



Chapter 7: French as a Second Language

It is the school environment where the majority of English speaking children start learning French as a second language. In Newfoundland and Labrador, students will follow one of four French education programs: core French, expanded core French, intensive core French and French immersion. The following sections will provide a brief overview of each of these program options.

Core French

The majority of students studying French as a second language will take part in the core French program. It is compulsory during the elementary and intermediate grades (i.e., Grades 4-9) and optional at the high school level. The aim of core French is to provide students with the opportunity to develop basic communication skills, knowledge of the language and an appreciation of French culture in both Canada and the world (Turnbull, 2000).

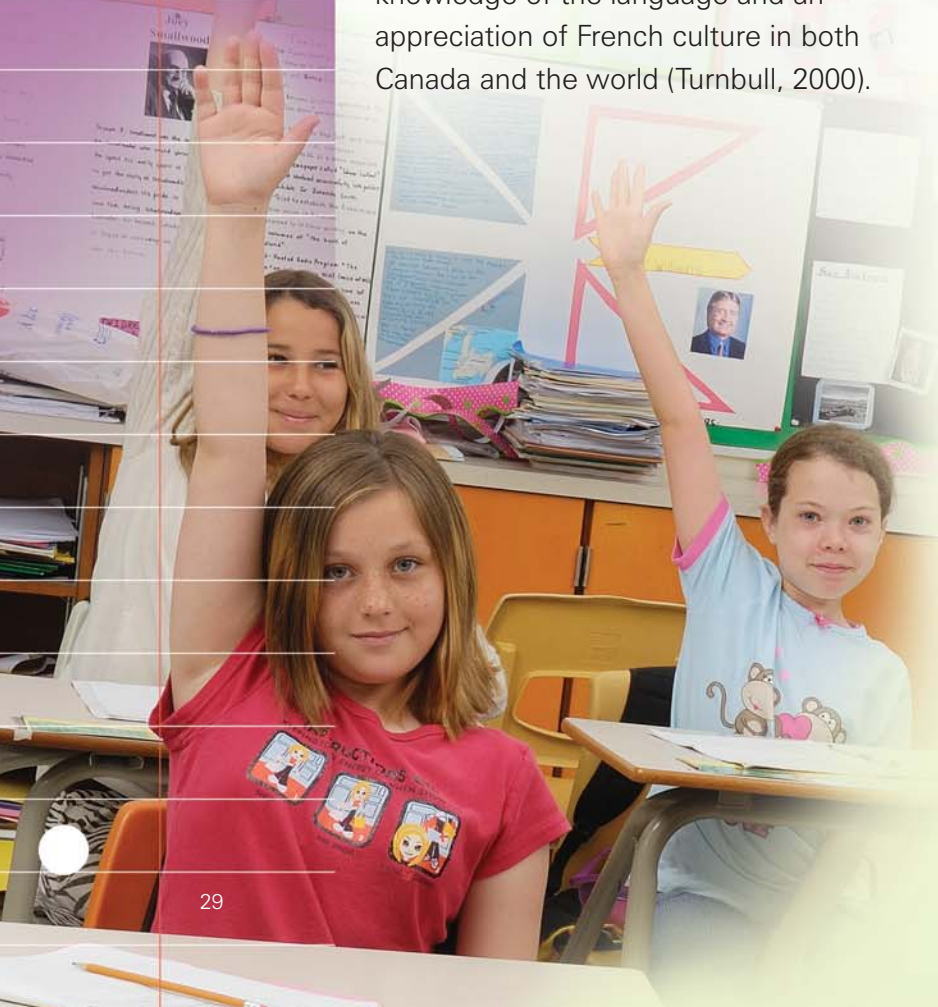
Intensive and expanded core French

The intensive core French program is for Grade 6 students. Students receive up to four times the number of hours of instruction normally devoted to French, that is, they will experience French language training between 60% and 80% of the school day. This provides students with additional opportunities to meet and surpass the outcomes of elementary core French.

The expanded core French program is for senior high school students who want to build upon the learning outcomes achieved in the core French program. Students complete courses in accelerated French as well as courses taught in French from other subject areas.

French immersion

The French immersion program provides students an opportunity to be completely immersed within the French language. French is the language of instruction and, as much as possible, the means of communication in the classroom. This intensive exposure to French is important because it allows students to quickly reach the level of French-language ability required to study other subjects in French (Canadian Parents for French, 2006, p.85).



Currently, students have two options for French immersion: early and late immersion. As the names suggest, the difference between these two programs is when students start the program: Kindergarten for early French immersion; and Grade 7 for late French immersion. Once in senior high, students in both programs complete 3 two credit courses in Français and 3 other two credit courses in another subject area taught in French. Upon graduation, students who successfully complete the graduation requirements will receive a French immersion designation on their transcript and diploma.

Enrolment in French programs

In line with decreasing provincial enrolment, it is not surprising the number of students enrolled in the different French programs is declining. Between 2002/03 and 2007/08, enrolment in these programs declined from 49,420 to 43,868 (an 11.2% decrease). However, during the same time, overall student enrolment declined by 14.5% (from 84,268 in 2002/03, to 72,084 in 2007/08). Clearly, other factors are affecting enrolments in French programming besides the declining provincial enrolment. The following sections will explore the trends present for the past five years to provide some insight into why enrolment in French programs is not declining as fast as overall student enrolment.



The percentages reported in the following sections must be interpreted with caution. While the core French program is offered in virtually all schools across the province, the other programs are not. For example, in 2007/08:

- 262 schools provided core French,
- 64 offered French immersion,
- 38 offered intensive core French, and
- 3 schools provided expanded core French.



What French program are students choosing?

While the majority of students follow the core French program, enrolment in the other French programs has changed (see *figure 7.1*). Between 2002/03 and 2007/08, the percentage of students in:

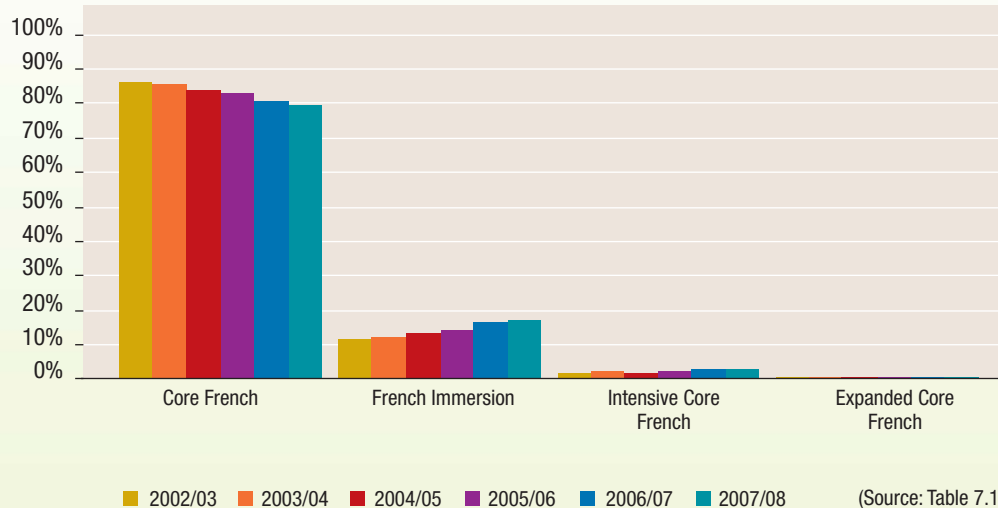
- Core French declined from 86.3% in 2002/03, to 79.6% in 2007/08. A similar decline can be found in virtually all provinces across Canada (Canadian Parents for French, 2006, p.88).
- French immersion and intensive core French increased.
- Expanded core French remained essentially the same.

Early and late French immersion

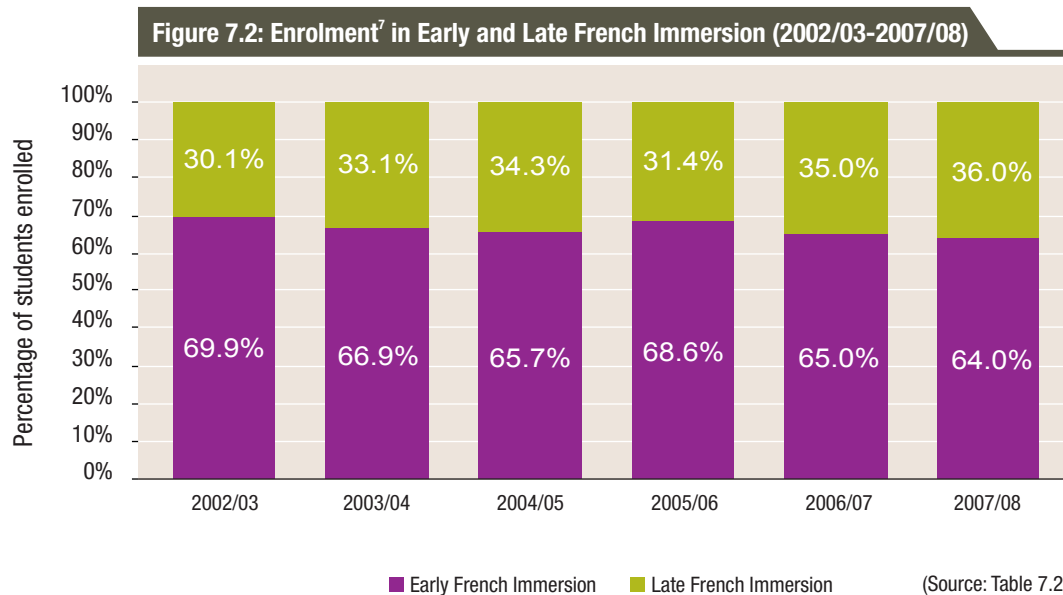
As previously stated, there are two program options for students entering the French immersion program - early and late. While higher percentages of students enrolled in early French immersion rather than late French immersion, a gradual decline occurred between 2005/06 and 2007/08.

With the exception of 2005/06, the percentage of students starting late French immersion has been increasing since 2002/03 (see *figure 7.2*). While the number of students enrolled in both French immersion programs has increased by 31.8%, the late French immersion program experienced the largest growth, with a 58.0% increase in the number of students between 2002/03 and 2007/08.

Figure 7.1: French program enrolment⁶ (2002/03-2007/08)



⁶ The percentages are based on the total number of students in a French program in a given year. For example, in 2002/03, 49,152 students were studying French. Of these, 86.3% were following the core French program, 11.6% were in French immersion (early or late), 1.5% in intensive core French and 0.6% in expanded core French.



⁷ The percentages are based on the total number of French immersion students in a given year. For example, in 2002/03, there were 5,690 French immersion students. Of these, approximately 70% were in the early French immersion program and 30% in late French immersion.

