

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



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) has established a three-phase Ontario Labour Market Partnership initiative entitled, *Meeting Labour Market Needs for French as a Second Language Instruction in Ontario* with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skill Development to study labour market needs for French as a second language (FSL) instruction in the province (May 2017 - January 2021).

This initiative was created 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. This labour market partnership initiative is now in its final phase, entitled "*Implementation of Evidence-Based Strategies and Practices to Improve the Recruitment, Hiring, Retention and Professional Support of Ontario FSL Teachers and French-Speaking Education Workers.*"

The French as a Second Language Labour Market Partnership includes representatives from all the publicly funded English language school boards' provincial leadership associations, teacher federations, education workers' unions, faculties of education, Ontario colleges, the Ontario College of Teachers, the College of Early Childhood Educators and the Ministry of Education. Some Committee members also participate on the Steering Committee and/or Research Technical Team.

Phase I: Understanding Perspectives regarding the French as a Second Language Teacher Labour Market Issue

Phase I of the initiative ran from May 15, 2017 to May 14, 2018, and facilitated the "*Understanding Perspectives regarding the French as a Second Language Teacher Labour Market Issue.*" The project focused primarily on research linked to FSL teachers that included:

- 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 various boards and Faculties of Education across the province to explore factors influencing their decisions to work in various boards in Ontario;
- Identification and description of policies and procedures currently used to address FSL teacher supply;
- Analysis of the reported impact of existing strategies and current recruitment practices;
- 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).

In May 2018, the FSL-Labour Market Partnership Committee released its report entitled, [*Understanding Perspectives Regarding the French as a Second Language Teacher Labour Market Issue*](#). The report, identified the challenges in hiring, recruiting and retaining FSL teachers in English public school boards across the province. The report also offered a number of recommendations in two areas – Recruitment and Professional Support.

Phase II: Moving Forward with Understanding Perspectives Regarding French as a Second Language Labour Market Issue

Phase II of the initiative ran from November 12, 2018, to November 11, 2019, entitled “*Moving Forward with Understanding Perspectives Regarding the French as a Second Language Teacher Labour Market Issue.*” This phase focussed on action planning and facilitating the implementation of the phase one recommendations. Pilot projects were identified to implement evidence-informed practices and strategies based on the action plans. Research addressing the recruitment, hiring, and retention of sufficient numbers of French-speaking education workers (e.g. Early Childhood Educators and Educational Assistants) and the development of related recommendations were also components of this phase. The research included:

- A review of background studies previously conducted by key stakeholder groups and independent researchers;
- A qualitative and quantitative study (surveys/interviews/focus group) on recruitment, hiring and retention of education workers;
- Analysis of education workers’ (ECEs, Educational Assistants) experiences working in FSL school contexts.

At the end of this phase, all member organizations and professional associations developed recommendations to expand and deepen the implementation of effective recruitment, retention and development strategies across the province regarding French-speaking education workers. A report entitled [*Moving Forward with Understanding Perspectives Regarding the French as a Second Language Labour Market Issue*](#) was released in January 2020.

Phase III: Implementation of Evidence-Based Strategies and Practices to Improve the Recruitment, Hiring, Retention and Professional Support of Ontario FSL Teachers and French-Speaking Education Workers

Phase III of the initiative is running from February 1, 2020, to January 31, 2021. The final phase of this complex initiative will have a province-wide focus and will endeavor 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 will focus on:

- Monitoring the implementation of recommendations regarding education workers.
- Continuing to communicate evidence-informed recruitment, hiring, retention and professional development practices/strategies that can be successfully scaled for broader implementation according to local contexts.
- Evaluating the overall initiative to include the degree of meaningful provincial implementation of the recommendations identified in Phase I.

At the end of Phase III, the final report, *Implementation of Evidence-Based Strategies and Practices to Improve the Recruitment, Hiring, Retention and Professional Support of Ontario FSL Teachers and French-Speaking Education Workers* will be released.

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