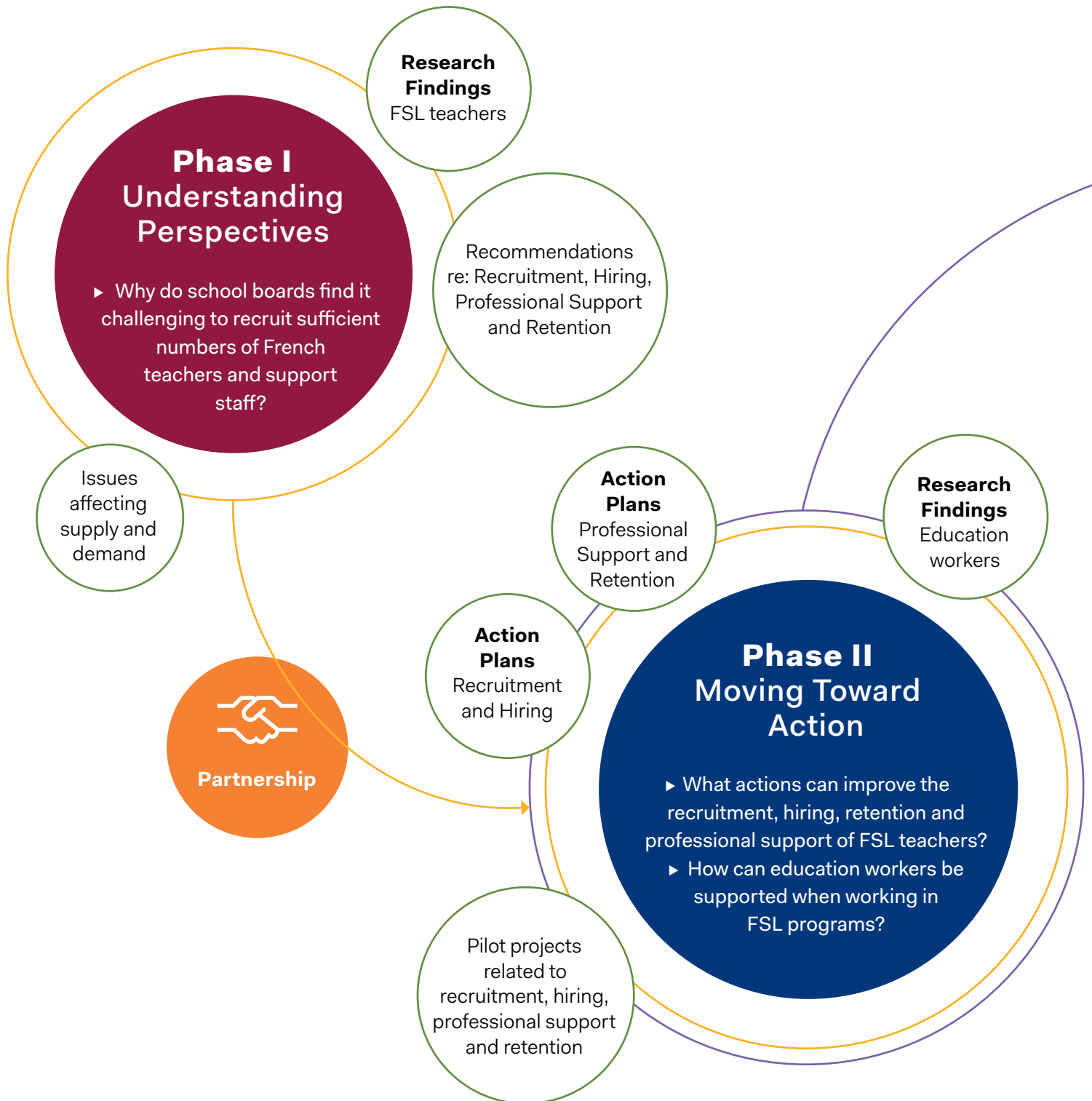
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Meeting Labour Market Needs for French as a Second Language Instruction in Ontario (2017-2021)







Executive Summary

Implementation of Evidence-Based Strategies



History and Timeline of French as a Second Language Labour Market Partnership Project

In March 2016, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) submitted a proposal to the Ontario government to establish a three-year Ontario Labour Market Partnership project to study labour market needs for French as a Second Language (FSL) instruction in the province. This proposal was in response to concerns OPSBA member boards raised about the growing gap between the number of students enrolling in French language programs and the recruitment and retention of sufficient numbers of qualified FSL teachers and support staff. This issue has become an increasing challenge for school boards.

In May 2017, OPSBA received approval to proceed with Phase I of the initiative entitled *Meeting Labour Market Needs for French as a Second Language Instruction in Ontario: Understanding Perspectives* regarding the French as a Second Language Teacher Labour Market Issue. Phase I focused on the following:

- ▶ a review of background studies previously conducted by key stakeholders;

- ▶ a qualitative and quantitative study including surveys, interviews, and focus groups of recent French as a Second Language teacher hires and soon-to-graduate FSL teachers in school boards and faculties of education across the province to explore factors influencing their decisions to work in various boards in Ontario;
- ▶ the identification and description of policies and procedures currently used to address FSL teacher supply;
- ▶ an analysis of the reported impact of existing strategies and current recruitment practices;
- ▶ an analysis of intersection of research findings (factors influencing decision-making, effects of current policy/procedures, and recruitment practices on supply pipeline and job vacancy rate);
- ▶ recommendations for action based on research findings and stakeholder priorities.

In October 2018, OPSBA received approval for Phase II of the initiative entitled *Moving Forward with Understanding Perspectives Regarding the French as a Second Language Teacher Labour Market Issue*. Phase II focused on:

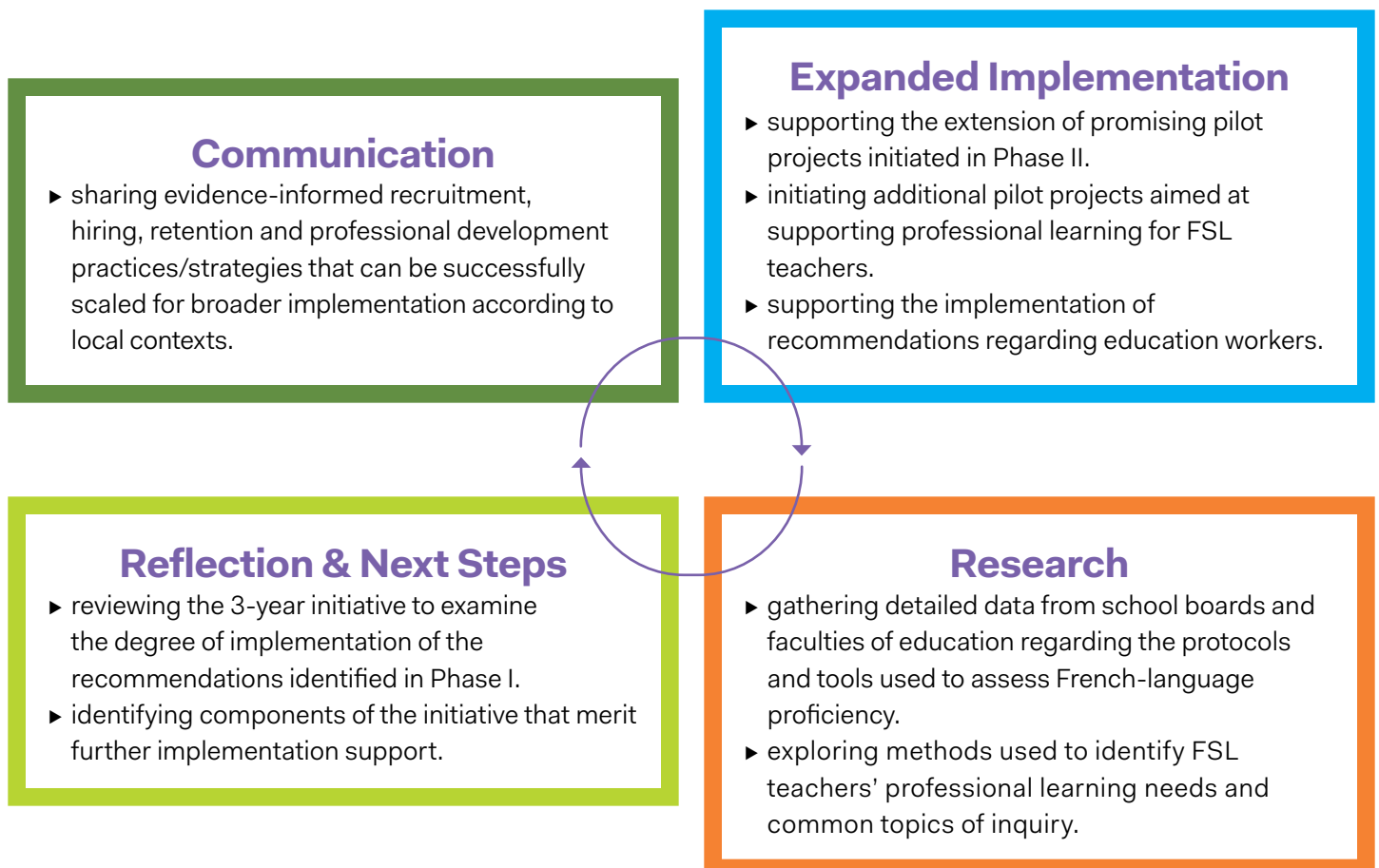
- ▶ action planning and facilitating the implementation of the Phase I recommendations - the action plans identified a number of pilot projects to implement evidence-informed practices and strategies covering the recruitment, hiring, development and retention of FSL teachers;



- ▶ field research exploring the recruitment, hiring, and retention of French-speaking education workers (e.g., Early Childhood Educators and Educational Assistants); and
- ▶ recommendations for action based on education worker research findings.

In January 2020, OPSBA received approval from the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development to begin Phase III: *Implementation of Evidence-Based Strategies*. The final phase of this complex initiative has had a province-wide focus with a view to share and deepen the implementation of the evidence-based strategies and approaches identified in the first two phases of the FSL-Labour Market Partnership Project. Specifically, the work in Phase III focused on the following four key objectives displayed in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1 Phase III objectives



Highlights Learned from Phase III

A range of actions were undertaken in order to meet the objectives in Phase III. As noted above, these actions involved a combination of communication, expanded implementation, research and reflection and reinforced a number of key themes first identified in earlier phases of the initiative:

- ▶ **An inter-connected approach:** while work on implementation and research was often linked directly to FSL teacher recruitment and hiring, or retention and professional support, many successful pilot projects showed elements of both. For example, projects focused on one area of professional learning (e.g., improving educators' French-language proficiency) ultimately increased opportunity for educators to be hired into a wider range of FSL positions. Similarly, opportunities to engage school leaders in deeper understandings about FSL teacher retention necessarily included discussions regarding meaningful professional support.
- ▶ **Role of ongoing professional support:** throughout the initiative, opportunities to support professional learning, such as pilot projects, prompted enthusiastic responses from many organizations represented by the Partnership. While the range of professional learning topics was wide, many of the pilot projects focused on very specific audiences (e.g., early-career FSL teachers, teachers initiating new FSL programs, initiatives supporting specific learner groups in FSL programs). The breadth and depth of professional learning reinforced the importance of practice of timely, innovative and responsive professional learning for FSL teachers.
- ▶ **French-language proficiency:** identified as a recruitment and hiring challenge in Phase I, Partnership research into the assessment of French-language proficiency has created opportunities for future collaboration between school boards, between faculties of education, and between school boards and faculties, to review existing French-language proficiency protocols. Since most faculties of education and school boards already engage in some type of proficiency assessment at key points in the career path of FSL teachers, such collaboration may bring greater understanding to the French proficiency skills needed for FSL teaching.
- ▶ **Value of collaborative partnership:** all work accomplished during the three phases of the initiative resulted from the opportunity for stakeholder voices to be included in planning, decision-making, and implementation. Partnership members brought unique perspectives and knowledge to the initiative that was instrumental in shaping priorities, actions and next steps. While much has been accomplished since the Partnership was formed in May 2017, members have identified future work to be undertaken and committed to ongoing collaboration as a Partnership in order to fulfill the original mandate: the development of workable solutions to address the FSL teacher shortage issue.

Next Steps

The Labour Market Partnership committee, representing key stakeholder groups and all publicly funded English-language school boards in Ontario, engaged in a review of the cumulative work of all three phases of the FSL-Labour Market Partnership project. This review examined the structure of the Partnership, the scope of current research and implementation, and the potential need for further research and implementation to fully satisfy the Partnership's original recommendations.

Executive Summary

Based on the review, the Committee identified a number of areas where small-scale implementation should be expanded in order to effect more substantive long-term change in the recruitment, hiring, professional support, and retention of FSL teachers in Ontario. These include:

- ▶ ongoing supports for FSL teachers and FSL teacher candidates to participate in opportunities aimed at enhancing their French-language proficiency;
- ▶ greater consistency and transparency among those engaged in determining French-language proficiency requirements for FSL teaching;
- ▶ ongoing support for responsive professional learning for FSL teachers and opportunities to share innovative practices from pilot projects;
- ▶ the development of a communication campaign that shares information about FSL teaching prospects with senior secondary and undergraduate students studying French or studying in French environments;
- ▶ further examination of circumstances that support FSL teacher retention.

Partnership members indicated their overwhelming support to continue in some manner with the implementation of long-term strategies aimed at addressing issues with FSL teacher supply and demand.

Phase III Report

Implementation of Evidence-Based Strategies



Framework and Partnerships

The framework for meeting the objectives in Phase III is structured through the work of three committees: the FSL-Labour Market Partnership committee (FSL-LMPC); the FSL-LMPC Steering committee; and the Education Worker committee. Each action plan committee established in Phase II continued with their implementation work through Phase III. The function and membership of each committee are outlined below.

FSL-Labour Market Partnership Committee

Partnership committee membership includes representatives from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF), the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (ECCODE and PCODE), the Ontario Association of Deans of Education (OADE), the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO), Public and Catholic Supervisory Officers' Associations of Ontario (OPSOA and OCSOA), the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU), and the Ontario Council of Education Workers/Ontario Public Service Employee Union (OCEW/OPSEU), all publicly funded English-language public and Catholic school boards in the province through their trustee/school board associations (OPSBA and OCSTA), and the Ontario Ministry of Education. The FSL-LMPC serves as the key decision-making body of this project and is co-chaired by the Project Lead and Partnership Lead. This group operates on the principles of collaborative professionalism and makes recommendations linked to research and is respectful of collective agreements.

FSL-Labour Market Partnership Steering Committee

The Steering committee is chaired by the Partnership Lead and the Research Lead and includes members from the various sectors represented on the Partnership committee. The Steering committee is designed such that it can be consulted quickly on any issues or questions related to the project in order to speed up the turn-around time for any required action. These meetings occurred as required between the larger FSL-LMPC meetings.

Education Worker Committee

The Education Worker committee continued to guide the discussion relating to education worker recommendations developed in Phase II. The committee is co-chaired by the Project, Partnership, and Research Leads and was responsible for co-developing the related Phase III communication and action plans.

Meetings

Meetings of the FSL-LMPC were held virtually on February 6, March 31, April 8, June 10, September 23, October 21, November 25, December 9 and 16, 2020, and January 6 and 13, 2021. Steering committee and Education Worker committee members met virtually on various dates over the course of Phase III and individually by telephone for specific expertise as required.

To facilitate communication and maintain focus, ad hoc meetings were organized between committee members, between committee members and their respective organizations/associations, and with project leads as necessary. Meetings took place via teleconferences and online forums as needed to clarify information and forge strong working relationships.

“LMPC members and their related organizations remained steadfast in their commitment to this work and continued to thoughtfully engage despite emerging urgent priorities throughout Phase III.”

Communication

A project information sheet was developed in conjunction with the FSL-LMPC to provide background information and consistent messaging given the strong response to the Phase II final report. The project information sheet was posted on the OPSBA website and on websites of stakeholder organizations. Online forums and meeting notes facilitated the necessary ongoing communication towards the development of the recommendations and stakeholder commitments. The final report was shared by each committee representative internally with their respective organization's/association's executive structure(s) in order to seek feedback. At the end of January 2021, the LMPC submitted to MLTSD its final Phase III report entitled, *Implementation of Evidence-Based Strategies*, followed later in February 2021 by the public release of the same report on the OPSBA website.



Key Project Components

The work of the Labour Market Partnership committee followed two parallel paths in order to realize the key objectives of Phase III. First, FSL-LMPC members continued to champion actions initiated in Phase II and extended through Phase III. All action planning continued to support the original seven recommendations from Phase I related to FSL teacher recruitment, hiring, retention and professional support. At the same time, the LMPC supported two investigations discussed in Phase II:

- ▶ the French-language proficiency assessments used by faculties of education during the admission and/or graduation of FSL teacher candidates, and assessments used by school boards when hiring FSL teachers, and
- ▶ the methods used by school boards to determine the professional learning needs of practicing FSL teachers and the topics currently supported during professional learning based on identified needs.

It is important to acknowledge the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on all activity related to the work of Phase III, particularly communication and implementation. All members of the Partnership work in the education sector which was required to initiate and adjust to significant operational changes over a short period of time due to the impact of the pandemic. Nonetheless, LMPC members and their related organizations remained steadfast in their commitment to this work and continued to thoughtfully engage despite emerging urgent priorities throughout Phase III.

Partnership work during Phases I and II evolved a perspective to FSL teacher recruitment that became influential in Phase III implementation. This perspective drew attention to two potential local sources of future FSL teachers:

- ▶ the increasing numbers of grade 12 secondary school students succeeding on the DELF who may meet eligibility requirements in FSL teacher education programs in the future, and
- ▶ the number of FSL teacher applicants whose French-language proficiency assessment results indicate the need for further development so that these applicants may successfully access FSL teaching positions.

This perspective became known as “grow our own” and has influenced many of the actions supported by the Partnership in Phase III.

To describe the Phase III work, the body of the report is organized into four sections. Section 1 reports on the ongoing implementation of actions first identified in Phase II and extended into Phase III. Section 2 describes two key areas of additional research regarding the assessment of French-language proficiency conducted by faculties of education and school boards with FSL teacher candidates and FSL teacher applicants. In Section 3, the report describes the actions taken in response to the Phase II recommendations regarding education workers in FSL contexts. Finally, Section 4 discusses potential next steps for the FSL-Labour Market Partnership beyond its current mandate.

Section 1

Expansion of Actions from Phase II



Part A Actions Regarding Teacher Recruitment and Hiring

Communication

Communication about the Partnership's work continues to be a critical element in addressing the issues related to the FSL teacher supply pipeline. Some member organizations of the Partnership have included this work as a regular meeting agenda item underlining their collective commitment to problem-solving the FSL teacher shortage issue. All member organizations have effectively capitalized on their existing communication networks to gather information, engage in pilot project opportunities, and to provide information about the Partnership's work to their membership.

A pilot project involving three northern school boards (Algoma DSB, Near North DSB, DSB for Ontario North East) was extended through Phase III. The project used French-language proficiency assessment results from an online tool, *Ev@lang*[™], to see if the tool could serve all three school boards as a possible French-language screening tool when recruiting FSL teachers. Based on field testing results and follow-up discussions with volunteer FSL teachers, the boards began the process of co-developing potential hiring guidelines to share with Human Resources (HR) personnel for possible use during school board hiring, career fairs, and other recruitment communication tools.

Prioritizing communication in the education sector during 2020 has been challenging. Members of the

Partnership, however, have been instrumental in identifying communication opportunities that match key audiences with relevant FSL teacher recruitment and hiring information in a timely manner. For example, to reinforce some of the supporting documents appended to the Phase II report, communication was developed to highlight and distribute particular documents to school boards with suggestions regarding their potential use with specific audiences. These documents include the revised *Pathways to Employment as an FSL Teacher in Ontario* and *Guiding Questions to Review School Boards' Websites re: Promoting Employment Opportunities for FSL Teachers*. The Partnership committee looks forward to an opportunity to share and discuss, at a more appropriate time, the full findings and implications related to FSL teacher recruitment and hiring.

Implementation

The Phase II report identified a number of implementation strategies to address FSL teacher recruitment and hiring, many relating to French-language proficiency among FSL teacher applicants. Key among these strategies was support for Partnership organizations to engage in pilot projects that, if successful, could be shared and replicated over time. To this end, a call for pilot project proposals was distributed to all English-language Ontario school boards in support of professional learning opportunities

Section 1: Expansion of Actions from Phase II

for education workers and FSL teachers to further develop their French proficiency to levels needed to access the full range of FSL teaching opportunities. Of the 38 proposals received, 25 were approved with 12 dedicated to supporting French-language development in various ways. For example, projects were approved¹ that:

- ▶ supported FSL teachers to enrol in specific language development courses (e.g., District School Board of Ontario North East; Limestone DSB; Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation; Ontario Teachers' Federation; Protestant Separate School Board of Penetanguishene, and Renfrew County Catholic DSB);

- ▶ supported enrolment in Additional Qualifications courses in FSL (e.g., Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic DSB; Durham DSB; Rainbow DSB; Rainy River DSB);
- ▶ included support for education workers' engagement in French-language development and curriculum support (e.g., Algoma DSB and Greater Essex County DSB).

The pilot projects supporting the development of FSL teachers' French-language proficiency are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Pilot projects supporting the development of FSL teachers' French-language proficiency

Title of Project	Project Description	School Board/ Organization
Supporting French-language learning in FSL programs	Partnership with the Centre d'éducation et formation pour adultes to provide French-language learning opportunities for Anglophone Education Workers.	Algoma DSB
Subsidies for FSL Aqs + creating Welcome Packages for new FSL hires	Strand 1: Facilitating and supporting occasional/permanent teachers to enrol in FSL Part II/III; also extended to teachers aiming to enrol in FSL Part I. Strand 2: Development and distribution of Welcome Packages for teachers new to FSL. Packages to include resources, books, posters, USB with additional information/resources.	Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic DSB
Increasing Retention by Increasing Oral Proficiency	French-language development for Teachers, Education Workers and Administrators - 250 instructional hours with <i>Iboux</i> , online French language development website us.iboux.com	District School Board Ontario North East
Ignite Professional Learning in DDSB	In collaboration with Ontario Tech University, support for teachers to enrol in FSL AQ Part 1.	Durham DSB

¹ In Phase II, a Professional Learning model for effective FSL instruction was developed with "Community of Practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) as the key element that improved French-language proficiency and effective instruction for teachers. This model was used to guide priority-setting. Factors such as geography, elementary-secondary, public-Catholic, and school board size were considered in the approval process.

Section 1: Expansion of Actions from Phase II

Title of Project	Project Description	School Board/ Organization
Apprendre ensemble... à distance	An extension of the <i>Apprendre Ensemble</i> module for K-12 staff from the FSL-Labour Market Partnership Project Phase II report; asynchronous and synchronous sessions for K-12 FSL educators, including Education Workers.	Greater Essex County DSB
Use of technology to support interactive learning	Enhancing professional development (facilitated in French) and instructional practice through technology using “green screens.” Target audience: NTIP and FSL teachers in first five years.	Limestone DSB
ECE French Fluency PD Opportunities	French language development opportunities were provided for Early Childhood Educators in order to participate in a variety of online French language learning programs for those working in FSL Kindergarten settings.	Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
Ici on parle français - French language PD opportunities for teachers	Professional Learning for FSL certified teachers to register and participate in the online French-language program of their choosing or to purchase print and other media learning resources to improve their FSL teaching.	Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF)
Vive la francophonie	Series of small group professional learning sessions for FSL teaching staff to explore interactive teaching resources to improve students' oral language. Learning will be enhanced with participation by local francophone artists and performers.	Protestant Separate School Board of Penetanguishene
Improving Self-Efficacy for FSL Instructors through FSL AQ	Facilitating and supporting FSL teachers to enrol in FSL AQ Parts 2 or 3.	Rainbow DSB
FSL Subsidy for FSL Part 1, 2 or 3 AQ Courses	Facilitating and supporting FSL teachers to take FSL AQ Parts 1, 2 or 3 in partnership with Lakehead University.	Rainy River DSB
Online French Course (Alliance Française, Ottawa)	Facilitating and supporting FSL teachers to register (including placement test fees) in language development course(s) through Alliance Française, Ottawa. Open to permanent and occasional teachers.	Renfrew County Catholic DSB

Progress Summary of Pilot Projects to Support French-Language Development

Pilot projects outlined in Table 1 fall into two broad categories: opportunities for teachers to enrol in additional qualification programs, and opportunities for teachers and education workers to enrol in language development courses or opportunities to improve their proficiency in French. Some pilot projects report successful collaborations with providers of additional qualification courses that customize the course content to the specific needs of participants. Similarly, a smaller number of pilot projects report collaborating with organizations that provide French-language improvement courses specific

to participants' needs and work contexts. All organizations participating in these pilot projects report plans to continue through the 2020-2021 academic year.

Additionally, the Partnership aimed to strengthen relationships between faculties of education and school boards with respect to FSL teacher candidates preparing for the teacher workforce. A call for proposals for pilot projects was distributed to all faculties of education and school districts in the province in order to document emerging collaborative practices between both organizations that streamline the transition from FSL teacher candidate to FSL teacher. Unfortunately,

responses from faculties of education and school boards indicated that they were unable to participate in such projects at this time (Fall, 2020).

Monitoring the enrolment of FSL candidates in teacher education programs was identified as an important component in understanding the potential supply of FSL teachers. Recent reports (OPSBA, 2019; OCOL, 2019) have described shortfalls in FSL teacher education enrolment despite consistently strong post-graduation employment prospects. Data provided by the Ministry of Education and Ontario faculties of education show a 23 percent decline in the projected number of FSL teacher graduates in spring/summer 2021 compared to the average number of graduates over the previous three years. While faculties of education continue to monitor enrolments, they have also identified barriers that, if addressed, would potentially increase the supply of FSL teacher applicants ready to access FSL teaching positions. Such barriers include:

- ▶ Ministry of Colleges and Universities imposed enrolment caps and associated funding reductions;
- ▶ inadequate language proficiency among initial teacher education applicants;

- ▶ linguistic insecurity of initial teacher education applicants and candidates;
- ▶ undervaluing of French as a pursuit during and beyond public schooling.

The Partnership continues to support collaborative opportunities between school boards to co-develop French-language proficiency assessments in alignment with the CEFR and informed by emerging research. This support stems from data gathered in Phase I of the Partnership, and more comprehensive research completed in Phase III (see Section 2) that demonstrated a wide range of school board-developed assessment protocols that vary significantly from one board to the next and are often subjective in nature. An opportunity has emerged for work in this area to continue through the FSL Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy supported by the Department of Canadian Heritage. At this point, collaborative pilot projects supported by the Strategy are underway between school boards in Ontario and other provinces/territories with results to be available in Spring 2021.

Research

The work of the Partnership has confirmed that the supply and demand of FSL teachers in Ontario is a multi-layered issue requiring ongoing research and analysis. Earlier research by the Partnership suggested a relationship between the degree of French-language proficiency and the overall supply of FSL teachers, but more research was needed to analyze how the concept of language proficiency is expressed in the assessment tools and protocols used by key stakeholders conducting assessments, namely most faculties of education and school boards. Findings and discussion of this research is presented later in Section 2.

Part B Actions Regarding Teacher Retention and Professional Support

Communication

The overall communication plan described in Part A above also included timely communication regarding information to support FSL teacher retention and professional support. Resources first included in Phase II were revised to be easily disseminated among appropriate school board personnel for consideration and possible implementation. Resources specific to FSL teacher professional support included:

- ▶ **Apprendre Ensemble** – a professional learning module piloted in the Greater Essex County DSB and revised for implementation in other school board contexts. The module included K-12 FSL teachers, education workers, and focused on CEFR implementation while providing opportunities for participants to develop French-language and cultural knowledge.
- ▶ **Strategies and Resources to Support Professional Learning for FSL Teachers** – a compendium of strategies that optimize professional learning for FSL teachers, and current resources to support teachers' French-language development.

Partnership members representing the Ontario Teachers' Federation, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation investigated options for, and the possible value

of, collating and communicating FSL-related resources from the Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP). Additionally, school boards are committed to ongoing reviews of their FSL board plans to incorporate promising retention and professional support strategies, including continued support for recent encouraging increases in student participation in the Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELF) exams.

Implementation

FSL teacher retention is a multi-faceted concept that has been discussed in the academic literature (Karsenti, et al., 2008) and became a focus of discussion at various times in all three phases of the Partnership's work. As revealed during the Phase I research, significant numbers of teachers in Ontario with FSL qualifications teach in FSL programs less than half their assignment (approximately 2300 in 2018), and many more teach no FSL at all (2704 as reported in 2018). These findings drew attention to the definition of teacher retention itself, and to questions relating to the retention of FSL teachers, such as: what factors influence FSL teachers to teach in contexts other than FSL; what factors support FSL teachers to continue teaching in FSL programs; and at what point does retention become a factor contributing to the challenges in the overall supply and demand of FSL teachers.

Section 1: Expansion of Actions from Phase II

Implementing actions relating to FSL teacher retention have begun with the short-term goal of gathering additional data from school board HR officials based on a common understanding of teacher retention. From this data has emerged a longer-term implementation agenda for improving FSL teacher retention where possible. This agenda aims to identify and share promising leadership practices that minimize FSL teacher attrition in various contexts and maximize FSL teaching as a long-term career aspiration. The Partnership recognizes that supporting this agenda will require additional time and commitment beyond Phase III.

During Phase II, the Partnership supported a small number of pilot projects. One of these pilot projects focused on the role of principal leadership in supporting FSL education with a view to retaining FSL teachers. With the collaboration of the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) and the Catholic Principals' Council |Ontario (CPCO), a professional learning module for principals in French immersion contexts was expanded to include a summer session and extensive pre- and post-reflection opportunities. This data collection not only provided meaningful information for further module refinement but supported the development of an important professional network for principals working in French immersion schools. OPC and CPCO continue to refine this professional support and are currently developing modules specific to FSL-Core contexts.

Several of the Phase II pilot projects confirmed a keen interest in professional learning for and by FSL teachers. Informed by research linking effective professional learning with improved teacher satisfaction and an inclination to remain in FSL teaching roles (Karsenti et al., 2008), many more pilot project opportunities were made available in Phase III. In addition to the pilot projects focussing on French-language development described in Part A above, 13 of the 25 pilot projects supported a wide

range of professional learning for FSL teachers on topics such as:

- ▶ pedagogical strategies that support the inclusion of students with special education needs studying FSL (Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic DSB);
- ▶ translation of effective teaching resources into French (Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario);
- ▶ establishing learning networks for novice FSL teachers (Grand Erie DSB);
- ▶ developing/learning with teaching resources based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (e.g., Niagara Catholic DSB, Sudbury Catholic DSB);
- ▶ literacy development with emerging readers in French (Peel DSB);
- ▶ collaboration with FSL professional organizations (Renfrew County DSB; Windsor-Essex Catholic DSB);
- ▶ professional learning in mathematics using French resources (Toronto DSB; Durham Catholic DSB);
- ▶ cross-panel professional learning with a focus on struggling readers (Trillium Lakelands DSB);
- ▶ developing digital resources to demonstrate students' skill progression based on CEFR (Upper Grand DSB);
- ▶ program development for combined SK-Grade 1 classes (York Catholic DSB).

The pilot projects supporting the professional learning of FSL teachers are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Pilot projects supporting the FSL teachers' professional learning

Title of Project	Project Description	School Board/ Organization
Supporting ESL and Special Education needs in FSL	Focus on the co-development of learning tasks shaped for ESL and students with special education needs; collaboration between FSL teachers, educational assistants, ESL teachers and Special Education teachers.	Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic DSB
Building Collective Teacher Efficacy	Math professional learning for Primary FI teachers in the first 5 years to improve confidence and efficacy using <i>Mathologie</i> from Pearson.	Durham Catholic DSB
Respond and Rebuild	Translation and production of the <i>Respond and Rebuild</i> resource for use by FSL teachers province-wide.	ETFO
Growing Our Own in Grand Erie/ Faire croître le français à Grand Erie	Establishing a Professional Learning network of five novice intermediate French Immersion teachers to support effective use of professional resources.	Grand Erie DSB
PD-French Immersion Secondary	Professional Learning for Secondary FSL teachers to use the curriculum, CEFR and DELF to develop teaching resources for secondary students in French Immersion. Exploration of the digital resource, <i>Jusqu'au bout</i> .	Niagara Catholic DSB
Literacy Strategy in Grade 1 French Immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Teacher Professional Learning for Grade 1 French Immersion teachers. ▶ Large-scale, four-session virtual collaborative inquiry to support literacy development in Grade 1, including keynote speaker, Renée Bourgoin. 	Peel DSB
Partnership with ACPI to enhance professional practices	Professional Learning for FSL teachers. Partnership with ACPI to access resources and virtual consultative support for all FSL teachers in the district.	Renfrew County DSB
Let's be Core French consistent through CEFR – Inspired Resources	French-language instructional resource, <i>C'est Parti</i> , to support online and in-class learning.	Sudbury Catholic DBS

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Title of Project	Project Description	School Board/ Organization
Supporting FSL Teachers Transitioning to New FSL Program Delivery Model	Support for Grade 4 and 5 FI teachers transitioning to teaching Math and Science in French using <i>Questions Overtes</i> , by Marion Small	Toronto DSB
Elementary focus: early and struggling readers in FSL Secondary focus: strategic CEFR-based approach to second-language acquisition.	Strand 1: early reading support/intervention – learning with Renée Bourgoïn (Primary French Immersion teachers). Strand 2: learning with Denis Cousineau – providing explicit instruction on using CEFR as a diagnostic tool to better understand our students’ needs and better describing students’ competency levels.	Trillium Lakelands DSB
Improving French proficiency and pedagogy	Developing a digital/print resource that outlines student skill progression based on curriculum expectations in Speaking/Listening and CEFR descriptors.	Upper Grand DSB
Membership in ACPI and exploration of resources	Opportunities for Elementary & Secondary FI teachers to become members of ACPI (includes membership in CASLT and OMLTA) with facilitated access to ACPI resources and support.	Windsor-Essex Catholic DSB
SK/Grade 1 Combined French Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Professional Learning for K2/Grade 1 French Immersion teachers. ▶ New combined K2/Grade 1 FI program - professional learning for teachers new to combined grade program development, planning, assessment, resources. 	York Catholic DSB

Progress Summary of Pilot Projects to Support Professional Learning for FSL Teachers

As evident in Table 2, professional learning for FSL teachers spanned a range of topics related to effective teaching and learning. In most cases, teachers came together virtually to plan, facilitate and co-learn in professional learning sessions geared to the learning needs previously identified through questionnaires or ongoing conversations. Many projects focused on the effective use of specific print or media resources to support the development of French-language skills or subject content knowledge. Other projects have accessed topic specialists to support topics such as inclusive education, literacy development, or the expansion of FSL programs within a school board. All projects reported plans to continue implementation through the 2020-2021 academic year.

Research

Given the focus on professional learning during Phase III, the Partnership explored the processes used by school boards to identify and prioritize the professional learning needs of FSL teachers. The purpose of the investigation was two-fold: to identify methods used by school boards to understand FSL teachers’ professional learning needs and to document themes emerging from this process. Individuals responsible for FSL professional learning in nine school boards (representing urban/rural, large/small, and various geographic regions of the province) came together via teleconference to share their experiences and engage in the following guiding questions italicized below:

What processes are used to determine the professional learning needs of FSL teachers?

Among the nine school boards, a wide range of processes are used to determine FSL teachers’ professional learning needs. No school board relied on a single process to gather this information. Surveys were the most commonly used means to gather information about FSL teachers’

learning needs directly, with surveys routinely sent to teachers, but also to school administrators. On one occasion, students were also surveyed as part of a larger survey initiative to gather perspectives on various programs and how they might be more responsive to students' interests. School boards reported distributing surveys annually, and occasionally more often depending on the context (e.g., regarding the implementation of a new program resource).

Other direct methods for identifying FSL teacher learning needs include focus groups, meetings, and exit surveys following professional learning sessions. Focus groups occurred with teachers, administrators, and sometimes with both groups together. School boards reported using focus groups to gather input from various stakeholders for the purposes of engaging in FSL program reviews. Many school boards reported holding regular meetings with principals of French Immersion schools where principals often advocate for support for FSL teachers' professional learning. In addition to focus groups and regular meetings, teachers are often asked for feedback on professional learning sessions they attend by completing exit surveys/cards, thereby providing direct input into future sessions.

A number of indirect methods are used by school boards to gather information about FSL teachers' professional learning. Collaborative Inquiries are popular professional learning structures that allow teachers to identify and work towards specific learning goals. Professional learning leaders also reflect on the topics of teachers' questions during small-scale professional learning sessions, phone calls, and email exchanges to better understand areas of interest and future learning. Increasingly, topics of professional conversation on social media platforms provide a window into the professional learning that FSL teachers are exploring.

Despite the nine participating school boards representing jurisdictions with notable differences in student population, geographic location, and population demographics, the content of FSL teacher professional learning clusters under three main topics: the CEFR, literacy development in French Immersion, and inclusion.

Currently, what are the professional learning needs of FSL teachers and how are these being addressed?

At present, the implementation of the CEFR was identified by most school boards as the most prevalent learning need among FSL educators. More specifically, FSL educators continue to expand their understanding of the CEFR as a developmental continuum, using the CEFR as an assessment for learning tool, the interconnectedness of the CEFR and the current FSL curriculum, and the role each strand of the CEFR plays in the development of students' French proficiency. School boards reported dedicating considerable resources to support FSL teachers' professional learning related to the effective implementation of the CEFR. Not surprisingly, the Partnership approved a number of pilot projects supporting greater application of the CEFR (see above Part B: Actions regarding Teacher Retention and Professional Support).

Literacy development has emerged as a theme in FSL teachers' professional learning, especially among teachers supporting primary-age students in French Immersion. Specifically, FSL educators have identified topics such as the use of phonological awareness strategies, effective reading strategies, and critical literacy skills development within a second language learning context as key professional interests. Again, the Partnership was able to support a number of pilot projects that focused on literacy development for young FSL learners.

Including all students in FSL programs was reported by school boards as being a longstanding issue that has seen

gradual improvement but still a subject of discussion. Specific topics related to inclusion include FSL exemption rates in Grade 9, and the latent effects of school practices that predate current Ministry of Education inclusion policy. School boards reported inclusion continuing to challenge French Immersion as programs learn how to best accommodate diverse learning needs in second language instruction contexts. Participating school boards expressed optimism that inclusionary practices are increasingly commonplace, leaving FSL programs fully accessible to all students.

To what extent is the development of teachers' French proficiency supported in current professional learning?

As described earlier in this section, FSL teachers' French-language proficiency has been a common thread in the Partnership's Phase III work. As such, the nine participating boards were asked how language proficiency support is included in planning professional learning with FSL teachers. One northern Ontario school board indicated that many of their FSL teachers are French first language speakers and therefore French-language development is not a key component in professional learning. The remaining eight school boards recognized that French proficiency is a factor affecting pedagogical efficacy in their districts and shared a number of strategies



to support proficiency development while engaging FSL teachers in pedagogical learning. Below is an annotated list of strategies used in these school boards to support FSL teachers' language development:

- ▶ provide all professional learning in French, but recognize the various language proficiency levels in the room;
- ▶ begin professional learning sessions with language learning norms to support a safe learning environment, e.g., all pronunciations/accents of French are acceptable;
- ▶ recognize and accommodate the need for balance between language learning levels and professional learning content. Provide word walls and other strategies for participant reference;
- ▶ support opportunities for FSL teachers to participate in DELF correcteur training – many participants have been motivated to develop their French in order to engage in the training.
- ▶ school boards also recognized that some language development strategies have been challenging. For example, school boards reported that participation in sponsored summer immersion and language development opportunities have been undersubscribed. Similarly, after-school opportunities to engage with other French speakers or participate in French cultural events have not been well attended.

Does your school board provide any PD for education workers in FSL programs geared to improving their French-language proficiency?

As a supplementary question, board participants were asked to share strategies used to support language development for education workers working in FSL contexts. Participants were aware of the Phase II research with education workers and acknowledged the research

findings mirrored their collective experience. All school boards reported facing challenges in recruiting education workers overall, but those working in FSL programs, while generally having limited proficiency in French, learn key French phrases and expressions to support student learning. One school board indicated that in providing education workers with paid subscriptions to Rosetta Stone™ (language learning software), approximately 15 education workers yearly take advantage of the opportunity.

**Summary of Section 1 –
Expansion of Actions from Phase II**

The expansion of work begun in Phase II constitutes a significant portion of the Partnership's activity in Phase III. It centred on actions designed to support improvements in FSL teacher recruitment and hiring, as well as supporting FSL teacher retention and professional support. The success of the collective work relied on a range of effective communication strategies to Partnership stakeholders and their networks. This communication facilitated expanded implementation of a number of strategies initiated in Phase II that eventually engaged school boards, faculties of education and Partnership organizations in 25 new pilot projects directly supporting professional learning with FSL teachers and education workers. Additionally, faculties of education and school boards participated in comprehensive research regarding the assessment of French-language proficiency with FSL teacher candidates and FSL teachers seeking employment. Research was also conducted with a sample of school boards to explore prevailing current professional learning needs of FSL educators and how those needs are identified.

Section 2

Research Regarding French-Language Proficiency Assessment in School Boards and Faculties of Education



Part A Assessing French-Language Proficiency in School Boards with FSL Teacher Applicants

Background, Scope, Rationale and Study Design

In 2018, the Phase I report of the French as a Second Language (FSL) - Labour Market Partnership Project included a number of recommendations aimed at addressing the longstanding challenges faced by school boards in satisfying the growing demand for FSL teachers in Ontario. The recommendations stemmed primarily from a year-long exploratory study conducted by the Partnership with all 60 English-language, publicly funded school boards in the province that examined many factors related to the overall FSL teacher supply pipeline. One factor centred on the practice in many school boards of assessing French-language proficiency of FSL teacher applicants. From these collective assessments, school boards reported that approximately one in four FSL teacher applicants demonstrated lower than desired levels of oral French proficiency during the recruitment and hiring process leaving boards to either consider lowering their desired employability standards, or to continue their recruitment efforts often with unsatisfactory results.

Further examination of the research conducted by the Partnership indicated that school boards collectively use a wide range of assessment tools and processes to measure French oral language proficiency, ranging from holistic, highly subjective measures to the use of recognized international language proficiency standards.

This range of assessment measures complicates efforts to understand the level of oral French proficiency desired across school boards and its potential effect on the overall supply and demand of FSL teachers. As part of the same 2018 research, newly hired FSL teachers identified this range of assessment practices and fluctuating performance thresholds as problematic, citing that while the FSL curriculum is standard across the province, there appears to be no such standard in the language proficiency skills needed to be hired to teach it. As such, the Phase I report included a recommendation to investigate in more depth the processes and tools used by school boards to assess French-language proficiency while recruiting and hiring FSL teachers. The aim of the current investigation is two-fold: first, to document and analyze the range of French-language proficiency assessments conducted by Ontario school boards when hiring FSL teachers; and second, to identify research-based second language proficiency assessment practices that may serve as guideposts in possible efforts to reduce the potential effects of the wide range of language proficiency practices currently in use. What follows is a review of current literature in the field of second language proficiency assessment to provide a frame of reference for the analysis of school board assessment practices.

Review of the Literature

Defining Second Language Proficiency¹

Proficiency in a second or additional language has been the subject of detailed research and theory-building for many years. Prior to the 1970s, language proficiency was conceptually aligned with mastery of oral and written grammar (Harley, Cummins, Swain, Allen, 1990). The work of Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), and later Bachman (1990) repositioned understandings of language proficiency towards what has become known as communicative competence, a broader concept of proficiency that includes the social and strategic use of language in addition to its grammatical forms and functions. As a result, the assessment of language competence necessarily expanded to examine knowledge and use of language in several contexts, ones not easily captured in traditional language proficiency tests focused on grammar knowledge alone. Similarly, the processes used to assess language proficiency, rather than simply the outcomes of such assessments, became a needed research focus in order to better describe the newer, more comprehensive conceptualization of language proficiency (Sandlund, Sundqvist, Nyroos, 2016). With this shift, the numerous comprehension and production components require proficiency to be described in degrees along a continuum relative to the intended language purpose or use (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007; Tremblay, 2011).

Assessing second language proficiency for various purposes is not new. With the continuous increases in global migration, communication and commerce, government institutions and business enterprises have adapted by employing personnel capable of functioning in more than one language (Issacs, 2016). Assessing these

capabilities has become necessary to ensure a suitable match between the language demands in specific contexts and the language skills of the individual (Sandlund, Sundqvist & Nyroos, 2016). Indeed, assessment procedures for second language speakers of English have been established to meet highly specialized contexts such as the military (Defense Language Proficiency Test); professional certification (Test of Legal English Skills); educational institutions (Cambridge International English Language Testing System); and business (Business Language Testing Service). Similarly, for teaching, some countries rely on language proficiency ratings in order to grant certification to teach in the target language, e.g., Germany (CEFR); United States (ACTFL); and the UK (TEFL/TESOL). This backdrop of language standard-setting for teaching in specific contexts merits discussion about its feasibility in FSL contexts within Canada especially given the official language status of French.

Users of assessment tools² to rate second language proficiency bear responsibility in attending to the skilful development of such tools and appropriate decision-making resulting from their use (Carlsen, Deygers, Zeidler & Vilcu, 2019). Due to the inherent subjectivity in perceiving and judging language (Roca-Varela & Palacios, 2013; Park, 2020), this caution is of particular importance during high-stakes proficiency assessments such as those leading to employment or advancement (Glisan, Swender & Surface, 2013; Kissau, 2014; Fulcher, 2015). The 2018 research by the FSL-Labour Market Partnership (hereafter referred to as the Partnership) indicated that a significant proportion (~25 percent) of FSL teacher applicants fell short of French proficiency expectations.

1 In the context of this discussion, proficiency refers primarily to oral language proficiency, i.e., the degree of communication competency demonstrated through listening comprehension and interactive spoken language. Some school boards also assess French written language, but most boards identified oral proficiency as the component of language proficiency of greatest interest.

2 For the purpose of this discussion, the term *assessment tools* is used rather than *test* to describe the complex process of gathering information in order to judge language proficiency.

Follow-up research in 2020 by the Partnership shows that most Ontario school boards focus primarily on oral language when considering French proficiency of FSL teacher applicants. As such, it is important to consider questions about the specific nature of assessing oral language proficiency in the context of recruiting and hiring FSL teachers: why is oral language proficiency important for FSL teaching, what is involved in reliable assessment of oral language proficiency, and how can oral language proficiency assessment be practically incorporated into the recruitment and hiring processes school boards currently use?

The degree of French proficiency required by FSL teachers emerged as a concern in the 1990s, coinciding with the pan-Canadian expansion of FSL programs, particularly French Immersion, combined with early signs of FSL teacher shortages (Day & Shapson, 1996; Obadia & Martin, 1995). To facilitate the communicative approach to FSL teaching, teachers needed advanced levels of French-language proficiency (Flewelling, 1995; Swain, 1996). Determining what this 'advanced level' is has been frustrated by inconsistent French-language benchmarks across the country, and varying methodologies used to assess them (Veilleux & Bournot-Trites, 2005). By comparison, the field of second language proficiency in English has been empirically researched in many global contexts and can provide insight into related challenges and opportunities in efforts to establish proficiency standards and the language assessments inherent in that process (Medgyes, 1992; Bayliss & Vignola, 2007; Glissan, Swender & Surface, 2013).

Why is oral language proficiency important for FSL teaching?

On one hand, determining the level of proficiency needed for effective second language teaching is not straightforward (Faез, Karas, Uchihara, 2019), yet the importance of oral language proficiency in FSL teaching

seems self-evident. As Sullivan (2011) contends, "all can agree that the French teacher who cannot speak French will not be a successful teacher of French." (p. 241) Moreover, the widespread adoption of communicative pedagogy as an effective means to meet language proficiency goals articulated in second language curricula has underlined the need for FSL teachers to attain high levels of oral language proficiency. Such attainment in French allows FSL teachers to operationalize the same broad complement of teaching strategies for learning the French-language and/or subject content as those available to their colleagues teaching in English (Chambless, 2012). Moreover, FSL teachers are often the most immediate, if not the sole, model of French speech available to FSL students (Veilleux and Bournot-Trites, 2005) and thus expected to communicate as a competent user of French. Conversely, lower levels of French proficiency are likely to reduce teacher efficacy (Chambless, 2012), are believed to raise feelings of linguistic insecurity (Wernicke, 2020), and are known to reduce teachers' confidence in their teaching abilities (Bayliss & Vignola, 2007; Swanson, 2012). Language teacher organizations in the US (ACTFL, 2012) and Canada (CASLT, 2009) have published reports identifying the need for language teachers to demonstrate high levels of proficiency in the target language. Moreover, research with second language teacher candidates has also affirmed their desire to reach high levels of target language proficiency to best prepare them for work in second language teaching (Kissau, 2014; Bayliss & Vignola, 2007).

What is involved in reliable oral language assessment?

Despite claims in support of high levels of second language oral proficiency among second language teachers, the literature documents a number of conceptual and operational challenges in the process of assessing oral proficiency and the development of related assessment tools needed to ascertain desired levels of performance. One key challenge is the use of the term

proficiency (Iwashita, Brown, McNamara & O'Hagan, 2008) and its varied interpretations by researchers and the domino effect these variations create. Research on proficiency informs the development of assessment tools and rating scales, which in turn informs assessment tasks, which then influence second language learners, teachers and other stakeholders, and so on.

A large number of studies over time have examined the components thought to constitute oral language proficiency stemming from a number of factors including global demand for multilingual speakers and education accountability (Swender, 2003; Glisan, Swender & Surface, 2013). Adams (1980) used results from oral interview assessments to identify accent, comprehension, fluency, grammar and vocabulary as key sub-skills of oral proficiency. Higgs and Clifford (1982) studied how raters of second language proficiency (in this case, foreign language teachers) perceived the relative importance of various previously identified oral language sub-skills. Foreign language teachers determined vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency and sociolinguistic ability to be the most important components of oral proficiency. McNamara (1990) engaged trained language proficiency raters to judge the oral communicative effectiveness of more than 250 health professionals. While the list of important language components was similar to those identified in previous studies, McNamara's variance analyses indicated that "resources of grammar and expression" were the strongest factors in defining communicative effectiveness (p. 62). The above studies were based on ratings done with single samples of oral language; speakers were prompted to speak for sustained periods of time, and raters used each speaker's entire sample to rate a number of oral proficiency subskills, e.g., vocabulary and grammatical control.

Other studies have examined oral proficiency using a suite of tasks per speaker where raters focused on only one language component per task. For example, De Jong and Van Ginkel (1992) provided speakers with separate speaking tasks for pronunciation, sentence completion, picture description, communication strategy, and structured conversation. Once raters had rated each component skill separately, they generated an overall rating based on the complement of individual component ratings. Here the researchers noticed that some language components differentially affected overall ratings: pronunciation seemed to contribute more than other components to low overall ratings whereas all language components contributed equally when higher ratings were achieved. Using multiple tasks as well as holistic and analytic scoring, Iwashita, Brown, McNamara and O'Hagan (2008) also found that not all oral language components equally affect the overall impression of language proficiency when speaking. Their findings, along with those of De Jong and Van Ginkel (1992), Higgs and Clifford (1982) and others, reinforce the notion that not all components of oral language development play equal parts in evaluating proficient use of the language (De Jong, Steinel, Florijn, Schoonen & Hulstijn, 2012).

Apart from the studies summarized above, many others reveal the different ways in which oral language proficiency is conceptualized (see Sandlund, Sundquist & Nyroos, 2016 for a comprehensive review). These differences lead to variations in how oral language proficiency research is conducted and how findings are interpreted. These differences also lead to variation in the tasks developed to assess oral language proficiency, the tools used to rate performance, and the ways in which raters use these tools (see Fulcher, 2003, for a detailed schema showing the complex interplay between oral language components, raters, training, scale descriptors, tasks, test takers, and other variables).

What processes and tools are used to assess oral language proficiency?

Four key pillars support the typical process of assessing oral language proficiency: 1) construct definition, 2) rating scale development, 3) operationalization, and 4) validation (Fulcher, 2015). Briefly, rating scales stem from the oral language constructs being defined. For example, if vocabulary use is thought to be an important construct in oral language performance, then descriptions of vocabulary usage appear within the rating scale in increasing increments of proficiency. Analytic scales may display key constructs (e.g., vocabulary, fluency) separately, whereas holistic scales display a collection of constructs woven together within each level of achievement. Operationalization describes the routines required to complete the assessment, (e.g., number and nature of tasks, time allotments). Validation refers to the process of verifying that the assessment tasks consistently prompt speakers to demonstrate the oral language constructs being assessed. For example, a task requiring a short word definition oral response could yield a valid assessment of vocabulary knowledge but may not be a valid indicator of oral fluency.

Interviews have long been part of the oral proficiency assessment repertoire used for a range of purposes, including hiring (Swender, 2003). Typically, oral interviews provide a quasi-authentic platform for a speaker to demonstrate sufficient samples of oral language so that proficiency can be rated. Some interview protocols are standardized (e.g., the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) designed and made available through the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)), which is to say they follow a similar format and rating procedures wherever they are used. As expected, higher degrees of standardization lead to stronger levels of reliability and validity. However, not all interviews designed to elicit samples of oral language are standardized to the extent of the OPI³. Such interview protocols may show notable variation in any of the measurement of linguistic



components of the interview, (e.g., number and type of speaking prompts, number and training level of raters, sophistication of rating scales, degree of interaction between speaker and rater(s), predetermined benchmarks for decision-making, and the ultimate purpose of the interview) with subsequent reductions in reliability and validity. In the present study, interviews have been identified by Ontario school boards as the most frequently used format for assessing the French oral language proficiency of FSL teachers and, as such, warrant further discussion here.

Interviews provide an opportunity for prospective second language teachers to demonstrate their oral proficiency in the target language. Whether this opportunity takes place as part of the teacher certification process, or as a component of the job recruitment process, research provides some caveats for those conducting such interviews. Swender (2003) notes that companies/institutions conducting language proficiency assessments are increasingly choosing to separate this process from other elements of the recruitment/hiring process. For example, if a minimum proficiency level is required, Swender suggests using the oral proficiency assessment as a screening mechanism to determine if the candidate should proceed to the next step in the recruitment process. This separation affords advantages to the recruiter/rater and the speaker. First, it allows the recruiter to use language prompts about topics other than those related to the job in question. This, in turn, reduces the cognitive load for the speaker, invites increased interaction between the speaker and rater(s), and provides a more authentic oral language sample to be rated (Ross, 2017 – Ch. 2).

Similarly, for the speaker, open-ended speaking prompts on familiar topics generate a broad array of communicative skills, including socio-linguistic and strategic skills, all necessary for most job performance demands.

Kissau (2014) studied the use of the OPI with American teacher candidates to investigate the effects of OPI on select teacher education programs and workplace readiness. In approximately half the states in the US⁴, the OPI is the oral language proficiency tool used for foreign language teacher certification (Hammadou Sullivan, 2011; Malone & Montee, 2010). Over time, Kissau wanted to see if the expanded use of the OPI for teacher certification was having a negative impact on enrolment in foreign language teacher education programs, and how current teacher candidates perceived the use of the OPI as a gateway to employment. In short, Kissau found that the use of the OPI had no negative impact on enrolments in foreign language teacher education programs. Similarly, teacher candidates perceived the use of the OPI favourably, supporting the notion that teachers of foreign languages need to have advanced fluency (p. 535).⁵ Kissau's study suggests that a standardized tool can be successfully used to conduct oral proficiency assessments in large-scale, high-stakes contexts at the point of teacher certification.

Rating scales are inextricably linked to the practice of judging a multi-component construct that develops over time, such as language proficiency (Iwashita, Brown, McNamara, & O'Hagan, 2008). While researchers may generally agree on the range of language constructs used to inform rating scales, there is less agreement on

3 Critics of the OPI (Chalhoub-Deville & Fulcher, 2003; Liskin-Gasparro, 2003; Malone, 2003; Malone & Montee, 2010) cite issues with both reliability and validity based on the variation allowed in language prompts and inter-rater inconsistencies.

4 States not requiring certification based specifically on the OPI require alternative methods of oral proficiency assessment before granting certification to teachers of foreign/second languages.

5 Fifty-six percent of non-native speaking participants in the study achieved proficiency levels consistent with those deemed by ACTFL to be suitable for teachers of foreign languages in public schools (Advanced-Low to Advanced-Mid, roughly equivalent to B2.1 to B2.2 on the CEFR). The remaining participants scored just below the required minimum threshold and would be given an opportunity to be reassessed after 90 days.

the proficiency definitions described for each level along the continuum. Fulcher and Davidson (2007) argue that “definitions are written intuitively and may not characterize actual language use...” (p. 94). Historically, descriptions at the high end of rating scales have attempted to mirror “native-like proficiency,⁶” itself inexact and wide-ranging. More fine-grained analytic scales have developed over time in an effort to improve rating objectivity (Dogan & Uluman, 2017). Metruk (2018) assessed university students’ English oral language proficiency using both holistic and analytic rating scales. Results showed that scores obtained from analytic scales were significantly lower than those generated using holistic scales but cautioned that analytic scales may not necessarily provide a more accurate portrayal of speakers’ oral language proficiency. Both methods, he argues, rely on the interpretations by individual raters, and each method presents advantages and disadvantages related to practical application. The use of both analytic and holistic scales not only surfaces issues of reliability and validity, but also raises questions of rater knowledge and bias and their effects on the fairness of oral proficiency assessment, of particular concern in the case of high-stakes proficiency assessments. (Park, 2020).

Research findings are mixed on the degree to which various factors influence raters’ interpretations of rating scales or what these variations mean to the outcomes of oral language proficiency assessment. Douglas and Selinker (1992) found that raters working with the same language samples using the same scoring rubric arrived at similar scores but cited different reasons for their scoring. The authors speculated that such variations may stem from elements of the language sample not included in the rating scale but still perceived by the raters. The linguistic

background of raters has also been researched as a possible influence on raters’ variable scoring. Park (2020) reviewed a number of studies examining raters’ familiarity with language varieties (regional accents, vocabulary, etc.) and its possible impact on proficiency rating scores. Depending on the variable controls, studies with various second languages showed that accent familiarity between speaker and rater led to higher ratings (Carey, Mannel, & Dunn, 2011); led to higher scores but only among raters who had also learned the target language as a second language (Winke, Gass, & Myford, 2013); led to both higher (Hsieh, 2011) and lower ratings (Galloway, 1980) when the raters were second language teachers. Park’s own study (2020) found that native speakers rated target language speakers slightly more favourably than non-native raters but with complex data analysis, concluded no significant differences between the scoring of both groups of raters. Zhang and Elder (2011) also compared holistic ratings by native- and non-native speakers using speech samples from the same assessment. They found significant differences in the ways the two groups of raters justified their overall ratings of proficiency even though the final scores themselves showed little difference.

In summary, assessing oral proficiency is challenging on many fronts (Luoma, 2004; Chuang, 2009). Establishing reliability and validity is complicated by factors such as the language constructs included or excluded from an assessment, the multiple factors that impact raters’ objectivity, the time required when using analytic scales, and the predictability of any one language assessment on a speaker’s future ability to use language proficiently in various contexts.

Notwithstanding these challenges, interviews and rating scales remain commonly used tools in assessing oral

⁶ In this discussion, while the term “native” is used regularly in language proficiency research to express a degree, sometimes desired, of language proficiency, it is recognized that using the term “unreflectively is to engage in a gesture of othering that operates on an axis of empowerment and disempowerment” (Bonfiglio, 2013:29). The term “native” is used in this study while acknowledging uses in other contexts that privilege and oppress identified groups.

proficiency. Recent research, however, points to other assessment strategies that provide reliable insight into speakers' oral language proficiency minimizing the dependence on time-consuming and inescapably subjective interview ratings. Tremblay (2011) examined a range of tools used in a variety of contexts to rate speakers' proficiency in their second language. Included in her analysis was a review of tools used specifically in the assessment of second language (L2) speakers of French, including the practice of tallying the number of courses taken by a French learner, or the total number of years studying French-language as a proxy for L2 proficiency. Her review of 144 studies between 2000 and 2008 showed that this practice accounts for more than 50 percent of all language proficiency assessments conducted in second language acquisition research, including studies focusing on L2 French acquisition. Tremblay (2011) argues that the practice of relying on past L2 instruction (e.g., years of study) to predict L2 proficiency is risky given the range of circumstances surrounding the L2 instruction, such as the recency of instruction, whether or not the instruction was mandatory, or if the language learning occurred in an environment where the L2 was spoken at large.

Through rigorous comparison of cloze test scores with results from other established norm-referenced (e.g., Oxford Proficiency Test) and criterion-referenced (e.g., ACTFL) proficiency assessments, Tremblay's own study (2011) documents results of the use of thoughtfully constructed cloze tests (for details, see Tremblay and Garrison, 2010) as a reliable and valid predictor of oral language proficiency. Predictability scores were particularly strong with more proficient L2 speakers such as those requiring high levels of proficiency in various employment contexts. Recognizing that cloze tests are written and do not expose a number of oral language constructs such as accent or word stress, Tremblay recommends supplementing cloze test results

with tasks requiring speech, for example, a read-aloud task, or an opinion prompt, in order to complement the overall assessment of oral proficiency (p. 363). Tremblay's research introduces an alternative to current reliance on oral interviews as the primary measure of oral proficiency in contexts where time constraints and inter-rater reliability may be of concern.

In summary, the research on second language proficiency is vast, but narrows with the discussion on proficiency assessment, and considerably further as researchers explore second language proficiency assessment in teacher education and employment. In the early 1980s, both the construct of second language proficiency and its implications for teaching underwent an evolution in thinking away from mastery of oral and written grammar towards the multiple competencies of communication. As such, assessment of such competencies demanded greater attention to the combination of linguistic and sociolinguistic conventions that affect understanding. Language proficiency, therefore, has become a function of its use in context, and the assessment of it, arguably more subjective. To counter the effects of subjective assessment, especially in higher stakes contexts such as employability, researchers have explored the use of tools and procedures that provide authentic interactive assessment platforms (e.g., interviews) as well as evaluation strategies that maintain reliability and validity (e.g., rating scales). Language development continua (e.g., CEFR) are useful foundational tools in building assessment and evaluation tools as well as identifying next steps for second language learning and teaching. Given the prevalence and complexity of second language assessment, reliable tools and procedures are often time and resource consuming. Alternative assessment tools (e.g., Cloze tests) and technologies (e.g., virtual interactions) are the focus of recent research to gather meaningful language performance data in a resource-efficient manner (Isaacs, 2016).

Part B Current Study of French-Language Proficiency Assessments with FSL Teacher Applicants in Ontario

Methodology

In early 2020, all 60 English-language, publicly funded school boards were sent a survey requesting general information about their French-language proficiency assessment practices. The survey was intentionally short with a view to promote a strong response rate. It explored two key questions:

- ▶ Which French-language skills are assessed during the FSL teacher hiring process, what tools are used to gather and evaluate applicants' proficiency in French?
- ▶ Who conducts the assessments, how are they done, and at what stage in the hiring process?

To supplement the survey responses, school boards were also asked to provide examples of assessment documents used to gather and evaluate French-language

performance of FSL teacher applicants. Once surveys were returned, school boards were contacted for supplemental details as needed for clarification. Forty-four school boards responded to the survey providing a response rate of 73 percent and yielding a reasonable representation of current French-language assessment practices used when hiring FSL teachers in Ontario. Descriptive statistics were used to describe survey response frequencies and the incidence of various phenomena revealed during the analysis of supporting documents provided.

Which French-language skills are assessed during the FSL teacher hiring process?

Table 3 below represents results of the analysis of documents provided by school boards and follow-up correspondence.

Table 3 Percentage of school boards assessing various French-language skills when hiring FSL teachers

	Listening Comprehension	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Participating School Boards (N=44)	41%	84%	7%	48%

The vast majority of school boards reported conducting some type of assessment of oral (speaking) French proficiency when hiring FSL teachers. Of the school boards indicating they do not assess speaking skills, two boards require applicants to submit results of the DELF (Diplôme d'études en langue française) which includes an assessment of oral proficiency. The remaining four school boards indicated that all French proficiency assessments are conducted by individuals in schools and, therefore, these boards were not able to verify oral assessment details. School boards were also asked to provide samples of oral assessment tools used, e.g., prompts/questions used to initiate conversation, and rubrics used to judge proficiency. While 37 school boards provided samples of oral prompts/questions, only nine boards (24 percent) provided samples of evaluation rubrics used to guide

evaluation of oral proficiency. School boards that did not provide evaluation rubrics (76 percent) confirmed that their assessments of oral French are based on the holistic impressions of individuals conducting the assessments. It could not be confirmed whether or not these impressions were based on known language proficiency standards or were consistent one individual to the other.

Forty-eight percent of school boards also reported assessing applicants' French written language, with half the participating boards (22) providing samples of writing prompts. Based on the samples, a range of tools is used to assess writing proficiency. Most tools take the form of prompts for a short, written essay to be completed independently by the applicant during a fixed amount of time on topics related to teaching; one school board conducts a dictation with applicants in order to generate a writing sample; another board asks applicants to complete a cloze test⁷; while another board measures written language proficiency by means of a grammar and vocabulary test. School boards were also asked to provide samples of rubrics used to evaluate samples of written French. As with oral language proficiency assessment, relatively few school boards (7 of 22) provided such evaluation rubrics. Follow-up conversations with school

board personnel confirmed that in most cases, the evaluation of written proficiency in French is derived from the holistic impression of the evaluator.

Forty-one percent of participating school boards indicated they assess listening comprehension. With only one school board providing a sample of a listening comprehension assessment (a brief dictation plus a short literary text followed by multiple-choice comprehension questions), follow up conversations were arranged with boards who indicated listening comprehension was assessed but no documentation was provided. Almost all school boards concurred that in their view listening comprehension was a function of their performance when speaking – that an applicant's oral responses to questions would reflect their understanding of spoken French. While this association between listening comprehension and oral proficiency has merit, the data do not reflect a systematic approach to assessing listening comprehension or its role in FSL teacher hiring decisions.

Reading comprehension was the language skill least frequently assessed by participating school boards. Seven percent of school boards reported assessing reading comprehension while only one board provided a sample of their assessment (a short literary text followed by multiple-choice comprehension questions).

School boards were also asked to weigh the relative importance of various language proficiency assessments in their hiring of FSL teachers. By a large margin, oral language skills were considered more important than any other skills of language proficiency. This weighting corresponded to the large number of school boards conducting oral language assessments, and to the relatively large number of sample assessment tools

provided. However, the weighting of other language skills assessed did not correspond to the work undertaken by school boards to assess them. Listening comprehension, writing and reading were all weighted equally in importance whereas school boards overall make far greater efforts to assess written language than either reading or listening. This discrepancy can be accounted for in part by school boards choosing to indicate a weighting for oral language, then often providing lower but equal weightings for all other skills assessed. From a number of angles, however, the proficiency of oral language among FSL teacher applicants appears to be the most frequently assessed skill, and the one bearing the greatest influence in making hiring decisions.

Given the number of documents provided by school boards, there appears to be a genuine commitment to assessing oral and written French proficiency with FSL teacher applicants. Initial observations, however, showed considerable variation in the format, content, and complexity of tools used to determine an applicant's proficiency with oral and written French. As such, further analyses of school boards' assessment tools were conducted using the 37 samples of oral language assessment, and 22 samples of written language assessment, to look for similar or divergent understandings of language proficiency. The analyses centred on the following questions:

- ▶ How do school boards engage applicants in order to assess oral and written proficiency?
- ▶ What specific linguistic skills are assessed?
- ▶ How is the applicant's degree of oral and written language proficiency ultimately determined?

7 A written text where individual words or groups of words are strategically deleted depending on the construct being assessed. The goal for the test-taker is to fill in the missing pieces of text to re-create a syntactic and semantic approximation of the original.

Assessing Oral Language

Nearly all participating school boards (95 percent) confirmed that they assess an applicant's oral French during the job interview. Some school boards (18 percent) also include additional steps in assessing oral language either when recruiting FSL applicants (e.g., at job fairs); online or over the phone (14 percent), or following a job interview, either in person (11 percent) or online (7 percent). As expected during job interviews, 85 percent of school boards ask questions in French and applicants' responses (also in French) constitute the language sample upon which an evaluation of their oral language competence is based. What follows in Table 4 is an analysis of the questions asked during job interviews for FSL positions.

Table 4 Questions asked during French oral language assessment

Number of school boards	37 (of 44)
Mean no. of questions per interview	2.3
Range (min-max)	1-5
Question expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ to remember strategies and tools that support teaching in French ▶ to understand and apply strategies for instruction and communications in French ▶ to evaluate, analyze and create strategies for supporting parents and learners

As seen in Table 4, between two and three questions are asked in French, on average, during job interviews. The range in the number of questions is noteworthy ($sd = 9.09$) and indicates that some school boards ask very few questions while others ask many more. In two school boards, for example, most of the interview questions are asked in French. A similar range is noted in the types of questions. All questions were analysed for content themes and the themes categorized by level of cognitive demand. With only a small number of questions being asked on average per interview, it is likely that few interviews included questions covering the full range of cognitive demand⁸.

Oral question analysis showed that three of 37 school boards engage their FSL applicants in more general or familiar questions, for example, questions asking FSL teachers why they are interested in teaching French; how they have attained their current level of French-language proficiency; and asking FSL teachers about their post-secondary education. Kazemi & Zarei (2015) found that topic familiarity "makes statistically significant contributions to effective oral production" (p. 96). These questions were given in the form of oral and written prompts, and in turn FSL teachers were required to elaborate on them orally within a specific period of time.

The oral interview questions among the remaining 34 school boards generally ask questions of higher cognitive demand, for example, questions asking applicants to compare and contrast a number of teaching resources; to explain the use of a particular communication strategy with parents; or to design effective instruction for a range of different student needs. Dempster & Kirby (2018) used Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) to analyze university level examination questions. Their

⁸ In this context, *cognitive demand* refers to the relative difficulty of question types revised by Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001.

Assessing Written Language

analysis indicated that the cognitive demand for questions requiring one to remember is generally low whereas the cognitive demand for questions requiring analysis, evaluation or creative thinking is usually much higher. To optimize the interview time available, interview questions in French tended to explore topics of pedagogy (as did the questions asked in English), topics also requiring greater linguistic dexterity typically available only to highly competent second language (L2) speakers. Research by Ross (2017) suggests that L2 speakers' language production is adversely affected as the degree of cognitive demand increases in all but highly proficient speakers. Similarly, language proficiency scales such as the CEFR show increasing degrees of cognitive demand coincident with increasing degrees of proficiency. If cognitively demanding interview questions are used for the dual purpose of inquiring about an L2 speaker's knowledge of pedagogy as well as their oral language proficiency in French, it is possible that neither purpose is well served by this approach.

A similar process was used to analyse prompts used by school boards to assess applicants' writing in French with the results shown below in Table 5.

Table 5 Questions asked during French written language assessment

Number of school boards	22 (of 44)
Mean no. of questions per interview	1.1
Range (min-max)	1-3
Question expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ to remember facts and concepts around teaching French ▶ to understand classroom environment and needs ▶ to evaluate situations and creating solutions, e.g., conflict resolution

Overall, the lower rating of the importance of written language proficiency in French described earlier was borne out in the lower number of school boards providing samples of prompts used to assess written language (22 written language vs. 37 oral language). This trend was reinforced by the lower mean number and range of prompts used during interviews. Nonetheless, the prompts used seem to demonstrate a breadth of content and cognitive demand similar to that found in oral language assessments. The low mean number of prompts used, however, suggests that a teacher applicant would likely be asked to provide a written response to only one prompt which would serve as the sole sample of written French used to determine proficiency.

The content of writing question-prompts fell into three main clusters: prompts asking about fundamental

knowledge in FSL teaching; about sustaining student engagement, specifically through technology; and about conflict-resolution with parents and students. When analysed for the degree of cognitive demand, the prompts, while fewer in number, revealed the same spread found with oral language prompts/questions. Most frequently, school boards used writing prompts that were cognitively demanding and often based on hypothetical scenarios requiring the application of knowledge through creative problem-solving. However, three school boards opted for writing prompts on familiar, less pedagogy-centred topics, e.g., What would you do to prepare for this teaching assignment? When writing, applicants are often given much more time to respond than during the oral interview with as much as 30 minutes being allotted to provide a single-page written response. The degree to which the allotted time could possibly mitigate against cognitive demand was not a feature of this research. Additional time to respond in writing, however, does allow the writer to attempt improvements to style, vocabulary, morphology and syntax, potentially providing a more accurate representation of written language proficiency than the “in the moment” oral responses of the applicant.

Tools to Evaluate Applicants' Proficiency

In this study, a distinction has been drawn between the assessment and evaluation of French. Assessment refers to the processes used to gather samples of oral and written language from FSL teacher applicants; evaluation describes the means by which these samples are judged (Hattie & Brown, 2011) in order to inform hiring decisions. What follows is an analysis of tools and processes used by school boards to evaluate oral and written French proficiency, the specific linguistic skills being evaluated, and the role these evaluations play in hiring decisions.

School boards were asked to provide samples of evaluation tools used to rate applicants' oral and written language samples obtained during the hiring process. School boards were also asked to provide researchers with documents that would guide interviewers with hiring decisions based on language proficiency. Table 6 shows the number and percentage of school boards that provided such documentation.

Table 6 Documents provided for French proficiency evaluation and decision-making

	Participating School Boards (N = 44)
# of Scoring Rubrics	9 (20%) Oral only = 2; Oral & Written = 7
# of Benchmarks & Guidelines for Hiring	8 (18%)

It is important to note that a few school boards provided scoring rubrics used to evaluate the content of applicants' responses to interview questions, some of which are often

asked in French. These rubrics are not counted in the table above as they are designed to evaluate pedagogical knowledge rather than language proficiency. A small number of school boards that did not provide language proficiency rubrics reported they rely on proxy methods to evaluate applicants' French. For example, two school boards rely on results of the DELF; three boards rely on varying levels of FSL qualifications (or equivalent) granted by the Ontario College of Teachers⁹. The majority of school boards (82 percent), however, reported evaluating applicants' oral and written proficiency in French holistically without reference to proficiency standards leaving French-speaking interviewer(s) to make independent evaluations based on their general impressions of the applicant's French skills. As such, it is not possible in this context to determine which language skills underpin most school boards' definition of proficiency.

Nonetheless, the language scoring rubrics used by the nine school boards in Table 7 provide some insight into which language skills inform their understanding of proficiency and its perceived value in FSL teaching. These rubrics are analytical in nature where various traits of oral and/or written language are pre-determined and provide the proficiency framework against which the applicants' language is rated. The use of analytic scales allows interviewers to pinpoint language strengths and weaknesses, improve rating objectivity (Dogan & Uluman, 2017) and provide a mechanism for more consistent ratings where proficiency assessments are carried out by multiple interviewers working independently. When shared, language proficiency ratings can also be used to inform teacher applicants' plans to improve their language development as needed. Table 7 below describes the specific language skills captured in these school boards' scoring rubrics.

⁹ The Ontario College of Teachers does not stipulate French-language proficiency requirements in order to grant Additional Qualifications in FSL.

Table 7 French-language skills evaluated in school boards using analytic rubrics

	Language Skills/Traits Identified
<p>School Board 1</p>	<p>A five-point scale is used to rate applicants on the traits below. Each rating is a cluster of traits rather than each trait evaluated separately. No additional trait descriptors are provided. Note: oral language evaluation is based on performance on two separate tasks (telephone screener conversation; interview)</p> <p>Oral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Listening Comprehension ▶ Organization of ideas ▶ Vocabulary use – specifically word choice, vocabulary range, absence of anglicisms ▶ Grammar and Syntax ▶ Fluency and Spontaneity <p>Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Grammar ▶ Vocabulary use
<p>School Board 2</p>	<p>A five-point scale is used to rate applicants on the traits below; traits rated separately. Note: written language evaluation is based on performance on two separate tasks (short essay and Cloze test).</p> <p>Oral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Communication (Vocabulary, Grammatical Structure) – rated on error frequency and type ▶ Communication (Fluency, Intonation and Expressiveness) – rated on perceived ease of expression, appropriate intonation ▶ Organization (clarity, logic, examples) – rated on ability to articulate main ideas and provide supporting examples <p>Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Communication (Vocabulary and Grammatical Structure) - rated on perceived vocabulary range, complexity of sentence structures, number and frequency of errors and their impact on comprehensibility ▶ Communication (Punctuation, Capitalization and Spelling) – rated on spelling accuracy (includes verb and adjective agreements), control of punctuation conventions, impact on comprehensibility ▶ Organization (Clarity, Logic and Fluidity) – rated on distinction between main and supporting ideas, clarity of examples to illustrate key points.

	Language Skills/Traits Identified
<p>School Board 3</p>	<p>A four-point scale is used to rate applicants using the traits below. Each rating is a cluster of traits rather than each trait evaluated separately.</p> <p>Oral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Quality of Spoken French – rated on accuracy of pronunciation, vocabulary range and accuracy; correct use of sentence structure; grammatical accuracy especially prepositions, agreements, gender; absence of anglicisms ▶ Oral Communication Skills – rated on clarity of thoughts, ease of expression, logical organization when speaking, pace of speaking <p>Writing:</p> <p>A four-point scale is used to evaluate written language using the following traits rated individually.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Vocabulary – holistic rating basic to sophisticated ▶ Grammar – rated on number of errors in verb conjugations, adjective agreements, use of gender, plurals ▶ Syntax – rated on sentence structure ▶ Punctuation – rated on number of errors ▶ Organization – rated on clarity of ideas
<p>School Board 4</p>	<p>A five-point scale is used to rate applicants on the traits below; traits rated separately.</p> <p>Oral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Comprehension – rated on perceived understanding of interview questions indicated by degree of detail in the responses ▶ Pronunciation ▶ Grammar ▶ Vocabulary ▶ Fluency <p>Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ No rubric used for evaluating written language – evaluation based on holistic impression of applicant's response
<p>School Board 5</p>	<p>A seven-point scale is used to rate applicants on the traits below. Ratings fall into three distinct categories. Each rating category represents a cluster of traits rather than each trait evaluated separately. Not all traits appear in each cluster.</p> <p>Oral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Vocabulary and Grammar – rated on degree of proper use ▶ Vocabulary specific to pedagogy – rated on perceived ease of communication using pedagogy-specific language ▶ Fluency – rated on number/length of pauses in communication; use of anglicized language, ready access to appropriate vocabulary range <p>Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Vocabulary and Grammar – rated on error type and frequency with specific attention to verb conjugation that impact communication ▶ Syntax range – rated on perceived degree of language sophistication ▶ Overall communication – rated on perceived communication effectiveness to the reader

	Language Skills/Traits Identified
<p>School Board 6</p>	<p>A four-point scale is used to rate applicants using the traits below. Each rating is a cluster of traits rather than each trait evaluated separately.</p> <p>Oral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Expressiveness – rated on degree of expressiveness that aids understanding ▶ Articulation/pronunciation – rated on use of standard pronunciation ▶ Fluency – rated on degree of speaker hesitation <p>Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ No rubric used for evaluating written language – evaluation based on holistic impression of applicant’s response.
<p>School Board 7</p>	<p>A five-point scale is used to rate applicants on the traits below; traits rated separately. Oral language evaluation is based on performance on three separate tasks (role play, monologue and responses to questions).</p> <p>Oral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Engagement – rated on speaker’s ability to engage in conversation ▶ Coherence – rated on the speaker’s ability to stay on topic, provide examples, and respond appropriately to questions ▶ Vocabulary – rated on range and accuracy of vocabulary used appropriate to the context ▶ Syntax – rated on degree of appropriate use of sentence structure, accurate use of grammatical conventions ▶ Fluency and Expression – rated on degree of speech clarity, pace and expressiveness <p>Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Vocabulary – rated on range and accuracy of vocabulary used appropriate to the context ▶ Syntax – rated on degree of appropriate use of sentence structure, accurate use of grammatical conventions ▶ Coherence – rated on logical structure of writing to aid understanding ▶ Clarity and Precision – rated on writer’s ability to stay on topic and provide brief, relevant examples
<p>School Board 8</p>	<p>Rubrics based on series of “I can” statements categorized to distinguish applicant suitability for Core French or French Immersion. Language evaluation traits include:</p> <p>Oral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Fluency – rated on perceived ease of speaking, knowledge of vocabulary and syntax, pronunciation ▶ Language register – rated on appropriate use of language in various contexts ▶ Vocabulary – rated on appropriate use of language to express opinions with clarity ▶ Engagement – rated on speaker’s ability to engage in conversation <p>Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Clarity – rated on use of language to express ideas clearly in various contexts ▶ Syntax – rated on use of written language conventions, especially grammar

	Language Skills/Traits Identified
<p>School Board 9</p>	<p>A three-point scale is used to rate applicants on the traits below. Traits are rated separately.</p> <p>Oral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Pronunciation – rated on frequency of errors ▶ Grammar – rated on degree of control and range of syntactical structures in use ▶ Vocabulary – rated on range of vocabulary used and contextual appropriateness ▶ Fluency – rated on degree of hesitancy ▶ Comprehension – rated on perceived degree of understanding of oral questions <p>Writing (based on the CEFR Global Scales):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Cohesion ▶ Precision

The analytic rubrics above identify several similar language traits. For example, in oral language, fluency (or pace) and vocabulary appear as stand-alone traits in all nine rubrics with grammar/syntax identified in five out of nine. The remaining oral language traits identified are less discrete and include engagement, register, coherence, pronunciation, expressiveness, and organization of ideas, some of which overlap with each other based on the descriptions provided. With written language, syntax and vocabulary (or descriptions of same) appear in all seven rubrics provided, followed by a range of interrelated traits referring to clarity of expression, organization of ideas, and language conventions. These rubrics provide a reasonable depiction of how language proficiency is understood within each of these nine school boards and a mechanism for that understanding to be operationalized by various interviewers during the process of assessing oral and written language proficiency when hiring FSL teachers.

Decision-Making

As noted in Table 7, nine of 44 school boards submitted documents that provided guidelines followed to make hiring recommendations based on the outcomes of French proficiency assessments. Each of these school boards uses analytic scales for rating oral (and usually) written French of FSL teacher applicants. Five of these nine boards rely on their language evaluations to inform hiring recommendations specific to different FSL program types, namely Core French or French Immersion.

Generally, the outcomes of the language evaluations identify performance distinctions used to determine the applicant's readiness to teach either Core French or French Immersion. One school board uses language ratings to further distinguish between elementary and secondary teaching with secondary French Immersion requiring the higher language proficiency ratings. The three remaining boards using rating scales do not provide specific hiring benchmarks based on language proficiency ratings. Instead, these decisions are left to individual hiring teams to make a holistic judgement in order to match the applicant's language proficiency with the FSL program types under consideration. In all nine school boards, language proficiency ratings constitute only a portion of the information used to recommend a teacher for hire; understandably, many factors contribute to such decisions apart from the applicant's language proficiency in French. Only one school board quantifies the value of the French proficiency rating in the overall hiring decision process (30 percent). Finally, two school boards reported using language proficiency ratings from the DELF to guide hiring decisions. In one case, a DELF score of B1 is required for any FSL teaching position; in the other case, B1 is the minimum benchmark for teaching Core FSL, whereas C1 is the minimum threshold for being considered for a French Immersion position.

Who Conducts the Assessments, How is it Done, and at What Stage in the Hiring Process?

Apart from details regarding the language proficiency assessments used, school boards were asked to provide information about related contextual factors.

These factors included the personnel conducting the assessments, and the circumstances surrounding the assessments are captured in Table 8 below.

Table 8 Contextual factors in French proficiency assessments (participating school boards N=44)

Personnel Conducting Assessments	Teams¹ of Principals² hiring for board	Teams¹ of Principals² hiring for own school	Individual principals³ hiring for board	Individual principals³ hiring for own school	Non French-speaking teams or individual principals
	77%	41%	32%	23%	7%
Assessment Settings⁴	In person screening during job fairs	Online or phone screening prior to interview	During job interview	In person after job interview	Online or phone after job interview
	18%	14%	95%	11%	7%

1 includes at least one French-speaking Principal

2 includes Vice Principals. In two boards, FSL consultative staff participate in interviews

3 French-speaking

4 several boards' language assessments are conducted in more than one setting

From school boards' responses, two key trends emerge: most (77 percent) French-language proficiency assessment is conducted by teams of principals and vice principals that include a French speaker engaged in selecting prospective FSL teachers for jobs throughout the school board; and most (95 percent) of the assessment takes place during a job interview. Including a French-

speaker is also consistent on school-based interview teams where language assessment takes place. The small number of school boards who do not include a French-speaker when hiring FSL teachers (7 percent) roughly corresponds to the proportion of school boards (5 percent) that rely on proficiency ratings of external assessment results such as the DELF when hiring FSL teachers.

Summary of Findings

Forty-four of 60 English-language, publicly funded Ontario school boards responded to a survey seeking information about the French-language proficiency assessments used during the recruitment and hiring of FSL teachers. In addition to survey responses, school boards were asked to provide assessment and evaluation tools, hiring guidelines, and procedures to contextualize the language proficiency assessment processes they use. Combined, these data were analyzed to identify common and unique assessment practices which in turn, served to illustrate how language proficiency in French is understood in various school boards. In this study, the analyses distinguished between assessment (tools and procedures to gather language samples) and evaluation (tools and procedures to make judgments about language performance).

By a notable margin, most school boards (84 percent) reported that speaking is the French-language skill most often assessed, followed by writing (48 percent). This pattern corresponds to school boards' ratings of the perceived importance of these particular language skills when hiring FSL teachers, and by the relative number of assessment documents provided (37 of 44 school boards provided samples of oral language assessments; 22 of 44 provided samples of written language assessments). While some boards initially indicated other language skills (reading and listening) were important and were assessed when hiring FSL teachers, the number of assessment documents provided, and follow-up correspondence for clarification, did not support this claim.

Almost all school boards (95 percent) reported conducting language proficiency assessments during job interviews. Document analysis of the interview questions and prompts used to elicit samples of oral and written French-language from teacher applicants was conducted in an effort to examine similarities or differences between school boards' practices. On average, job interviews for

FSL teachers include two or three questions in French with the responses used to evaluate the applicant's oral language proficiency. However, some school boards ask as few as one question while others ask as many as five. The content of the French interview questions ranges from the familiar (low cognitive demand) to pedagogical knowledge in practice (high cognitive demand) with many more school boards (34 of 37) asking questions of high cognitive demand. In assessing written French, half the participating school boards provided samples of writing assessments. On average, FSL teachers applying to these boards are asked to respond to only one writing prompt. That said, the range of cognitive demand of written questions provided is similar to that of oral questions but with so few questions asked, it is not possible to generalize the level of question prompts that any single school board might use to assess writing proficiency.

When evaluating applicants' French-language proficiency, two strong patterns emerged from school board data: proficiency evaluation is conducted during the job interview and is most often done holistically, with analytic rubrics used infrequently. Almost all school boards (95 percent) reported evaluating oral and written proficiency during the job interview itself, with very few boards separating language proficiency evaluation from the interview process itself. Similarly, 80 percent of school boards reported evaluating applicants' oral and/or language proficiency holistically based on the evaluator's (usually one French-speaking principal or vice-principal) general impression of an applicant's performance during the interview. For most school boards reporting, therefore, it is not possible to know which components of language proficiency are considered most salient.

Nine school boards, however, evaluate applicants' language proficiency using analytic rubrics where specific language traits are identified and scored on a continuum. Analysis of these rubrics made it obvious

Connecting Second Language Proficiency Assessment Research with School Boards' Current Assessment Practices – Present Opportunities

which language skills were most important in these school boards and point to how French proficiency is understood. For example, fluency and vocabulary appeared as evaluation criteria on all oral language rubrics provided with engagement, register, coherence, pronunciation, expressiveness, and organization of ideas appearing in various combinations throughout the rubrics. Similarly, syntax and vocabulary (or descriptions of same) appear in all written language rubrics, followed by combinations of clarity of expression, organization of ideas, and language conventions. Eight of the nine school boards that use rubrics to evaluate language proficiency also provided scoring guidelines to inform hiring decision-making. Most guidelines describe applicants' perceived suitability for Core French and French Immersion programs; in one school board, scoring guidelines further distinguish between applicants' suitability for elementary or secondary FSL programs. Some scoring guidelines provided identified the weighting of language proficiency performance scores relative to the applicants' overall hiring package (interview, references, performance evaluations, etc.). In no cases did an applicant's language proficiency results account for more than 30 percent of their application.

Balancing the process of credibly measuring language proficiency with the resources required to obtain those measures has been identified in the literature as a key consideration in the second language assessment particularly in high-stakes contexts such as FSL teacher hiring. As seen in this study, holistic language proficiency assessment is a prevalent strategy in Ontario school boards. While holistic assessment left to individual hiring teams/individuals may be a time-saver, particularly when integrated within the job interview process, it draws questions about the reliability of the assessment outcomes and how consistently those outcomes serve as standards to be maintained with a school board.

Analytic rating scales, however, provide greater reliability in assessment outcomes, especially when grounded in evidence-informed language developmental continua, and when raters have training opportunities in order to compare ratings. Furthermore, the benefit of analytic scales is optimized when language prompts are varied and closely resemble the level and type of language germane to the teaching role. Such sampling of language performance may be difficult to achieve within typical job interview settings. To this end, a small number of school boards have moved to language assessment protocols that include opportunities before or after job interviews, or the use of interactive technologies that allow evaluators to review varied oral and/or written language samples outside the constraints of a time-bound job interview.

One additional advantage of analytic scales to evaluate language proficiency is the potential information they provide for applicant feedback for both school boards and FSL teacher applicants. At a minimum, assessment

results can be shared with FSL teacher applicants, hired or not, to pinpoint areas of needed growth for FSL teaching. Given the number of FSL applicants previously reported as falling short of expected French-language proficiency, precise language improvement goals could ready some applicants to meet hiring expectations within a relatively short time frame. Finally, aggregated assessment results can identify areas of needed growth in French-language proficiency that boards can draw on to inform professional learning for newly hired FSL teachers.

Next Steps

This study emerged from the 2018 Phase I Report of the FSL-Labour Market Partnership Project. At that time, Ontario school boards reported that approximately 25 percent of FSL teacher applicants fell short of individual boards' French proficiency expectations. The Phase I report also indicated that FSL teacher applicants found the inconsistency of French proficiency assessment practices between school boards to be problematic during the job application process. The current study reveals that while most school boards seek high levels of French-language proficiency among prospective FSL teachers, the range of assessment approaches showed inconsistencies in how boards conceptualize *language proficiency* and, therefore, are able to make reliable judgments about applicants' levels of French proficiency. It must also be noted, however, that assessment reliability is intrinsically linked to assessment validity (O'Mahony, 2019), and that efforts to improve the reliability of assessment practices should invite a review of the validity of the assessment itself. It was not within the scope of the current study to investigate the validity of participating school boards' assessment tools.

Nonetheless, with the evidence and analysis provided in the present research, there may be collaborative opportunities for school boards to review their French proficiency assessment practices from a number of perspectives: achieving greater consistency in French proficiency assessment and evaluation of FSL teacher applicants within their board; developing more reliable assessment and evaluation tools and procedures; using language proficiency results to provide feedback to applicants; establishing consistent hiring guidelines, and using language assessment outcomes to inform professional learning for new FSL teachers, including occasional teachers, as needed.

Ontario school boards are not alone in facing the challenge of recruiting sufficient numbers of FSL teachers whose French-language proficiency meets the requirements of their role. The question of French-language proficiency assessment and its relation to the recruitment of FSL teachers is currently being investigated nationally through the federal FSL Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy. The Strategy will extend the research described in the current study to include school districts and faculties of education across Canada with a view to identify and share effective solutions in response to the growing interest in bilingual education in all regions of the country.

Part C Current Study of French-Language Proficiency Assessments in Faculties of Education with Prospective FSL Teachers

Background, Scope, Rationale and Study Design

In addition to gathering French-language proficiency assessment data from Ontario school boards, the Partnership also recommended in 2018 that similar data be collected from faculties of education. Both sets of data would provide a broad-scale overview of the language proficiency assessment protocols used at two key junctures in becoming an FSL teacher: admission into professional teacher education and entry into the job market. With the cooperation of the Ontario Association of Deans of Education, a survey was circulated to each of the 13 faculties of education in Ontario. Ten faculties of education provided responses regarding initial teacher education and 11 faculties responded regarding additional qualifications programs (one faculty does not offer FSL initial teacher education; two faculties did not respond to the survey). Supplementary data were obtained from university websites as required.

In Ontario, FSL teachers are required to hold specific qualifications in FSL pedagogy. These requirements are described in Ontario Regulation 176/10 and form the basis of FSL qualification programs offered in Ontario faculties of education in order to be recognized by the Ontario College of Teachers. FSL qualifications may be earned either during teacher candidates' initial teacher education program, or after graduation from an initial

teacher education program as additional qualifications (AQs). As such, the survey was designed to capture the French-language proficiency assessment processes used in both qualification pathways.

French-Language Proficiency Assessment – Initial Teacher Education Programs

The survey asked faculties to report on the language proficiency assessment tools and processes used to admit teacher candidates into their FSL teacher education programs, and processes and tools used as graduation requirements, if any. Initially, the survey analysis revealed considerable variation across the 10 participating faculties, but some patterns in assessment protocols emerged upon further analysis. Table 9 below provides an overview of the initial teacher education assessment protocols reported, and their frequency of use by various faculties of education.

Table 9 French proficiency assessment protocols: Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

Assessment Protocol	Admission Requirements	Variations	Frequency of Use ¹
Credit/Course Accumulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 12 to 36 university credits (2 to 6 full courses) in French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Limits on number of courses in Translation or 1st year level French ▶ If fewer than # required courses, applicant must pass oral & written test 	9
Externally Developed Assessment or Certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Results on the DELF ▶ Results on TESTCan ▶ Results on Government of Canada Test of Language Proficiency used in the public service ▶ University Certificate of Bilingualism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Required DELF level usually higher for students completing practicum requirements in French Immersion (C1) versus = Core French contexts (B2) 	4
Internally Developed Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Results on university-developed admissions test including evaluation of proficiency in oral interaction and written language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ success based on a specific grade ▶ success based on performance evaluated against an analytic rubric 	5
Range of Assessment Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Admission based on any one of the requirements above 		4

1 Totals equal more than the number of faculties reporting (n = 10) as some faculties use more than one type of assessment protocol.

The most commonly used French-language proficiency assessment protocol used to admit students into initial teacher education programs is to consider previous French studies, typically the accumulation of university-level courses (e.g., courses in French language and literature, or content courses taken in French such as sociologie, biologie, etc.) taken in French prior to admission into consecutive teacher education programs, or as required courses to be taken during concurrent teacher education programs. In some cases, faculties limit the type of French-language courses that will be considered (e.g., translation courses). In one case, a faculty reported that if a student does not meet the prerequisite course count, they can substitute the missing course by successfully completing a proficiency test. Faculties also look to a range of language proficiency tests to make admission decisions. Of these, approximately half are external tests authenticated by outside organizations (e.g., the DELF, TESTCan) while approximately half are designed by the university itself. Website details about respective university-designed tests vary by university ranging from information that a test is part of the admissions

process to information about test components, criteria for evaluation and tips to help students prepare for the tests. In most cases, additional fees for students apply to external proficiency tests but not to internal tests. One faculty listed a range of acceptable assessment options for students including either course accumulation, or results on an external test, or results on a university-designed test.

Three faculties of education reported implementing an additional French-language proficiency assessment as a graduation requirement for FSL teacher candidates. In one case, the faculty uses credit accumulation for admission purposes, but requires successful completion of their internal proficiency assessment for graduation. Another faculty, using a multi-step admissions proficiency test, requires FSL teacher candidates to successfully complete a course on writing skills used to effectively teach French prior to graduation. One faculty noted that FSL students require a higher passing grade in their FSL pedagogy course(s) than for other courses in their initial teacher education program which could be interpreted as a proxy graduation requirement.

French-Language Proficiency Assessment – Faculty of Education FSL Additional Qualifications Programs

With regard to admission into FSL Additional Qualification programs offered by faculties of education, the survey also asked about differences in the language proficiency assessment protocols by FSL teacher education program (e.g., primary vs. secondary), the language of instruction,

and any undergraduate pre-requisites. All 13 Ontario faculties of education offer additional qualification programs in FSL; 11 of these responded to the survey with results summarized in Table 10 below.

Table 10 French proficiency assessment protocols: Faculty of Education FSL additional qualifications programs

Assessment Protocol	Admission Requirements	Variations	Frequency of Use ¹
Credit/Course Accumulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Major or Minor in French ▶ 12 to 36 university credits (two full courses) in French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Francophone secondary school graduation diploma ▶ Degree from Francophone university ▶ Credit requirement may vary by division 	6
Externally Developed Assessment or Certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Results on the DELF (usually B2 with 70%) ▶ Results on TESTCan ▶ University-issued Certificate of Bilingualism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Exemption with proof of degree from Francophone university 	5
Internally Developed Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Results on university-developed admissions test including evaluation of proficiency in oral interaction and written language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Success based on a specific grade ▶ Success based on performance evaluated against an analytic rubric ▶ Exemption with proof of undergraduate degree en francais² 	10
Range of Assessment Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Admission based on any one of the requirements above 		4
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Self-assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Declaration of French proficiency 	1

¹ Totals equal more than the number of faculties reporting (n = 11) as some faculties use more than one type of assessment protocol

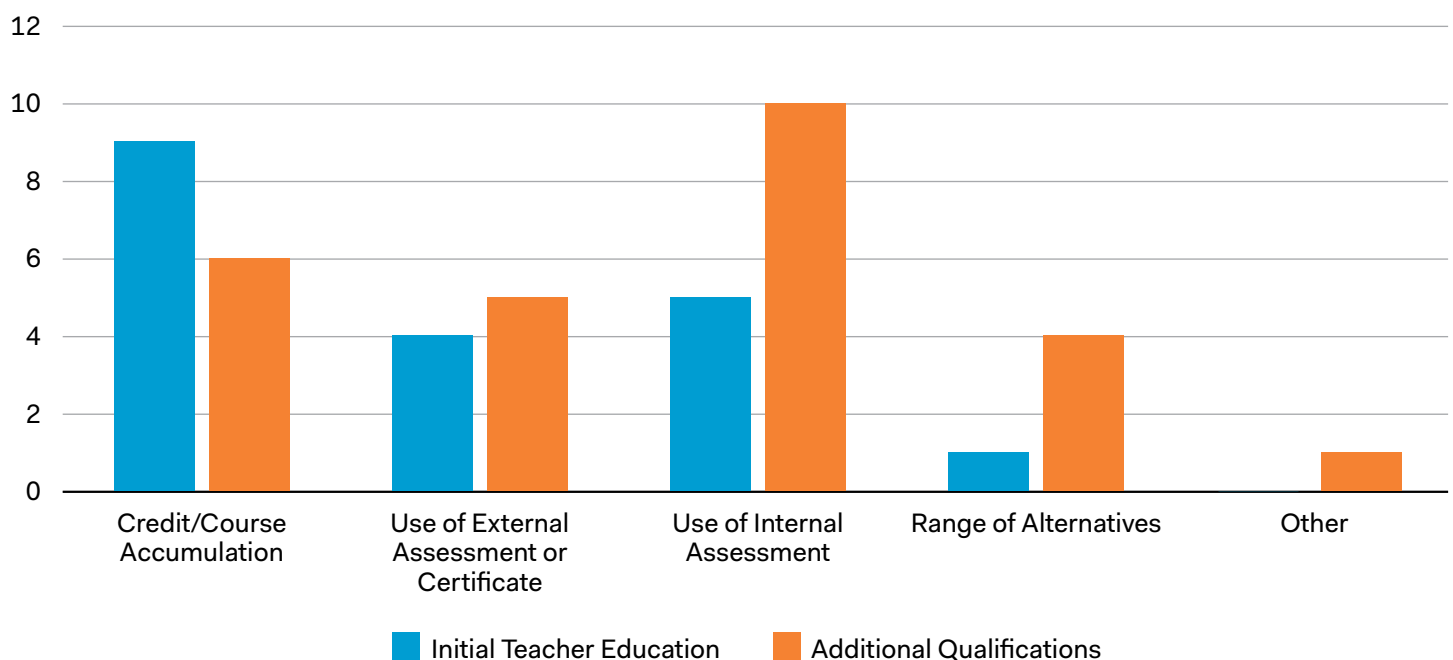
² *en francais* indicates all courses were taken in French; not the same as a degree with a Major or Minor in French

Summary of Findings

While the range of proficiency assessment protocols used in FSL additional qualifications programs is similar to that used in initial teacher education, faculties appear to consider a variety of assessment types within this range for making admission decisions. Further analysis showed that the same assessment protocol used by a faculty for FSL ITE admission was often used for admitting teachers into their FSL additional qualifications programs. Overall, almost all faculties use internally designed assessments for admission to FSL AQ programs, followed by credit accumulation and results from external proficiency tests, to determine applicants' French-language proficiency. One faculty asks FSL AQ applicants to declare their French-language proficiency to be sufficient to fulfill the requirements needed for FSL teaching with a caution that an inaccurate self-assessment may lead to unsatisfactory completion of the program.

Figure 2 compares the number of French-language proficiency assessment protocols used by faculties of education for purposes of admission into FSL initial teacher education and FSL additional qualification programs.

Figure 2 French proficiency assessment protocols: Faculty of Education FSL additional qualifications programs



The most commonly used protocols across both program types involve a review of students' accumulated coursework in French and the use of an internally designed French-language proficiency test. Faculties typically rely on a single assessment protocol for ITE admissions but consider results from a range of alternate assessments when considering applications for FSL AQ programs. Specific information about internally designed tests is not readily available on most faculty websites, however two faculties include information about their tests' components, how results are weighted, scoring criteria, and tips to help students prepare for the test. In some faculties, students may be exempt from internal assessments if they can provide evidence of advanced French-language proficiency as indicated through results on an external assessment such as the DELF, or through formal education at a francophone university. Unique to two faculties is the range of alternative assessment protocols used for ITE admission, and to one faculty, the declaration of French proficiency consistent with the language expectations needed in FSL teaching.

Connecting Second Language Proficiency Assessment Research with Education Faculties' Current Assessment Practices – Present Opportunities

Some comparisons can be drawn between the language proficiency assessment protocols used by faculties of education and those used in school boards that raise similar questions and may invite similar reflection. As with school boards, the use of internally developed

French-language assessment protocols by faculties of education raise questions of inter-rater reliability that appear in language testing (Roca-Varela & Palacios, 2013; Park, 2020). While some faculties evaluate French proficiency directly using internally or externally developed tests, others rely on assessments that provide inferred measures of French-language proficiency (course history). These differences may point to different interpretations of the underlying constructs related to language proficiency. In most cases, few test details are publicly available (such as format, skill focus, evaluation criteria) and gathering this information was not sought through the survey. Further analysis of French proficiency test documents, as well as details regarding test administration, evaluator training, and evaluation criteria, would be required to comment about validity and/or reliability.

One assessment protocol used widely in Ontario faculties of education but not by school boards was the program applicant's university credit or course history in French. While more prevalent in admitting students into initial education programs than in additional qualification programs, credit or course tallies were used to indirectly assess applicants' language proficiency in French and therefore, predict in some measure their suitability for FSL teaching. The range of credit counts ranged from a low of 12 credits (two full university courses) to a high of 36 credits (six full courses). In some cases, faculties identified restrictions on which courses could be considered in this count – typically courses in French language (beyond first year level), French culture, French literature, and in some cases (bilingual universities only), courses in any discipline taught in French. Two faculties also limited the number of translation courses that could be included in the course tally. Tremblay (2011) identified notable risks in the practice of using previous study in French as a proxy for French-language proficiency, the principal risk being the range of learning expectations associated with various French courses. It is reasonable to suggest that

even an advanced course in French literature may require skill strength in reading and writing but may not include opportunities that support the development of skillful oral interaction. Conversely, language learning experiences that foster authentic French-language development (e.g., immersion experiences in Francophone environments) may be discounted in protocols that focus exclusively on a student's record of accumulated coursework in French.

For both school boards and faculties of education, it is important to find a balance between the task of assessing French-language proficiency with the resources available to do so in order to satisfy their respective assessment goals. More common for admission to FSL additional

qualification than initial teacher education programs, faculties of education provide prospective students with a range of assessment alternatives to make admission decisions. While it is not clear if these assessment alternatives yield equivalent results, faculties offering these alternatives are well positioned to compare the several language assessment protocols used to obtain a snapshot of applicants' French proficiency and suitability of admission.



Part D Summary and Next Steps – French-Language Proficiency Assessment Practices in School Boards and Faculties of Education

All those engaged in language proficiency assessment are responsible for its development, interpretation and use in high-stakes decision-making (Carlsen, Deygers, Zeidler & Vilcu, 2019; Glisan, Swender & Surface, 2013; Kissau, 2014, Fulcher, 2015). Currently in Ontario, school boards and faculties of education employ a range of assessment protocols to make decisions about the French-language proficiency of future FSL teachers. Previous research as described and summarized from the literature identifies both promising and challenging assessment

practices, practices which currently form the basis of French-language assessments at two key points in the early career paths of FSL teachers – teacher education and employment. The assessment of French-language proficiency has been highlighted at a time when school boards face ongoing challenges in attracting sufficient numbers of FSL teacher candidates to meet the growing demand (Arnott & Vignola, 2018).

Collaborative opportunities exist for both school boards and faculties of education to reflect on current French-language proficiency assessment protocols with a view to use past and emerging research to strengthen existing practices while capitalizing on available resources and collective expertise that ultimately optimize the utility of these protocols and set the stage for ongoing support for FSL teachers at various stages in their careers.

Section 3

Recommendations into Action Regarding Education Workers in FSL Contexts



Section 3: Recommendations into Action Regarding Education Workers in FSL Contexts

In Phase II, the Partnership made three recommendations based on its own research into the realities of education workers working in FSL contexts. It was recommended that:

1. education workers be provided with professional learning opportunities germane to supporting students in FSL programs, where possible;
2. school boards consider adjustments to their recruitment and hiring procedures for education workers to include inquiries about applicants' ability to speak French;
3. education workers' ability to speak French becomes a consideration when assigning EWs to work in FSL programs.

To reinforce previous communication with Partnership members about the above recommendations, it was determined that an additional communication strategy be developed to share Recommendations 2 and 3 with school boards to invite discussion about the content of the recommendations and to plan accordingly based on local contexts.

For Recommendation 1, calls for pilot project proposals were circulated that encouraged applicants to extend professional learning opportunities to education workers who support FSL programs directly. The Partnership supported the following pilot projects that specifically included professional development for education workers:

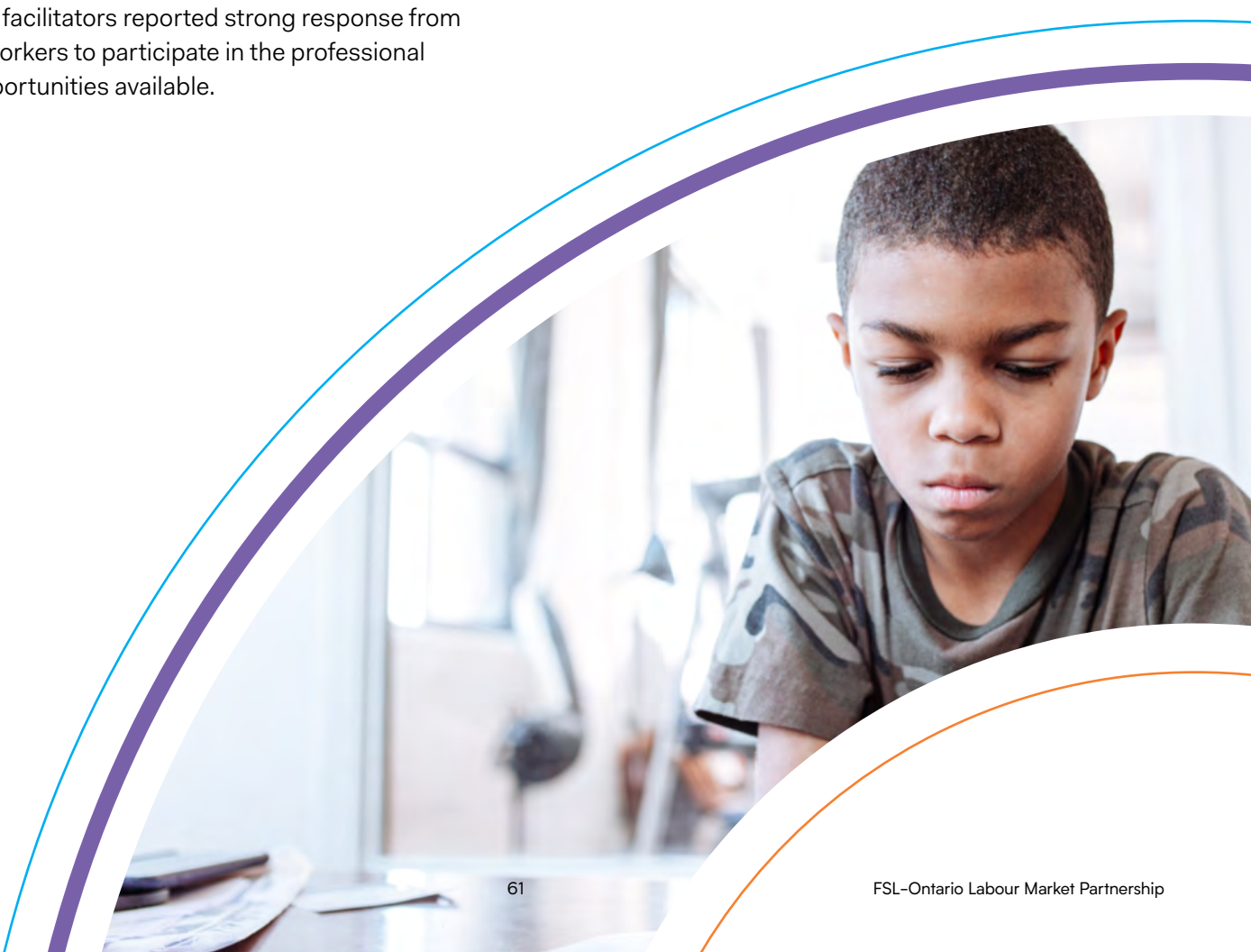
Table 11 Professional learning support for education workers

Project Title	Description	Board/ Organization
Supporting French-Language Learning in FSL Programs	Partnership with Centre d'éducation et formation pour adultes to provide French-language learning opportunities for Anglophone Education Workers.	Algoma DSB
Supporting ESL and Special Education Needs in FSL	Focus on the development of learning tasks shaped for ESL and students with special education needs	Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic DSB
Increasing Retention by Increasing Oral Proficiency	250 instructional hours with <i>Iboux</i> , online French language development website us.iboux.com/	District School Board Ontario North East
Apprendre ensemble... à distance	An extension of the <i>Apprendre Ensemble</i> module for all K-12 FSL educators	Greater Essex County DSB
ECE French Fluency PD Opportunities	A variety of online French language learning programs for those working in FSL Kindergarten settings.	Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation

Progress Summary of Pilot Projects Supporting French-Language Development for Education Workers

Among the 25 pilot projects supporting French-language development and professional learning for FSL teachers were five projects specifically designed to support education workers working in FSL contexts. Due to the nature of their work with teachers, education workers were invited to collaborate with teacher colleagues in various pilot projects. In most cases, these projects focused on developing educators' French-language proficiency or working directly with students in FSL programs. One project, however, supported education workers exclusively by providing opportunities to enrol in French-language development courses of their choosing. In all cases, the pilot project facilitators reported strong response from education workers to participate in the professional learning opportunities available.

“The Partnership supported pilot projects that specifically included professional development for education workers.”



Section 4

Overall Phase III Project Summary, Reflections and Next Steps



Key Learning from Phases I, II and III

Over three phases of research, recommendations, implementation and reflection, the FSL-Labour Market Partnership has explored in depth a number of previously identified issues affecting the supply and demand of FSL teachers in Ontario. Additionally, the work of the Partnership revealed new understandings of the complexity of these issues which reinforced the need for a systematic, inclusive approach to generating workable short- and long-term solutions. Through research with key stakeholder groups, the Partnership confirmed that:

- ▶ the demand for qualified, skilled FSL teachers in Ontario continues to increase overall, and at significant rates in a growing number of school boards.
 - ▶ the supply of qualified, skilled FSL teachers from faculties of education is insufficient to meet the annual demand.
 - ▶ the migration of FSL teachers out of FSL teaching to other teaching assignments contributes to the overall demand.
 - ▶ traditional FSL teacher recruitment strategies are effective but insufficient.
 - ▶ it is important to prioritize professional learning for FSL teachers within a community of practice that:
 - ▶ includes a wide range of meaningful professional learning opportunities,
 - ▶ is self-directed and collaboratively determined by staff and school leadership,
 - ▶ is responsive to identified teacher learning needs,
 - ▶ supports growth in teachers' pedagogical knowledge and French-language development.
 - ▶ a predictable supply of qualified, skilled FSL teachers would provide planning stability for quality FSL programs in Ontario schools.
- Through research, responsive implementation strategies and collaborative input, the Partnership work also revealed that:
- ▶ early-career FSL teachers have identified a number of factors that would improve the FSL teacher preparation and hiring experience, including greater transparency.
 - ▶ most school boards engage in French-language proficiency assessment for incoming FSL teachers and use a wide range of practices that lead to varying proficiency standards.
 - ▶ school boards are reluctant to hire FSL teacher applicants whose French-language proficiency is insufficient.
 - ▶ most faculties of education engage in French-language proficiency assessment for incoming FSL teacher candidates and use a wide range of practices that lead to varying proficiency standards.
 - ▶ education workers in FSL contexts usually do not speak French but have expressed strong interest in participating in language development opportunities.
 - ▶ providing ongoing language support for teachers and education workers in FSL contexts is a strategy that has strong potential to support FSL teacher development and retention.

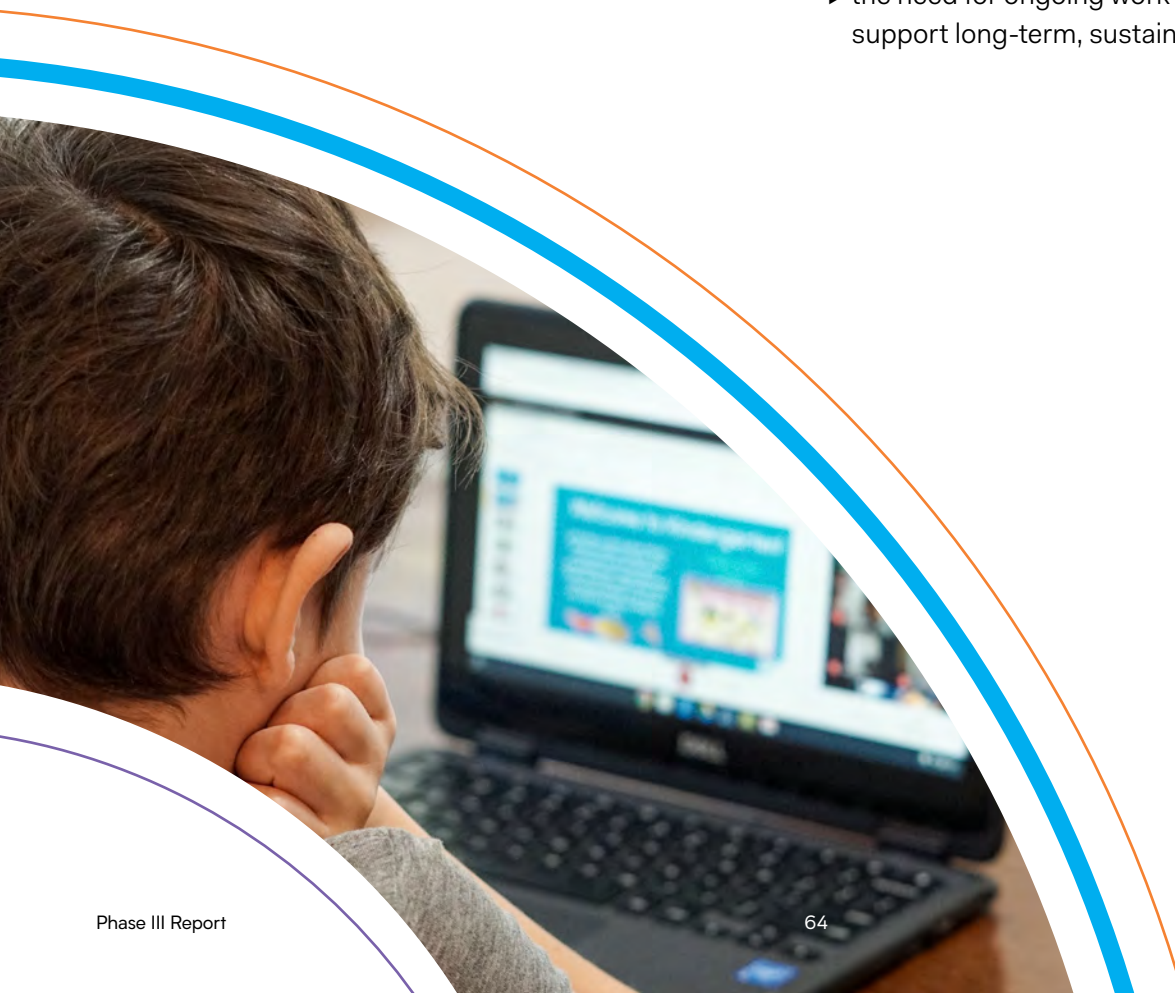
- ▶ promising opportunities exist to communicate more broadly with students in secondary schools and universities regarding career prospects as teachers and education workers in FSL contexts and the many ways to enhance French-language learning – developing student talent may be an untapped source of FSL educators in many Ontario contexts.

New learning by the Partnership regarding the interrelatedness of FSL teacher recruitment, hiring, professional learning and retention prompted member partners to engage in focused reflection on the structure of the Partnership, the substance of its work, and future goals and commitments. What follows is a summary of the reflection process.

Reflection and Next Steps for the FSL-Labour Market Partnership Project

A brief survey was developed for all current and former members of the FSL-Labour Market Partnership project to capture their reflections of all three phases of the Partnership's work. The survey prompted members to think about:

- ▶ the structure of the Partnership; its ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with diverse members with busy professional lives;
- ▶ the content of the Partnership's work; its success in focusing on the most relevant issues and supporting the implementation of innovative improvement strategies;
- ▶ the need for ongoing work with various stakeholders to support long-term, sustainable improvement.



Results from the survey showed very strong support (more than 90 percent indicating agreement most or all of the time) for the way the Partnership was structured, the substance of the work undertaken and the need for specific elements of the work to continue. Members identified a number of areas where small-scale implementation should be expanded in order to effect more substantive long-term change. These include:

- ▶ ongoing supports for FSL teachers, FSL teacher candidates and education workers to participate in opportunities aimed at enhancing their French-language proficiency;
- ▶ greater consistency and transparency among those engaged in determining French-language proficiency requirements for FSL teaching;
- ▶ ongoing support for responsive professional learning for FSL teachers and opportunities to share innovative practices from pilot projects;
- ▶ the development of a communication campaign that shares information about FSL teaching prospects with senior secondary and undergraduate students studying French or studying in French environments;

- ▶ further examination of circumstances that support FSL teacher retention.

Partnership members indicated their overwhelming support to continue with the implementation of long-term strategies aimed at addressing issues with FSL teacher supply and demand.

The Importance of Partnership and Collective Commitment

Throughout the three-year journey of this labour market partnership initiative, the focus has been on finding short- and longer-term workable solutions for securing sufficient numbers of French-language proficient teachers and French-speaking education workers to ensure high quality, sustainable FSL programs in Ontario English-language school boards. The strategies and approaches proposed in this report are multi-faceted and interrelated, providing a layer of complexity that required collective commitment, cooperation and innovative thinking of many education partners. This was the strength of the Partnership table that was at the core of this initiative.

Knowledge mobilization of the evidence-based findings and promising practices identified in the three phases of the initiative has been possible because every key organization that supports FSL recruitment, hiring, professional support and retention has willingly participated and contributed their time, energy and wisdom to the process. Most importantly, the Partnership members have agreed to continue their efforts following the end of the three-year mandate to build on the dialogue and deepen the implementation of promising strategies and approaches for the benefit of Ontario students and to reflect the value of learning French as a second language.

Key elements of the Partnership's work are already being extended into the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy in French Immersion and French Second-Language Programs. This multi-year strategy, supported in part by the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Ontario Ministry of Education, shares many of the aspirations of the FSL-Labour Market Partnership project but with a pan-Canadian scope.

Based on promising results from ongoing research, communication, and implementation during the FSL-Labour Market Partnership project, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association was approved to lead three initiatives aimed at examining the challenges and opportunities related to the FSL teacher shortage from a national perspective. Each of the initiatives is envisioned as a three-year project and will include cross-Canadian research, the development of strategies to improve FSL teacher recruitment and retention, and the creation of resources for consultation and broad distribution. Below is a list of the three initiatives and key objectives:

- ▶ FSL Teacher Recruitment Guide for English-language School Boards aims to develop a draft guide for English-language school boards that supports the effective recruitment and hiring of FSL teachers.
- ▶ French-language Proficiency Assessment Toolkit aims to develop a French-language assessment toolkit suitable for use with beginning and pre-service French as a second language (FSL) teachers.
- ▶ Supporting Principals to Address Challenges in Retaining FSL Teachers aims to facilitate school administrator engagement to share innovative practices and ultimately build toward a compendium of practices and strategies over three years that positively affect FSL teacher retention.

To facilitate ongoing professional discussion of the interconnected issues that underpin the supply and demand of FSL teachers in Ontario and elsewhere, OPSBA has initiated the development of an interactive webspace in order to curate relevant research, dialogue, and innovative developments stemming from the work of the FSL-Labour Market Partnership project, and eventually, from the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy. The webspace will invite all stakeholders in the recruitment, hiring, retention and professional support of FSL educators to contribute, engage, and reflect on their role in supporting the continuation of quality French as a second language instruction in Ontario and across Canada.

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Glossary

ACTFL	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
CASLT	Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
OPI	Oral Proficiency Interview
BLTS	Business Language Testing Service, published by Cambridge English Language Assessment
IELTS	International English Language Testing System, published by Cambridge University Press
DLPT	Defense Language Proficiency Test, published by the Defense Language Institute, USA
TEFL/ TESOL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language/Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, certification process to teach English as a second or additional language
TOLES	Test of Legal English Skills, issued by Global Legal English (members of the International Division of the Law Society of England and Wales)

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Education Partners and Representatives 2020 – 2021

Education Partner	Representative	Current Role
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)	Mona Staples	Associate Coordinator (CUPE School Board Sector)
Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)	Annalisa Varano	Past President CPCO
College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE)	Melanie Dixon	Director Professional Practice
Council of Directors of Education (PCODE)	Lucia Reece	Director of Education
Council of Directors of Education (ECCODE)	Tom D'Amico Ab Falconi*	Director of Education Director of Education
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)	Jennifer Mitchell	Executive Assistant
Ministry of Education (EDU)	Josée Dumas-Hurt Komila Rakhimova Hanca Chang	Education Officer (Bilingual) French as a Second Language Policy and Implementation Unit Field Services Branch Policy Analyst Professionalism, Teaching Policy Standards Branch Manager French as a Second Language Policy and Implementation Unit Field Services Branch Professionalism, Teaching Policy and Standards Branch
Ontario Association of Deans of Education (OADE)	Lace Marie Brogden	Dean, Faculty of Education Laurentian University
Ontario Council of Education Workers/ Ontario Public Service Employee Union (OCEW/OPSEU)	Nick Mustari	A / Negotiator

Education Partner	Representative	Current Role
Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association (OCSOA)	John Klein Tom D'Amico*	Superintendent of Learning Associate Director of Education
Ontario Catholic School Trustee Association (OCSTA)	Anne O'Brien	Director of Catholic Education
Ontario College of Teachers/Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario (OCT)	Stefanie Muhling	Bilingual Program Officer Accreditation (B) Standards of Practice and Accreditation
Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)	Susan Perry	Department Head Professional Development
Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)	Nancy Brady	Past President OPC
Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)	Judith Nyman David Jack Debra Krutila	Project Lead, FSL-OLMP Director of Program Policy Research Lead Partnership Lead
Ontario Public Supervisory Officers' Association (OPSOA)	Andre Labrie Jessica Silver Karen Edgar*	OPSOA/Sr. Negotiators Superintendent of Human Resources Superintendent/OPSOA Board of Directors Eastern Region Representative Superintendent of Student Achievement
Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU)	Keith Levere OSBCU	OSBCU Area 2 Vice President

Education Partners and Representatives 2020 – 2021

Education Partner	Representative	Current Role
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation / Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario (OSSTF)	Rosemary Judd-Archer	Provincial Executive Assistant Adjointe executive Educational Service Department Services éducatifs
Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF)	Lindy Amato	Director Professional Affairs
University of Ottawa	Stephanie Arnott	Assistant Professor

*former member (mid-year change due to retirements, transfers, new position)

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Debra Krutila, Partnership Lead
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