

## Guiding Principles

In Intensive Core French, the instructional process is founded on the following principles :

- French is the language of the classroom.
- Authentic communication is the focus of the program.
- Students develop the ability to communicate by engaging in interactive experiences organized around themes which are relevant and meaningful to the learner.
- Meaningful experiences include varied media for language learning (arts, music, poetry, literature, film, and theatre).
- Curriculum outcomes determine instruction and assessment.
- Emphasis is on development of literacy skills. Oral, reading and writing skills are connected.
- The classroom is learner-centred; learner needs, abilities (including first language experiences), and interests provide a starting point for instruction.
- Instruction follows a project-based pedagogy. It is planned to be both sequential and spiral, providing for a gradual increase in students' knowledge and skills, and allowing for the meaningful re-entry of knowledge gained through previous use. For additional reading on this approach, teachers may refer to either of the following documents:
  - a) La Revue de l'AQEFSL vol. 21, nos. 1 et 2, 1999 "Une expérience de français en 6<sup>ième</sup> année" par Joan Netten et Claude Germain
  - b) "Intensive Core French Project in Newfoundland and Labrador". June 1998, section 9.3 - Pedagogy

## Classroom Environment

*Department of Education documents are available online at [www.gov.nf.ca/edul](http://www.gov.nf.ca/edul)*

### The learner

The elementary school curriculum expands to provide for the widening interests of elementary school children. The introduction of Intensive Core French to the school is also a part of this expansion. This experience provides richness, variety and fluency at this key developmental age. The elementary years are a time when students begin their initiation into the world of adult reasoning, concepts, communication, and symbolism. Although there are some teaching strategies specific to this level, many are the same as those of the primary grades. An approach emphasizing the child as a thinking, doing, and feeling learner is essential.

Intellectually, elementary children are moving from a concrete level of reasoning to more abstract reasoning. Many may continue to require significant concrete experiences before gradually moving to more abstract concepts. Intensive Core French offers an opportunity for individual interests and abilities to be explored in a second language through individual, paired and group projects.

### **Implications for Intensive Core French**

Elementary children are curious about other languages and cultures. They are enthusiastic and want to learn French. These children need opportunities to be physically active through action songs, games, and dramatizations. Recognizing the constraints of time and resources placed on the regular Core French program, Intensive Core French is meant to provide a 20 week “enriched” period of study of French at the Grade 6 level. The intensity and concentration of time allows for greater in-depth exploration of individual needs, interests and abilities. Each instructional period should be varied, with a balance between the introduction of new material and the use of previously learned topics, all with the focus continually and primarily on communication. Group and individual work require clear, structured tasks that yield concrete results.

In every elementary classroom, there are varying levels of physical and emotional maturity. As they get older, students often become more sensitive to the reaction of their peers. This may be particularly evident in Grade 6. Some students become inhibited and are reluctant to participate actively in certain situations. Teachers respond to these changes through the creation of a “supportive, nonthreatening, risk friendly” environment; the careful selection of activities; the provision of choices (video taping a role play versus doing an improvisation); and the encouragement of different types of expression (creating a poem, a poster or a model). It is also very important that the teacher give frequent positive feedback. Such practices demonstrate respect and sensitivity, and help ensure active participation.

### **Classroom Atmosphere**

In a warm, supportive environment students feel at ease, and they know that their attempts at communicating are valued. Good language learners take risks. Students need to know that taking risks and making and correcting errors are a natural part of experimenting with language, and of learning. This principle should guide teachers in the way they handle student errors. Teachers should demonstrate to students that even the teacher makes mistakes, needs correction or uses the dictionary.

Errors that occur often and block comprehension may need to be corrected, but communication should not be interrupted in order to make corrections. Errors may be brought to the attention of students through reflection and self-correction, through a small or large group activity, or on an individual basis, depending on the purpose of the activity or lesson.

The focus in the Intensive Core French classroom is always on communication rather than language form. By the strategic selection of activities and the careful planning of the teacher, the French language becomes transparent, as the atmosphere encourages students to share personal experiences and ideas. The teacher should provide frequent positive feedback and evidence of progress. Elementary students need a very concrete sense of their improvement. Overall, the classroom atmosphere of Intensive Core French is one of fun, comfort and security in the second language.

*“Students should learn how their previous language knowledge can help in new situations.”*

Since Grade 4 is the introduction to second language learning for most students, teachers need to help students come to terms with the difference between their first language and their second language skills. At the beginning of the Intensive Core French program, teachers should devote time to reviewing students’ previous experiences in French (most students will know some words or phrases); to establishing French as the language of the classroom; and to setting classroom routines. Students should learn how their previous language knowledge can help in new situations. For example, French and English share many words, the printed alphabet is the same, and punctuation is similar. To help ensure success, new experiences and tasks should build on what students already know and can do.

### **Classroom Organization**

The organization of the classroom enhances student motivation and learning. The Intensive Core French classroom needs an area to display student work, student created “le mur de sons”, and “le mur de mots”. A listening centre in the classroom is an asset, especially for multi-age groups. Ready student access to French resources reinforces participation and supports communication. A display area fosters cultural awareness through the presentation of postcards, maps, calendars, photos and other authentic items. Communication is also enhanced by flexible seating plans and group arrangements. Since much of the Intensive Core French day will involve frequent changes in grouping and seating arrangements, flexibility becomes essential.

### Use of French

Research indicates that key factors affecting success in second language learning are the time devoted to it and the strategies used by the teacher. This has implications for the Intensive Core French environment. French is the language of instruction in the classroom. Every effort should be made to encourage communication, and convey meaning directly without recourse to English. The use of French, the project-based activities, the student-centered strategies and instructional time all affect student proficiency. Communicating successfully in French in the Intensive Core French program helps students develop a positive attitude toward themselves, toward learning, and toward learning French.

## Organizing for Instruction

### Planning

Planning is an essential part of the instructional process. Teachers need to plan for the year and for the Intensive Core French term, for each unit or theme and for the daily lesson.

#### *Long Term Planning*

Teachers must organize the instructional year based on the outcomes of the prescribed grade 6 curriculum, related or complementary themes and instructional time. The long term plan includes the sequencing of units, a student assessment plan, and an anticipated schedule. The teacher allocates instructional time and monitors approximate start and end dates for each theme. Inherent in this planning is a knowledge of curriculum integration and the outcomes to be covered in the Intensive Core French block. Teachers need to analyse outcomes for curriculum overlap and take advantage of the incidental learning done by students during the course of the year.

During the Grade 6 year transitional planning - to ensure students are able to make a smooth transition to the intermediate program is important. Specific outcomes for Intensive Core French provide guidance to teachers, as do the specific curriculum outcomes for Grades 7 - Grade 12.

#### *Unit/Theme Planning*

The teacher highlights the curriculum outcomes, estimates the time needed to complete a unit, selects and adapts materials and resources, and organizes activities, including planned assessments. Resources may be modified and elements such as pace and choice of activities adjusted to ensure a focus on outcomes, while taking into account individual student or class interests and needs. Flexibility in lesson planning and the development of each theme is essential. Intensive Core French allows for student reflection and input into theme, unit and lesson planning. The teacher may also prepare an overview for students to help guide and record progress.

### *Daily Lesson Planning*

During the Intensive Core French block, students develop skills leading to an established communicative goal. The daily plan blends new elements with familiar ones. In the introduction of new concepts or skills, students use their previous experiences to anticipate what they are to see, hear, read, say, or write. At the end of the lesson, students review what they have learned. They reflect on the process of learning and on what remains to be accomplished. A key to effective and successful daily planning in Intensive Core French is to ensure that each day includes a variety of frequently changing activities that reflect the interests and abilities of the class. Each day includes a beginning warm-up routine, opportunities for speaking, listening, reading and viewing, writing and representing.

## **Instructional Strategies**

The teacher chooses instructional strategies that enable the learners to meet the curriculum outcomes. The following strategies are recommended for the Intensive Core French classroom.

### **Modelling**

Modelling provides learners with concrete examples and support. Modelling may take many forms. The teacher, students and classroom visitors are language models for the students in the demonstration of strategies, technologies, new content and skills, the animation of texts, and the preparation of work samples to guide students. Teachers model listening, speaking, reading and writing strategies. For example, the teacher and one student may role play a pair interview. All students would follow this model to complete the task. Models may also include sample projects, writing and oral samples.

### **Cooperative Learning**

In cooperative learning, students work toward a common goal, with the group's success depending on the contribution of each member. Students work collaboratively; they have clearly defined roles; and they learn how to organize to complete a task. Cooperative learning is further characterized by group interaction; the teaching and development of social skills; and opportunities for reflection.

The Intensive Core French teacher describes the task, explains the role of each member, monitors and observes. Cooperative learning is most effective when:

- Students know the purpose of the activity and understand the instructions.
- Group member roles are clear.
- Groups are organized according to the purpose of the activity - the size of the group and the membership change often.
- Time lines are established and respected.
- Social skills such as using quiet voices, sharing materials, and taking turns are also taught.

### **The Interview**

The interview develops listening and speaking skills and is an opportunity for students to communicate ideas, likes and dislikes, and feelings. Interviews are used to collect and share information. In the Intensive Core French class, interviewing is frequently used and often informal, encouraging spontaneous communication. Examples include:

- teacher and student role playing a pair interview
- students interviewing each other
- students conducting oral surveys
- classroom imitation talk shows
- students interviewing classroom visitors
- interviews between students and classes of former Intensive Core French students
- teachers interviewing students

In preparation for a formal interview, the teacher should explain the process to students. A friendly, encouraging manner is best. Questions should be posed as they would be in everyday situations, with one question leading to the next. The interview should be a positive experience for the student. Throughout the preparatory process students should be encouraged to “take a lead: in the interview by initiating the questions themselves and by leading the conversation in directions that interest them. (Ask the interviewer some questions)

Teachers may wish to consult the *Elementary Core French Criterion-Referenced Test Report* (1996) for more detailed information on the use of interviews.

### **Role Playing**

In role playing, students try to speak, feel and behave like a character they portray. Role playing may be spontaneous or practised, and be part of a game or simulation. It encourages language use by providing a purpose and an audience for communication.

When organizing role playing, teachers give clear instructions about the purpose of an activity, the situation to be portrayed and the role of the audience. To encourage active listening, groups may be asked to record specific information during each activity. Models should be provided and students should have opportunities to practise before the role play is presented. Role playing may be done “live”, with video tape or for another class or audience.

### **Brainstorming**

Brainstorming draws on student experiences to help establish a meaningful context for learning a wide range of ideas. Suggestions are usually recorded. If these ideas are recorded on chart paper, they can become effective classroom posters and contextual clues for students during a unit. Students may use items from brainstorming as a basis for a personal list or record. A brainstorming activity should be brief; usually not more than 2 - 3 minutes. All ideas are noted; little attempt is made to edit or evaluate the suggestions.

Brainstorming may be a preparation for oral and written tasks. It helps build and review vocabulary. Brainstorming is also effective to summarize at the end of an activity or to draw conclusions about a lesson or topic and help students see their progress.

## **Teaching for Communication**

In a classroom focussing on communication, the language skills of listening and speaking, reading and viewing and writing, and other ways of representing are interconnected. However, it is important that teachers, during their planning, provide opportunities for students to learn specific skills or combination of skills as appropriate. In Intensive Core French, the emphasis is on authentic communication and the development of literacy skills. This orientation must be reflected in both instruction and evaluation. Teachers must strive to ensure an equal balance among the language skills. At any point in time, depending on the theme and the related activities, the focus on one skill could be much greater.

## **Listening**

(Refer to *Stratégies d'enseignement de l'oral - Intensive Core French Support document - July 2009*)

Listening is an intensive activity, requiring a high level of concentration. To develop listening comprehension, students need frequent opportunities to listen to and view a variety of oral texts, including authentic sources. Through frequent, varied experiences, students learn to accept and deal with ambiguity, an essential skill in learning a second language.

Students listen for a purpose; they focus on the main ideas of a text, and use information to complete tasks. Pre-listening preparation helps students to be focused.

Students respond in various ways to demonstrate their comprehension, as follows:

- Carry out classroom commands and follow instructions.
- Draw pictures based on oral instructions.
- Answer comprehension questions.
- Complete a table or chart.
- State an opinion.
- Tell stories in their own words.
- Ask questions about the text.
- Request opinions from the teacher or other students, in relation to a text.
- Give information related to a topic from other authentic sources.

## **Speaking**

(Refer to *Stratégies d'enseignement de l'oral - Intensive Core French Support document - July 2009*)

In Intensive Core French, students develop oral communication skills through conversations, interactions, and presentations. Students interact individually with the teacher, in pairs and in small and large groups with the teacher. Presentations may include activities such as personal introductions, or brief descriptions of projects such as making a greeting card, poster or other visual. When talking, a student searches for vocabulary and language patterns to communicate a message. At the elementary level, students need time to formulate responses.

Recommended oral production activities include:

- songs
- games
- role playing
- conversations
- interviews
- shared story-telling
- dramatic readings
- theatrical productions
- oral presentations
- improvisations

### **Reading**

(Refer to *Stratégies d'enseignement de la lecture - Intensive Core French Support document - July 2009*)

### **Writing**

(Refer to *Stratégies d'enseignement de l'écriture - Intensive Core French Support document - July 2009*)

## **Technology in Instruction**

### **Technology in Instruction**

During the past decade, access to technologies suitable for teaching and learning has increased tremendously. Audio and video players and recorders are essential, and are used by students as well as teachers. Equipment can be used to record student presentations, interviews and other oral communications; to share student accomplishments with parents, other classes, community groups or keypals; to incorporate video and audio components into instruction; and to present student work.

In the Intensive Core French program, computer technologies enhance the learning environment in the areas of communication, professional development, global communication, authentic peer linkages, and resources.

*Canadian Association of Second  
Language Teachers  
www.caslt.org*

### *Technology and Communication*

Technology serves as a communication tool for both teachers and students. Internet or intranet capabilities enable students to communicate with each other and with the teacher. As they begin to read and write, students may use electronic mail to communicate with francophone students. The teacher and class could design a model and pattern phrases to support this authentic language learning experience. Word processing, presentation software and graphics may enhance communication for both teachers and students.

### *Technology and Resources*

Technology provides access to reference materials. Websites are a source of current authentic information for teachers and students. The teacher can access relevant sites and arrange for students to have online virtual visits. For example, students may tour websites of elementary schools in francophone regions and countries, make virtual cultural visits to sites such as museums and visit theme-related areas around the world. As well, the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, and Canadian Heritage, are sources of current authentic information for teachers and students.

### *Technology and Professional Development*

The teacher has access to professional supports through technology. These include cultural information, dictionaries and reference materials, and professional organizations.

Principles guiding the use of technology are the same as those for other resources and activities:

- Outcomes and themes determine the task.
- Resources are appropriate for the task and the age and abilities of students.
- Teachers adapt resources to meet learner needs.
- Instructions are clear.
- At the end of the task, especially when it involves a new resource or process, the teacher and students reflect on what has been accomplished.

## Individualizing Instruction

### Learner Needs

The Intensive Core French class includes learners of differing abilities and interests. The teacher should consider learner needs and interests when planning instruction. At the beginning of the year in particular, teachers assess oral and written strengths and areas of need. Teachers respond through the careful selection and adaptation of resources, and through a variety of instructional strategies and assessments. A supportive second language learning setting is critical at all times. Classes may have students needing additional supports and students capable of surpassing the prescribed outcomes.

Supports to help students attain outcomes include varying the pace, assigning a variety of concrete tasks, utilizing many types of group/ cooperative learning activities, and providing extra time to complete work (including evaluation tasks). Short term interventions should be noted on a Pathways pre-referral form.

### Individual Support Services Plans

If accommodations and adaptations become student specific, ongoing, and long-term the student is being supported (through Pathway 2). The French teacher consults with the special education teacher or guidance counsellor, or follows the established procedures to refer a student. A student needing support(s) for extended periods of time may need an Individual Support Services Plan (ISSP), involving a team response. Documentation may already be part of a student's file.

An individualized plan may include recommended (Pathway 3) modifications to the French program, depending on the nature of an exceptionality. (For example, a Grade 6 student with a writing difficulty may be capable of success in a pre-dominantly oral Core French classroom without program modifications, but the student may require accommodations/adaptations.)

Where extensive accommodations or modifications are needed, French teachers serve as members of individual support services program planning teams to determine the best instructional program for each student.

Documentation for teachers include:

- *Pathways to Programming and Graduation: A Handbook for all Teachers and Administrators;*
- *Co-ordination of Services to Children and Youth in Newfoundland and Labrador*
  - *Individual Support Services Plans (ISSP)*
  - *Profiling the Needs of Children/Youth*

### Intensive Core French in Multi-Age Classrooms

Multi-age classes consist of two or more grades receiving instruction from the same teacher in the same scheduled class time. Intensive Core French can be successfully implemented in this setting. It is recommended that teachers who organize instruction for multi-age groups:

- Develop a long-term plan based on grade combinations, gradelevel and keystone outcomes.
- Organize learning in order to respect outcomes.
- Keep records of long-term, multi-year plans.
- Select activities and resources to respond to individual and group needs, including enrichment.

There are many combinations of multi-age classes. In a school, the combinations may change from year to year. There are however, some strategies that seem to work well in all arrangements. These include:

- grouping
- learning centres (especially a listening centre)
- a thematic approach to program delivery
- common topics with differentiated projects or tasks for each grade
- projects with differentiated tasks for each student
- peer assessments
- shared reading
- common tasks but differentiated assessment criteria for each grade

## Informing Others

*Canadian Parents for French*  
*www.cpf.nfld.net*  
*www.cpf.ca*

### Informing Others

Intensive Core French, like all French Second Language programs, needs the support of the school community, including students, parents, teachers, school councils, school administrators and the school board for maximum success. Teachers should provide opportunities for everyone to become informed about Intensive Core French and to observe the students. Students can prepare items for a school concert or assembly, make big books for display or use by other classes, or invite parents to a special celebration. Community groups should be encouraged to involve Intensive Core French students in events. Displays of student work, communication with parents, program information on the school's website, and talks on the value of the French program at school or district meetings help promote a better understanding of the Intensive Core French program.