



The Immersion Edge: Leading Professional Learning through Curriculum Change

a session for French Immersion administrators

Presented by Elyse Morin
Summer Symposium
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Bonjour!

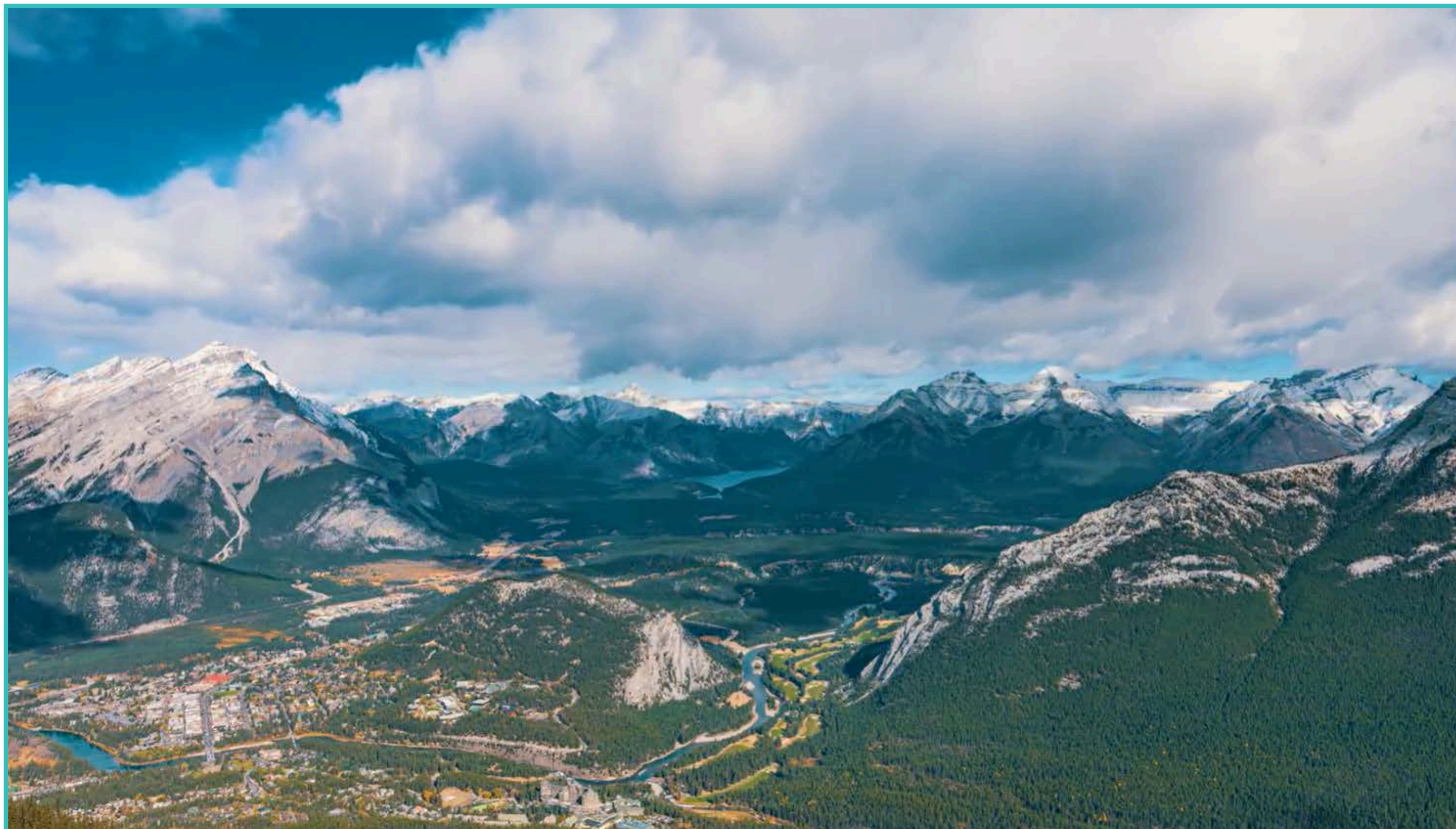
Elyse Morin

Conseillère pédagogique en
maths, FILAL et FLPL, Études

Sociales
elyse.morin@aplc.ca



Land Acknowledgement



Challenges in French Immersion Programs

Staffing Shortages

Schools face **significant staffing shortages** in French Immersion, making it difficult to find qualified teachers who can effectively deliver the curriculum in both languages.

Resource Limitations

A lack of tailored resources specific to French Immersion often hampers effective teaching, leaving educators and students without the necessary tools to succeed in a bilingual environment.

Language Proficiency

Many principals do not speak French fluently, which can lead to **communication barriers** and an inadequate understanding of the unique challenges faced by French Immersion programs.

Today's Objectives for Professional Learning

Understanding the DoubleTask

Teachers will explore the **concept of the DoubleTask**, requiring students to learn content while acquiring language, enhancing immersion education effectiveness.

Importance of French PD

Emphasis on the **significance of professional development** specifically tailored for French-language instruction, enabling teachers to better support their students' language acquisition.

Fostering French Culture

Strategies will be discussed to **nurture a schoolwide French culture**, creating an inclusive environment that values and promotes the French language among all students.

Why This Matters

The new curriculum presents a chance to **transform our professional development** approach to better support immersion education.





Section 1: The DoubleTask

Understanding the DoubleTask

The integration of content learning and language acquisition in immersion

The DoubleTask challenges students to grasp **subject matter** while developing language skills, requiring effective strategies from educators to support both cognitive and linguistic growth simultaneously.

Math problem

Problème 7e année:

Sachant que l'aire d'un carré est 49 cm^2 , détermine la longueur de son côté.

Explique ton raisonnement en utilisant le vocabulaire mathématique approprié.

Représente ensuite ta solution de façon symbolique.



The Research Behind

Understanding BICS and CALP in Language Acquisition

Jim Cummins' research highlights the distinction between **Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills** (BICS) and **Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency** (CALP), emphasizing the time required for academic language development in immersion settings.



Theoretical framework (Cummins & Gibbons)

Jim Cummins -- BICS vs CALP (1979, updated 2008)

BICS -- Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills :

- Language of everyday and social communication
- Acquired in 1 to 2 years in an immersion context
- Ex.: conversing with friends, asking permission to go out

CALP -- Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency :

- Academic language required for academic success
- It takes 5 to 7 years to develop, even with intensive immersion
- Ex.: analyzing a primary source, justifying an equation, formulating a hypothesis

DIRECT IMPLICATION:

A 7th grade student may seem comfortable speaking French in class...

... but struggling with a social studies text or a math problem because the CALP of these disciplines has not been explicitly taught.

"Students who are fluent in a language may nevertheless have difficulties with the academic language of the disciplines." -- Cummins, 2008

Pauline Gibbons -- Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning (2002, 2015)

Gibbons demonstrates that disciplinary language is not acquired by osmosis. It must be modeled, practiced, and transferred gradually.

Key concept: the "Continuum Mode":

Spontaneous oral communication --> Planned oral communication --> Informal written communication --> Formal disciplinary written communication

In immersion classes, teachers must:

- Model the disciplinary language orally before requiring it in writing
- Provide sentence structures (language frameworks)
- Create opportunities to SPEAK the language of the discipline

Gibbons (2015): "Language is both the medium of learning AND the object of learning in all subjects."

Language Scaffolding

Understanding the necessity of modeling and practicing language structures

Disciplinary language must be **explicitly taught**; it cannot be assumed students will acquire it naturally. Teachers need to create opportunities for students to engage with language actively.



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Études Sociales

Amorces et Modèles langagiers

Études sociales – Maternelle et 1ère année

Ce document soutient l'intégration du curriculum d'études sociales 2025 en contexte FILAL. Les structures de chaque colonne reflètent les attentes langagières du FILAL pour chaque niveau. Voir la légende ci-dessous avant d'utiliser le document.

Vous pouvez trouver [des cartes de verbes](#) sur le site de MCFPS.

Inspiré de [Soutiens Linguistiques pour les Habiletés et Procédures](#) (Edmonton Catholic Gr 7-9).

Légende des colonnes – valide pour tous les tableaux :

En développement	À niveau	Modèles pour l'enseignant
Phrases simples (sujet + verbe) sur des sujets très familiers. Production avec soutien.	Phrases courtes avec connecteurs simples, suivant des Modèles. Attente FILAL.	Structures que l'enseignant utilise pour reformuler (recasting) et enrichir le langage de l'élève à l'oral. Non attendues en production autonome.

Note importante : La colonne Modèles pour l'enseignant (recasting / enrichissement) contient des structures que l'enseignant utilise à l'oral après la production de l'élève, pour reformuler ou enrichir son message. Ces structures ne sont PAS des attentes de production autonome pour l'élève.

Créé avec l'aide de Claude AI

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Amorces et modèles langagiers

Études sociales – 2e et 3e année

Comment utiliser ce document

Ce document propose des outils linguistiques pour chaque verbe d'action des habiletés et procédures (H&P) et résultats d'apprentissage (RA) du curriculum d'études sociales (2e-3e année). Pour chaque verbe : une définition adaptée au niveau, les questions à se poser, les indices textuels utiles, et des débuts de phrases différenciés selon trois paliers, calibrés selon les attentes du curriculum FILAL du niveau :

- En développement – structure plus simple que les attentes FILAL du niveau, sans subordonnant, pour les élèves qui ont besoin de plus de soutien.
- À niveau – structure correspondant aux attentes FILAL du niveau (phrase de base, accords, types de phrases selon l'année).
- Approfondi – structure plus complexe et nuancée (connecteurs logiques, propositions subordonnées), au-delà des attentes du niveau.

Note : les structures « Approfondi » peuvent aussi servir de modèles langagiers que l'enseignant utilise à l'oral pour enrichir ou reformuler (recasting) les propos des élèves, sans que cela représente nécessairement une production autonome attendue de tous les élèves.

Inspiré de [Soutiens Linguistiques pour les Habiletés et Procédures](#) (Edmonton Catholic Gr 7-9).

Why Language Matters

Understanding language as a critical tool for thought

Language is essential for **conceptual understanding** and expression, significantly impacting French immersion students' success in navigating academic challenges within a minority context.



Language Beyond Vocabulary

Understanding Disciplinary Vocabulary and Essential Language Structures

To succeed academically, students must master both **disciplinary vocabulary** and language structures, which are crucial for articulating complex concepts across subjects, ensuring deeper engagement in learning.



Curriculum Verbs Demand Language

Understanding Why Justification is Crucial Across Subjects

New curriculum outcomes require students to **justify their answers**, emphasizing the need for specific language structures. Without proper instruction, students may struggle to articulate their understanding effectively.

When observing French immersion teachers look at:

- Are sentence starters or frames modelled? ("Je pense que... parce que...")
- Are connectors taught? (cause-effect, comparison, sequence)
- Is oral rehearsal happening before writing and reading?
- Look-for: sentence frames posted, or teacher modelling aloud

skills & procedures
Language
Curriculum
knowledge
understanding
develop Verbs
assess
share
explain
compare
examine
identify
describe
discuss
brainstorm



Language Structures in Disciplines

Math Language

In math, students use phrases like “If I then” and “the difference between” to articulate their problem-solving processes. These structures enhance comprehension and reasoning.

Social Studies Language

Social studies require students to employ transitional phrases such as “on one hand” and “this resulted in” to express historical analyses and comparisons effectively.

Science Language

In science, language structures like “I predict that” and “this demonstrates that” help students formulate hypotheses and conclusions, fostering a deeper understanding of scientific concepts.

Disciplinary Integration

Effective immersion education integrates language structures across subjects, allowing students to express complex ideas clearly and participate fully in discussions, enhancing overall academic success.

Vocabulary Nuances

Understanding how the **same word** can have different meanings across subjects enhances clarity in immersion teaching.

In math, a factor is a number that is multiplied.

In science, it's a variable.

In social studies, we talk about historical "factors".

Same word, three disciplines, three different uses.

It is precisely this type of ambiguity that our students navigate without a safety net.



What else should you see in a French immersion classroom?

- A quiet, orderly classroom isn't necessarily a strong immersion classroom. You want to see and hear students producing language, even if it's imperfect
- Vocabulary: pre-taught, anchored, clarified
- Structure: sentence frames modelled and visible
- Output: students producing, not just receiving



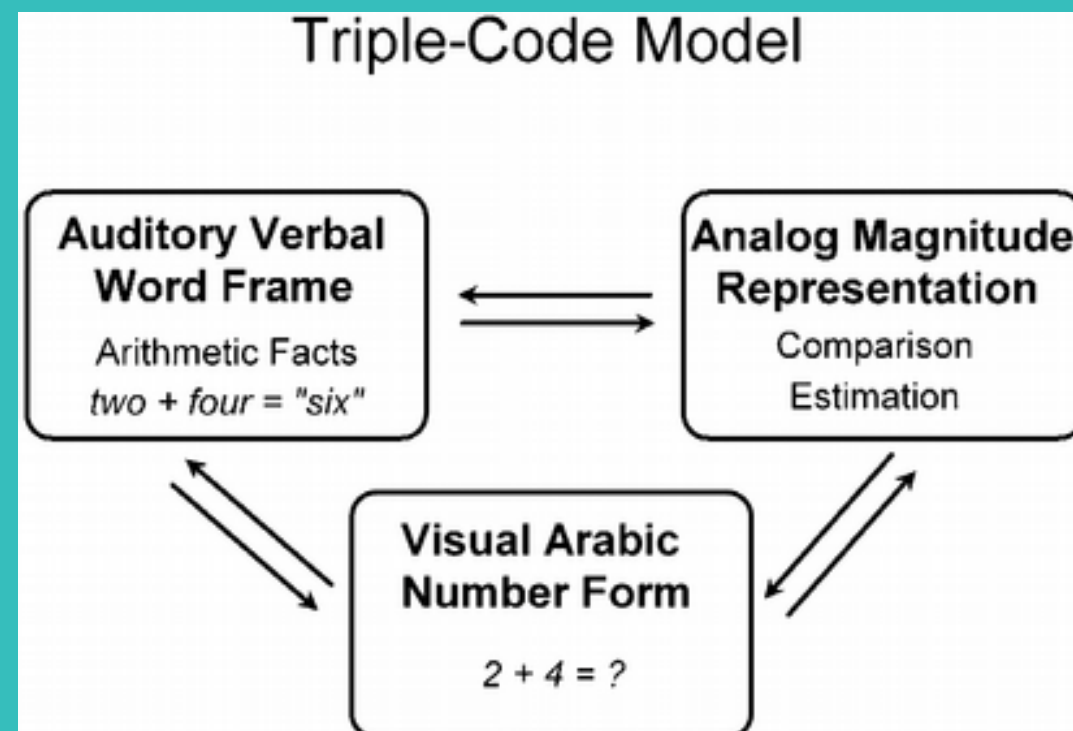
Setting fair expectations



Setting Fair Expectations

Younger French Immersion students navigate language acquisition while building literacy and numeracy, requiring differentiated expectations compared to their English-track peers.

Ex: counting to 100 in French is more challenging than in English due to the inconsistencies in the oral number sequence. It starts with a base 10 and by 80 we are now using a base twenty



Dehaene and Cohen's (1995)



Setting Fair Expectations: Reading

French Immersion students are still acquiring the language they will read in during early grades. Reading expectations need to be differentiated, just like numeracy.

Ex: Many school divisions expect a Grade 1 reading assessment early in the year, but French Immersion students at that stage are only beginning language acquisition. The FILAL curriculum is clear: pre-literacy skills, not reading fluency, are the focus for Grade 1.

FILAL curriculum, Alberta Education



Section 2: The Importance of specific training for French Immersion teachers



The PD Gap

Curriculum discussions often overlook how to effectively teach in French, leading to challenges for immersion students.

- Most subject-specific PD (math, science, social studies) is delivered in English
- Teachers learn the content, but not how to teach it in an additional language
- Teachers are left to translate the material themselves before it's classroom-ready
- Teaching math in English and teaching math in French Immersion are not the same task, even when the content is identical



Teach in French

Emphasizing the importance of using the French curriculum effectively

Using the curriculum written in French ensures students grasp concepts **accurately**. Precision in vocabulary is vital for their understanding and success across subjects in an immersion setting.



Section 3: How to better support teachers



APLC Resources & Learning opportunities

Essential support tools for your French Immersion staff

Access a range of **grade-specific resources**, teaching sequences, and language support materials available at aplc.ca, all designed to enhance teaching effectiveness and student engagement.



Boards on New Learn Alberta

Explore Learn Alberta for comprehensive support materials

These resources offer essential guidance, curriculum connections, and teaching strategies to enhance your French immersion programs and support your staff effectively.



Join a Committee

Building Connections Through a Regional French Advisory Committee through the consortium.

Regional French advisory committees foster collaboration among educators, **sharing resources** and strategies to enhance immersion education while ensuring teachers feel supported and engaged in their roles.

**Contact me if you are not yet on a list @
elyse.morin@aplc.ca**

AFLEC



Funding for Training

Investing in professional development for French Immersion educators is essential

Funding opportunities are available to support **training and professional development**, ensuring educators receive the necessary skills and resources to enhance student learning in immersion settings through the OLEP funds



Annual Conferences

Connecting Educators for Innovative Professional Development Opportunities

The [ACPI annual conference](#) provides a platform for educators to network, share best practices, and access valuable resources to enhance immersion education in their schools.

[ACPI](#) has also an administrator Zone where you can find information, training, etc. It is in English!



Immersion Teachers

Recognizing the expertise of teachers in language pedagogy

Immersion teachers possess unique skills in **additional language pedagogy** that can also benefit EAL and ESL students, making them invaluable resources within our educational community.



Championing French PD

Amplifying access to French professional development for educators

It's essential to **identify and share** valuable French resources among staff, ensuring everyone is equipped to enhance their teaching practices and foster student engagement.





Building a French-Speaking Culture

Importance of School Culture

A vibrant French-speaking culture enhances visibility, relevance, and engagement, benefiting all students and enriching their language learning experience.



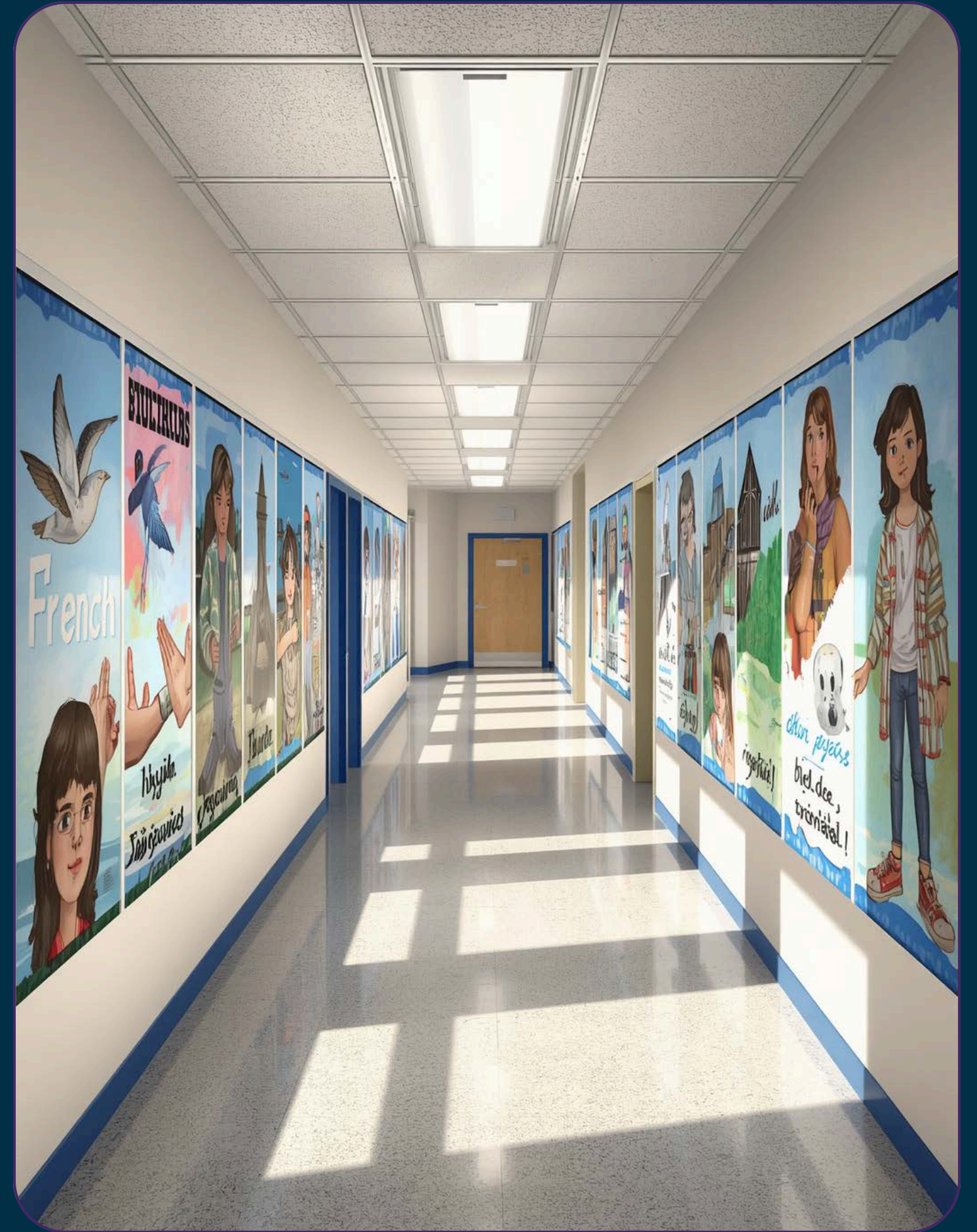
Bilingual Messaging

Implementing **bilingual announcements and signage** fosters a welcoming environment, enhancing visibility and relevance of French language learning in schools.



Making French Visible

Displaying French language elements schoolwide reinforces its value and creates an inclusive environment for all learners.



The Ripple Effect

Normalizing multilingualism creates an inclusive environment where all students value and celebrate diverse languages and cultures.



Key Takeaways

Creating pathways for our students to thrive in bilingual environments

By **nurturing** both content knowledge and language skills, we can empower students and teachers to succeed in their academic journeys and foster a love for the French language.





Questions?





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APLC Post Session Survey

Thank you for attending this session. To help us enhance the delivery of future sessions, we ask that you complete this short survey. **Your feedback is important and appreciated!** *Note: Your survey will be submitted anonymously.*

Survey URL: <https://aplc.ca/survey/?id=15805>



THANKS

The Francophone Provincial Consortium and The Consortium - APLC are committed to offering you professional development opportunities related to the implementation of the new curriculum, in line with the objectives of school authorities, and in line with the expressed and anticipated needs of stakeholders.

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