

Teacher Recruitment and Retention Webinars

Summary

Alberta Education hosted a webinar on June 14, 2022 to discuss French Immersion (FI) and French as a Second Language (FSL) teacher recruitment and retention (TRR), and another on June 17, 2022 to discuss francophone education TRR. During these webinars, representatives from school authorities, post-secondary institutions and a number of other organizations that support francophone and French language education in Alberta gathered to discuss the province's strategy in anticipation of the next federal call for proposals for TRR projects.

Below are the new priority areas gleaned from the discussions with brief, non-exhaustive descriptions. Once the federal call for proposals is released, any funding applications for federal TRR projects should align with one or more of the priority areas.

Francophone Education	French Immersion Programs and FSL Instruction
<p>Homegrown Teachers Includes promotion of francophone education across the education continuum, promotion of the teaching profession, increasing access to quality francophone education, and data collection and research to better understand teacher attrition.</p> <p>Support for Rural/ Remote Regions Includes support for pre-service teachers completing their practicums in remote and rural areas, online professional development (PD), and satellite campuses and online courses for post-secondary education.</p> <p>Linguistic Security of Teachers and Students Includes PD and activities to legitimize diverse francophone identities in schools and to support teachers and students experiencing linguistic insecurity.</p> <p>Support for Francophone Teachers Includes PD and teaching and learning resources targeted to the minority-language context, communities of practice, and mentorship opportunities between new and experienced teachers.</p>	<p>Homegrown Teachers Includes promotion of FI and/or FSL across the education continuum, promotion of the teaching profession, increased access to quality FI and FSL programming, and data collection and research to better understand teacher attrition.</p> <p>Support for Rural/ Remote Regions Includes support for pre-service teachers completing their practicums in remote and rural areas, online professional development (PD) and language classes for staff and satellite campuses and online courses for post-secondary education.</p> <p>Language Proficiency of Teachers Includes French language courses, exchange opportunities in francophone communities and bursaries to support language proficiency development of teachers and staff.</p> <p>Support for French Language Teachers Includes PD and teaching and learning resources targeted to the FI and/or FSL context, communities of practice and mentorship opportunities between new and experienced teachers.</p>

A summary of discussions during the webinars is outlined below, organized by theme. As there was significant overlap in topics discussed relating to francophone education and FI and FSL instruction, points from both webinars have been combined into a single summary.

Homegrown Teachers

- The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the increased importance of recruiting homegrown teachers—individuals who were enrolled in francophone education, FI programs or FSL courses in Alberta and who choose to pursue teaching careers in Alberta.

- Access to and promotion of quality francophone education, FI programs and FSL courses is critical for the development of homegrown teachers. If more students have a solid foundation in their French education, they will have more confidence in their language abilities and be more likely to pursue a career as a francophone or French teacher.
- Students, throughout the education continuum (K-12 and postsecondary) need to be shown that teaching is a viable career.
- In 2020-2021, fewer students in the province were learning French primarily because of the transition to online learning as well as parent and/or school redirection of priorities and resources to mitigate learning loss in core subject areas.
 - Enrolment in francophone schools is expected to recover quickly because francophone right holder parents wish to preserve and promote the French language, culture and identity in a minority official language setting, and there are multiple points of entry into francophone education.
 - In contrast, FI teachers will have to support students to recover from COVID-related learning disruptions that may be more pronounced for FI students, and schools will need to further promote kindergarten, grade one or late immersion programs to increase enrolment. Otherwise, in later years, there will be fewer Alberta students with the linguistic abilities to pursue a French Bachelor of Education.
- Data collection and research is needed to understand how many teachers stay in Alberta, for how long and what might be their reasons for leaving the province and/or the profession.

Support for Rural/Remote Regions

- Rural boards often lose teachers to urban settings and new teachers do not remain in rural settings to teach in francophone education, FI programs or FSL courses if opportunities exist in larger communities.
- Pre-service teachers feel the financial burden of taking short-term rural or remote placements when they already pay rent and have expenses in urban centres, near university campuses.
- A bursary would ease the financial burden of short-term rural or remote placements and would encourage pre-service teachers to return to rural and remote communities to begin their careers.
- Offering online French classes to all staff could be a way to support the language proficiency of existing French language teachers and build capacity in other staff members to teach French or in French in the future.
- Post-secondary institutions should be further encouraged to offer education courses through satellite campuses and online courses.

Language Proficiency & Linguistic Security of Teachers and Students

- A number of teachers and students within francophone education, FI programs and FSL courses lack confidence in their French-language abilities.
- Participants identified that increased PD opportunities would support francophone teachers and students experiencing linguistic insecurity.
- French-language teachers who wish to build their language confidence and resiliency should have access to resources, such as language development courses, exchange opportunities in francophone communities and bursaries.
- Many students in francophone education experience linguistic insecurity, and more needs to be done to legitimize diverse francophone identities in schools.

Support for Francophone and French Language Teachers

- Last year, a priority area was *Re-Entry after Disruption Due to the Pandemic*. Participants discussed the need for a more long-lasting priority area focused more generally on teacher support.
- Communities of practice and mentorship opportunities continue to be a priority, and participants agreed on the positive impact on teacher retention.
- Participants noted that, during the pandemic, school authorities and organizations adapted to offer high quality PD, communities of practice and mentorship opportunities online.
- It is now easier for teachers everywhere to access quality PD regardless of setting. Participants agreed that professional learning opportunities should continue to be accessible, far-reaching and subsidized.
- Francophone stakeholders continue to express a need for targeted PD opportunities around teaching in a minority-language context, especially to retain teachers from outside Alberta.