Shedding a Light on French Immersion Research, Policy, and Practice:

A British Columbia Perspective

by

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We accept this Thesis as conforming to the required standard.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of a French immersion Learning Support Teacher within the Metro/Coast Region of British Columbia. This descriptive study set out to identify the aspects of assessment and intervention practices for primary literacy skill development within a French immersion context. Using a Mixed Methods Research approach, participants were asked to complete an online survey gathering information on specific details pertaining to their practice. The online survey was circulated to eight school districts within the Metro/Coast Region of BC, and six completed surveys were collected. Aspects such as teaching experience, qualifications, and perceived sense of confidence and support were measured for each participant. Additionally, participants were asked to describe in detail how literacy assessment and intervention were conducted at their schools in the primary grades. Both qualitative and quantitative data was analyzed to identify common themes and trends. The results indicated that for these participants, assessment practices were well aligned at the Kindergarten level, but less consistent at other primary grades. Intervention practices tended to be teacher-created and varied in frequency, duration, length of intervention, as well as program delivery model (push-in support versus pull-out support). All participants indicated that there was a desire to establish collaborative opportunities with other French immersion learning support teachers in order to share resources and inform their own teaching practices.

Keywords: French immersion, special education, assessment, intervention, collaboration
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mom, Patricia Ann Dixon, who sadly passed away during the first year of my program. She was an accomplished educator in the field of Special Education and knew long before I did that I was, “destined to be a teacher.” I know that she would be proud of me.
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Background and Rationale

French immersion (FI) in Canadian schools is considered a choice program, in which parents can choose to enrol their children, without having any past experience with the French language (BC Ministry of Education, 1996). Spearheaded by a small group of dissatisfied Anglophone parents, the first French immersion program was offered in St. Lambert, a suburb of Montréal, Québec, in 1965. With the Official Languages Act in 1969, and through the Official Languages in Education Program in 1970, English-speaking parents were able to enrol their children in a school setting that would promote bilingualism of the two official languages of Canada (Murphy, 2000). Over the past fifty years, the French Immersion Program in Canada has shown continual increase in enrolment, with most recent numbers totalling more than 341 000 in 2010/2011 (Lepage & Corbeil, 2016).

There are several misconceptions with regard to the necessity of learning support services within a French immersion context. The traditional view is that such services, in particular, academic supports, are not needed in a French immersion school setting, as families of students with learning or behavioural challenges will not, or should not, consider French immersion as a possible avenue for their child’s education. In fact, “learning a second language was seen as a viable option for elite students with above average intelligence” (Eaton, 2002, p.4). In past practice, if a French immersion student was experiencing difficulties, it was usually recommended that they might be better suited in an English learning environment and the student was often relocated to reflect this recommendation (Bourgoin, 2014). However, research shows that due to the cross-linguistic relationship of reading and language abilities, there is no greater risk for students deemed “at-risk” for reading abilities or other learning challenges in remaining in a French
immersion choice program, with the caveat that they must be provided with early assessment and supported through appropriate intervention (Bourgoin, 2014; Genesee, 2004). Herein lies the current challenge and consequent need to ensure that Learning Support Teachers working with FI students are equipped with training on and access to assessment and intervention supports in order to effectively support students and prevent attrition within a French immersion setting.

One of the significant challenges with French Immersion Special Education involves finding educators who have knowledge and qualifications in both French immersion instruction and Special Education (Wise, 2011). In a survey conducted by the Canadian Parents for French, British Columbia and Yukon Branch (n.d.), it was reported that, “38% of school districts [identified that] French immersion teachers [did] not feel confident or prepared to teach learning disabled students” (p. 3). Many schools and school districts are forced to fill positions with educators who lack qualifications or confidence in either of these areas, which may result in less effective interventions for at-risk French immersion students (Wise, 2011). Many educators are more than willing to invest time and energy into receiving the necessary training to become more knowledgeable of French immersion or Special Education pedagogy (Bourgoin, 2014). However, finding training or professional development opportunities that combines both areas is challenging, as such a specific focus is rarely offered. This particular niche is definitely special in the field of Special Education.

Another challenge associated with French immersion is accessibility to resources and programs that are authentic to French immersion students (Muhling & Mady, 2017). With limited access to resources, French immersion learning support educators are often required to make do with the resources that are currently available to them, with or without proper training on the implementation of said resources. FI resources are often created from currently used English
resources, and then translated into French. Alternatively, Francophone resources are used with French immersion students, so the language and resource level at the early primary years is not valid for French immersion students. There is a definite lack of reading interventions that are authentic to French immersion student using effective pedagogical strategies (Genesee & Jared, 2008). The learning needs and benchmark levels of FI students are different than those of both English and Francophone students.

When looking at Special Education from a literacy skill development perspective, it is not difficult to find extensive amounts of literature and research outlining effective assessments, program delivery, and positive outcomes in the area of academic intervention (Andrews, 2010; Bournot-Trites, 2008; Bournot-Trites, Lee & Séror, 2003; Comeau, Cormier, Grandmaison & Lacroix, 1999; Genesee, 2004; MacCoubrey, 2003; MacCoubrey, Kirby, Wade-Woolley, & Klinger, 2004; Wise, 2014). However, Cook and Schirmer (2003) state that although identifying empirically validated practices for students with disabilities is important, it is only beneficial if the practices are appropriately implemented with students. Teachers must have the necessary knowledge and training to make the program implementation effective. Immersion teachers have expressed the need and desire for professional development on the instruction and pedagogy in a French immersion context, and access to differentiated resources as key factors in supporting the diverse needs of all learners (Bourgoin, 2014). Educators can become more informed through ongoing education, training and professional development. As a result, they will be better equipped to provide effective supports to their students who struggle academically (Bourgoin, 2014; Muhling & Mady, 2017).
French immersion is a publicly funded program, and as such, students have the right to have their diverse learning needs addressed in a FI learning environment (Bourgoin, 2014). Inclusion within an education setting can be defined as:

“[A] way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship” (Manitoba Education, 2007, p. 134).

While the popularity of French immersion education continues to increase, the diverse backgrounds of the families of students enrolling in the program must be considered (Cummins, 2014). Supporting an inclusive classroom relies heavily on a number of factors, including collaboration between the classroom teacher and the learning support teacher (LST), availability of differentiated learning supports and resources, as well as support from school and district administration to ensure that Ministry policies and practices are being followed (Muhling & Mady, 2017; Wise, 2011). Unfortunately, effective differentiated instruction, support services and access to the necessary resources continues to be an ongoing challenge within a French immersion setting.

**Personal Context**

Consistent with the historical perspective across Canada, the French Immersion Program within British Columbia, and more specifically, within the Lower Mainland School District in which I am employed, has lived up to the reputation that it is a program for the academic elite. Even today, when comparing graduation statistics of FI students with other students in the district or province, district personnel will acknowledge that French immersion graduates from our school
district have some of the highest standings in terms of academic success within the district and province (Sentinel Secondary School, 2016).

Unfortunately, the high academic standing of French immersion graduates does not provide a complete picture. Part of the reason FI graduates fare so well is due to high attrition rates, as many students exit the French Immersion Program due to academic difficulty (Bourgoin, 2014). Canadian Parents for French, (n.d.) reported that 81% of school districts in B.C. have experienced students transferring out of the FI Program due to a learning disability or lack of available services (p. 3). Students who experience challenges within a French immersion educational setting opt to switch into an English program, in hopes of eliminating the additional language challenge. In my school district, students and families who choose to exit the French Immersion Program are given the opportunity to meet with administration for an exit-interview to discuss their decision. Based on my experience, one possible interpretation of why families choose to exit the FI Program is due to limited access to the support or resources their child needs in order to be successful in a French immersion learning environment. I have experienced these feelings of frustration within an early primary French immersion setting, long before families make the eventual decision to exit the FI Program.

The lack of support and resources for French immersion students is a K-12 district-wide challenge. Within my school district, French immersion is only offered at two out of 14 elementary schools, and one out of three secondary schools. As a result, district efforts and funding for authentic French immersion literacy intervention assessments, supports and resources are very limited. FI students are assessed using district-mandated literacy screeners in English. One of the difficulties associated with assessment and intervention for FI learners who have been flagged as having severe literacy challenges is that of providing the student with access to appropriate tier
three intervention, while maintaining the required French language exposure within a FI learning environment. If a French immersion primary student shows significant challenge in foundational literacy skills, the only tier three intervention currently available to them is participation in a district-developed English intervention program. This would result in the student missing the majority of the French language instruction and learning engagements taking place in the classroom. Consequently, families are asked to make a difficult choice between participation in an intensive intervention program in English to support lagging literacy skill acquisition, or continuing their education within a French immersion setting.

In my role as a LST in a school district located within the Lower Mainland of BC, I have worked in both English and French Immersion settings. In my experience, I’ve noticed a number of differences in the perception and implementation of learning support services within both programs. In general, the overall demographic of student support services at a FI school tends to be more of an academic and/or behavioural nature. With the right strategies and supports in place, students with learning and behavioural challenges can have every opportunity to thrive within a FI setting.

As mentioned earlier, one of the primary challenges to supporting the diverse needs of FI students is the difficulty in finding educators who are qualified in both special education and French immersion. There are school districts within the lower mainland where there is only one French Immersion Learning Support Teacher within the entire district. In the current teaching climate in the lower mainland, it is very challenging to find qualified Learning Support Teachers in general, and even more so who are also trained in French immersion. As a result, sometimes schools end up going without a qualified LST for an extended period of time. As an interim solution, school districts might have no choice but to hire a FI elementary teacher to support with
primary literacy, without formal training in special education. Early literacy programs and support, without careful coordination and teacher training, can result in a lack of consistency between French immersion elementary school sites, as well as between school districts.

As an additional challenge to supporting inclusivity in the French Immersion Program, it is quite possible that secondary schools will not have a qualified French-speaking learning support teacher to assist students in French subjects and with French content. These challenges are not unique to my school district, and are apparent provincially, as the cohort of educators trained in both French immersion and Special Education is an exclusive niche. As a result, explicit training and professional development in the context of French immersion learning support has been extremely limited and must be supported and encouraged at a district and provincial level moving forward.

In general, special education teachers at the elementary school level in some districts often experience a sense of isolation, as they are usually the only LST present at their school site. This sense of isolation is even more prevalent within a French immersion context. Efforts are often made to promote collaboration between LSTs through district meetings. The focus of the learning support meetings tends to be overarching ideas and concepts that are pertinent to all learning support teachers at different sites and in various roles. As a result, the collaboration and networking that takes place is not usually relevant to the specific needs and challenges associated with special education in a French immersion context.

As mentioned in the introduction, access to authentic French immersion supports and resources is an ongoing challenge. When I first began teaching as a French immersion learning support teacher, my resource room contained a number of FI early literacy intervention tools that appeared to be of high quality. Unfortunately, the implementation of the majority of the learning
support resources required professional development and training. I did not feel comfortable implementing certain tools and programs without receiving the appropriate training or professional development. Over a number of years in the same learning support role, I was able to implement a number of the tools and resources available to me, but still felt a disconnect between the resources available to me and my knowledge around which intervention tools might be most effective.

**Purpose and Significance of the Study**

The primary purpose of my research is to identify which assessment tools, intervention resources, and delivery models are being used at French immersion elementary schools, within the Metro/Coast Region of the BC Public School System. Through an online survey directed at Learning Support Teachers working with early French immersion students at the primary level, assessment and intervention resources and strategies will be identified and reviewed in order to support and streamline French immersion literacy assessment and intervention process within the Metro/Coast region of BC.

The study will gather information on what current literacy assessment and intervention practices look like in the Metro/Coast region of BC. Results will be compared to the research to determine in what capacity current practices in our region align with the empirical evidence. This will guide educators in ways in which they can provide better support for French immersion students and their foundational literacy development. Early and effective intervention in this area could lead to fewer struggling students at the intermediate and secondary levels. This support with foundational literacy skills may also influence attrition rates for French Immersion students at the later grades.
Research Question

Based on the historical context, the current research, and my own personal experiences, the focus of my study will be on early French immersion literacy assessment and intervention. The following question will drive the direction of the inquiry:

*What do Learning Support Teachers believe are the components (assessment, program delivery, effectiveness) of high-quality French immersion early literacy intervention?*

Information will be gathered on the assessment tools used by FI Learning Support Teachers to identify those students who are considered at-risk for literacy challenges within a French immersion setting. The implementation of French immersion early literacy intervention programs (for example, the model and language of delivery) will also be investigated. Finally, feedback from teachers on their perception of the effectiveness of their intervention programs and strategies will be discussed.

Methodology

This descriptive research study includes creating an initial database of the elementary schools in the Metro/Coast Region of BC who offer early French immersion as a choice program for families. Through this database, a request for participation will be shared with all FI LSTs at these schools, asking them to complete an online survey. Through a mixed-method approach (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013; Mertens, 2010) of both open- and closed-questions, participants will be asked to outline information pertaining to the particular assessments, resources, and program delivery methods used at their sites. From the information collected, a review how the current assessment and intervention practices align or differ with the empirical research will be completed. Based on the findings, recommendations and future considerations will be discussed.
French immersion students provide a unique challenge for special educators. How can support, differentiation and intervention be best provided to students within a French immersion context? As with authentic French immersion resources and support, the research conducted on second language reading acquisition contains some large gaps (Genesee & Jared, 2008). I am hopeful that my research will add to this knowledge in a way that is relevant not just in my own teaching practice, but for my colleagues within my school district and possibly to French immersion learning support teachers within the Metro/Coast region of British Columbia.

**Definition of Terms**

**Common underlying proficiency principle:** First- and second-language skills are interdependent, supporting the transfer of cognitive and literacy skills across languages

**Cross-linguistic transfer:** The ability of linguistic skills developed in a child’s first language (L1) to transfer over to the language and literacy skills in a child’s target language (TL)

**Dual track:** Refers to the implementation of French Immersion Program at a school site that also offers an education program in English.

**Epistemology:** The branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge.

**French immersion:** Schooling that is delivered in French to students who are not required to have any prior experience or knowledge of the French language.

**Linguistic mismatch assumption:** Learning challenges will arise if the home language is different from the school language

**Maximum exposure assumption:** In order to learn a language, one requires as much exposure to the language as possible
Mixed methods approach: A research methodology that incorporates the integration of both quantitative and qualitative research methods, in order to provide a more thorough answer to a research question or questions.

Monolingual principle: A set of three monolingual instructional assumptions deemed best practice, without being supported by empirical evidence

Ontology: The branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of being

Phonological awareness: The understanding that that words used in speech consist of syllables, onsets and rimes, and phonemes

Push in model of support: Where targeted intervention and support is provided to students within the classroom setting and is developed in collaboration between the classroom teacher and the learning support teacher

Pull out model of support: Where targeted intervention and support is provided to students within a small group setting outside of the classroom and program content may be separate to what is being taught in the classroom

Response to intervention (RTI) model: A three-tiered approach for providing early identification and support to students who are experiencing learning and behavioural challenges at school

School Based Team: A team made up of school personnel who meet regularly to assist classroom teachers to develop and implement strategies of support for students using the RTI model

Single track: Refers to the implementation of French Immersion Program at a school site where all classrooms conduct learning following a French Immersion Program delivery model.
Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Chapter 1 introduced the thesis and provided historical and personal context for its purpose. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the research conducted in the area of the French Immersion Program and its challenges (perceived and actual). The review begins with the research conducted on student attrition from FI programs and the role reading ability plays for families when making the decision to exit the program. The research (or lack thereof) investigating the prevalence and challenges associated with learning disabilities for French immersion students will be outlined. A thorough examination of the research on the cross-linguistic transfer of language acquisition, and the role it plays in supporting phonological awareness in a child’s first language (L1) on reading ability in a target language (TL) will also be discussed. A look at the ongoing discrepancy between research, policy and practice within a French immersion context in Canada, will also be explored. Chapter 2 will conclude with a summary of the rationale and direction for the current research.

Reading Skill and Student Attrition in French Immersion

One of the main challenges faced by the French immersion (FI) community is student attrition. As a student progresses through the grades and the immersion course load becomes more difficult, many families will opt to transfer their child from the French Immersion Program to an English program (Bournot-Trites, 2008; Cummins, 2014; Genesee, 2008; Wise, 2011). Bournot-Trites (2008) identifies reading ability in French as one of the key factors associated with student success and retention within a French Immersion Program. She notes that many students experience challenges associated with reading academic content in French. Reading difficulty is often viewed as one of the underlying reasons causing students to exit the FI program (Erdos, 2011; MacCoubrey, Kirby, Wade-Woolley, & Klinger, 2004; Wise, 2014). Parents believed or experienced that the supports for their child were not available in a French immersion setting.
However, moving a student to an English program does not always guarantee student success. Bruck (as cited by Bourgoin, 2014, p. 3) noted that students who exited the FI program and experienced successes in an English classroom environment tended to be receiving extra support which was either not provided or unavailable to them in FI. This provides evidence of the importance of access to supports for FI students (Bourgoin, 2014; Wise, 2011). Additionally, reading issues are often not addressed in a timely manner in a FI setting and as a result, students experience unnecessary reading challenges that haven’t been properly addressed or supported through early assessment and intervention.

Timely assessment and intervention are often perceived as difficult to address for French immersion (FI) students (Bourgoin, 2014). This is due to the fact that the language of instruction and literacy development are being conducted in a student’s non-native language (L2 language) (Erdos, 2011). Students’ early language and literacy skills in French are not developed enough in order to effectively assess their early reading abilities. As a result, underlying reading challenges might go unnoticed until the problem becomes more severe (MacCoubrey et al., 2004).

Bournot-Trites (2008) states that, “A better understanding of the acquisition of reading in French immersion is critical if we are to ensure that all immersion students receive adequate assistance early on” (p.2). Wise & Chen (2010) also echo the importance of early identification and early intervention in reducing attrition rates in French immersion.

**Research on French Immersion Students with Learning Disabilities**

With respect to the research conducted on French immersion literacy skills, the field is incredibly limited. Genesee (2004) conducted an extensive empirical research review, in search of FI empirical research from studies conducted in Canada and the United States. In order to collect pertinent studies, a manual search of journals that reported research on immersion in both Canada
and the United States from 1999 to 2004 was conducted. An electronic search also took place through ERIC, PsycINFO and Google Scholar. Finally, key researchers in Canada were contacted and asked for references to the aforementioned topic. From the studies collected, the articles that included empirical evidence were categorized. Genesee’s particular focus was on the suitability of FI programs for students who are at risk of either below average academic ability, or a learning disability.

Through the extensive review, Genesee (2004) was only able to identify three studies that were related to reading impairment (Bournot-Trites & Denziot, 2005; Geva & Clifton, 1994; MacCoubrey et al., 2004). Within this research, only two investigated students who were at-risk for reading difficulties (Bournot-Trites & Denziot, 2005; MacCoubrey et al., 2004). He was able to conclude that, “despite the substantial concern that has been expressed by researchers, educators and parents about the suitability of immersion for students with learning disabilities, there has been relatively little actual empirical research on such learners” (p. 15).

The limited amount of research is even more prevalent in British Columbia. Based on the literature pertaining to BC, the primary individual who has been involved in much of the French immersion literacy research is Monique Bournot-Trites, Associate Professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia (U.B.C., n.d.). Over the course of her extensive career, Bournot-Trites has conducted and supervised research investigating language and literacy development of French immersion students. One of her research studies (Bournot-Trites, Lee, & Séror, 2003) investigated how peer tutoring from older intermediate students could support Grade 2 and 3 students with reading difficulties. Intermediate students who had been trained as peer tutors worked with primary students who were experiencing reading difficulties in French. They met twice a week for 30 minutes each session, for a total of 10 weeks.
Findings from the study showed that students with mild reading difficulties experienced the most improvement, while students with more severe reading difficulties experienced less improvement. A questionnaire was also sent home to all participants (parents, teachers, intermediate and primary students), which revealed the social-emotional and inter-generational benefits of a peer-tutoring system within a school community. Future research is required to explore how this system could be modified in order to be used as an effective intervention for primary students with more severe reading challenges in French.

Another example of a French immersion research study conducted in BC took place in Northern British Columbia (Andrews, 2010). For her Masters Dissertation, Andrews looked at the suitability of the FI Program for students with reading difficulties by investigating the types of errors early FI students make when reading in French. One of the goals of the study was to create an assessment tool that could be explicitly used with FI students. The participants included Grade 2 and 3 French immersion students who spoke English as their first language. Using standardized English measures, participants were assessed for word reading, decoding, and paragraph comprehension. They were assessed on the same skills using an experimental French assessment tool developed by Andrews. Through detailed error analysis, her findings showed that students make similar-style errors in their L1 and TL, and that if a student experiences reading difficulties in one language, they will generally experience similar reading difficulties in an additional language. The results of this study support inclusion of students with reading difficulties in FI, as opposed to having them exit the program in favour of an English program. Andrews also emphasized the advantage of having access to standardized reading measures in French.

It can be noted that research studies pertaining to British Columbia French immersion students are few and far between. In both studies conducted by Bournot-Trites et al. (2003) and
Andrews (2010), the purpose of the research was to provide empirical evidence dispelling the myth that students experiencing reading difficulties in French should choose to exit the program in favour of an English program. Even for students with reading challenges, there are ways to provide effective support within a French immersion context. It is also important to note that in both cases, participants were Grade 2 students or older. This is most likely due to the fact that reading acquisition occurs later for FI students than for students in an English program (Bournot-Trites, 2008). As a result, there isn’t much empirical evidence pertaining to early assessment and intervention for FI students within a British Columbia context.

Canada-wide, the majority of the research conducted pertaining to FI investigates a number of key themes, which will be reviewed in this Chapter. The first theme will focus on how the cross-linguistic transfer of language acquisition can support early intervention in a French immersion setting. The second direction of the literature review will investigate the discrepancy between research and practice within a FI context. Finally, a cross-Canada comparison of how French immersion policies support inclusivity will be explored.

**Cross-Linguistic Transfer of Language Acquisition**

Within the context of early-literacy development in a French immersion (FI) setting, the research is significantly more limited when compared to similar research efforts conducted in an English-education system (Erdos, 2011; Genesee, 2004; MacCoubrey et al., 2004; Wise, 2014). However, one topic that has been investigated quite thoroughly is the role that cross-linguistic transfer plays in language and literacy acquisition. Comeau, Cormier, Grandmaison, & Lacroix (1999) conducted a longitudinal study investigating the effects of cross language transfer on French immersion students in Grades 1, 3, and 5. Their results indicated that phonological awareness skills are transferable across languages, supporting the cross-linguistic transfer theory.
Cross-linguistic transfer refers to the ability of linguistic skills developed in a child’s first language (L1) to transfer over to the language and literacy skills in a child’s target language (TL) (Andrews, 2010; Erdos, 2011; MacCoubrey, 2003; MacCoubrey et al., 2004; Wise & Chen, 2010; Wise, 2014). Within the context of this review, TL refers to French language and literacy acquisition. Phonological awareness (PA) is of particular importance with respect to cross-linguistic transfer. Wise (2014) defines phonological awareness (PA) as, “The insight that words used in speech consist of syllables, onsets and rimes, and phonemes” (p. 2). The effective role that PA can play, both as an early-assessment and early-intervention tool, in a FI context, is investigated and outlined in a number of studies (Andrews, 2010; Bournot-Trites & Denizot, 2005; Comeau et al., 1999; MacCoubrey, 2003; MacCoubrey et al., 2003; Wise, 2014; Wise & Chen, 2010).

Due to the fact that PA assessment and intervention can be conducted independently from a child’s developing literacy and TL skills, it is suggested that its implementation will compensate for the delayed language and literacy development of FI students in a TL.

Erdos’s (2011) longitudinal multi-study quantitative research looked at both oral language and reading development, and asked, “Is it possible to accurately predict students who are at risk for oral language and/or reading difficulty early on at a time where [TL] proficiency is limited?” (p. 28-29). Two studies were conducted, using 86 English-dominant children as participants, who attended school in an early FI program. The first study looked at the results of assessments, which focused on phonological processing and alphabetic principle and were conducted in English at the start of Kindergarten. The results were later compared to the scores on decoding and reading comprehension conducted in French at the end of Grade 1. The second study looked at Grade 1 FI students who were already experiencing challenges in either oral language and/or reading development. The results supported the use of early identification English (L1) assessments to
predict the acquisition of reading skills in French (TL). It was recommended that students who are identified as “at-risk” should receive intervention with an emphasis on letter-sound knowledge and PA. The results also indicated that FI students who are “at-risk” also need support with oral language development. A relatively small sample size, and the fact that a causal link between predictor and outcome variables could not be established, must both be noted as limitations of the study (Erdos, 2011).

Similar to Erdos’s (2011) work, MacCoubrey, Wade-Woolley, Klinger, and Kirby (2004) also investigated which measures would best identify English-speaking FI students who might be at risk for future reading difficulties. The study used longitudinal quantitative research methods to determine how well screening measures taken in a child’s first language (L1) would predict the course of reading development in French (TL). Using predictive discriminant analysis procedures, the team looked at phonological processing assessments (phonological awareness, phonological working memory, and rapid lexical access) in the fall of Grade 1 on a sample of 95 FI students from eight different schools in Eastern Ontario. Outcome measures were collected in both French and English in the spring of Grade 1, and again in the fall of Grade 2.

The overall results indicated that, “English phonological measures taken in early Grade 1 can be used to predict later reading achievement in both English and French” (MacCoubrey et al., 2004, p. 24). Once again, the results suggest that PA assessments conducted in L1 will allow for early-identification of children who might be at risk for reading challenges in TL. As a result, early intervention can be administered. One criticism of the research is that a fairly large number of students (18 cases) could not be classified and several other students were misclassified, either by being identified as “typical” but turning out to be “at risk” (five cases) or were identified as “at risk” but were actually “typical” (eight cases). Most concerning are the unclassified cases and the
five cases identified as “typical” but were in fact “at risk”, as this implies that these students may be overlooked for early intervention.

MacCoubrey (2003) also investigated the cross-linguistic effects of language and reading acquisition during her Masters research on phonemic awareness intervention. She focused on the following three hypotheses: a) that phonological awareness instruction in French improves the phonemic awareness of at-risk students in both French and English, b) that letter-sound association instruction improves letter-sound knowledge in the students’ first and second languages and finally, c) that phonological awareness intervention positively impacts on word reading in at-risk students enrolled in French Immersion.

There were 112 participants from 11 Senior Kindergarten (SK) classrooms in Eastern Ontario. MacCoubrey used two screening batteries (one in English and one in French) in order to identify those participants who were “at-risk” for reading difficulties. The “at-risk” participants were then assigned to either the treatment group or the control group. Students in the treatment group received explicit phonemic awareness intervention and instruction in French, while the control group received French language activities. Post-test assessments were conducted after 12 weeks of intervention and compared to baseline scores.

MacCoubrey’s (2003) results indicated that PA training and intervention in French improved both PA skills in French and in English. This supports the concept of cross-linguistic transfer. The other results from her study were less conclusive. Letter-sound knowledge did not improve as a result of letter-sound association instruction (it actually improved uniformly across all groups over time). Additionally, word-reading improvement as a result of the intervention was partially supported (it improved in English, but not in French). These findings may have resulted due to the fact that MacCoubrey’s team did not have complete support from the schools’ staff and
administration. Initially, the plan was to also include intervention in both English and French, but the school disagreed and, “were ideologically opposed to the English phonemic awareness intervention portion of study. As French Immersion instructors they were insistent on French being the only language used in instruction” (p. 71). This may have played a role in reducing the reliability of the results.

Wise and Chen (2009) built off of MacCoubrey’s work (MacCoubrey, 2003; MacCoubrey et al., 2004) by looking at the impact and success of phonological awareness intervention on reading acquisition in a French immersion context. Their empirical study addressed the critical issue of late assessment of FI students. Many studies (MacCoubrey et al., 2004; Wise & Chen, 2009) have pointed out that reading assessment in a French immersion setting is often not conducted until Grade 2 or 3, due to the fact that “most children who enter the French immersion setting have little background in the French language, and must first acquire listening and speaking skills before formal reading instruction can be introduced” (Wise & Chen, 2009, p. 130). Consequently, students who may be at-risk do not receive timely intervention. Once again, the importance of cross-linguistic transference is emphasized in order to provide early assessment and intervention. Fortunately, unlike the roadblocks that MacCoubrey (2003) experienced, Wish and Chen (2009) were able to implement intervention in both English and French for at-risk students.

Twenty-nine Grade 1 participants were recruited from a selection of students who scored “at risk” on their results of a Board-wide English reading assessment, the PM Benchmark Kit (Nelly & Smith, 2001) delivered at the end of SK in a southern Ontario school district. From this sample, students were reassessed in Grade 1 using the Phonological Awareness Test 2 (PAT2) (Robertson & Salter, 2007). The treatment group comprised 15 students, and the comparison group
comprised 14 students “who were enrolled in the same program during the previous school year” (Wise & Chen, 2009, p. 132).

Wise and Chen (2009) conducted PA instruction for 25 minutes every other day in a small group setting. The first 10 weeks of the intervention took place in English, while the second 10 weeks took place in French. This program delivery model honoured the fact that at the start of Grade 1, students may not have the French language skills necessary to complete the required PA tasks. By introducing the PA instruction in French for the second half of the intervention, students were provided with an additional 10 weeks to develop their French language skills. Additionally, they were able to make cross-linguistic connections between the skills and strategies taught and developed in both languages over the course of the intervention.

At the end of the 20-week intervention, the PAT2 test was re-administered. The overall results concluded that participants made considerable improvements in their English PA skills. Additionally, reading achievement in French was significantly higher in the treatment group, when compared to the results of the comparison group. The research builds on MacCoubrey’s (2003) work and shows the validity of cross-linguistic transfer and the importance and effectiveness of early-intervention with a focus on phonological awareness in supporting struggling readers in a French immersion setting (Wise & Chen, 2009).

More recently, Wise (2014) identifies in the literature the role of PA in reading acquisition in both monolingual and bilingual children (p. 12). Wise’s (2014) research included quantitative analysis pertaining to two main research questions. The first was to investigate the effectiveness of PA training for Grade 1 FI students who were identified as at-risk for reading difficulties, with a particular emphasis on the effect of English PA intervention on improving both English and French PA. The second question compared the results of treatment group (students receiving
English PA) with the control group (English instruction to increase vocabulary development) on French reading measures taken at the end of Grades 1, 2, and 3 (p. 26-27). Unlike previous studies (Erdos, 2011; MacCoubrey et al., 2004), Wise (2014) had a larger sample size, and was able to work with 252 Grade 1 students (approximately 100 children in each cohort each year for three years).

Wise’s (2014) results indicated that post-treatment, the achievement gap was closing between the treatment group and the achievement of typically developing readers in French. The control group continued to show a significant difference in performance when compared to typically developing readers. Delayed post-testing data were also analyzed and similar differences between treatment and control groups continued to be prevalent. Wise (2014) identified that finding participants to represent the true changing demographic of the FI population (having a diverse linguistic background, instead of having primarily English as L1) was a limitation to the research, and must be considered for future studies in this area.

The research shows that PA in a student’s L1 language is an effective early assessment and intervention tool for TL learners. In each study, the cross-linguistic evidence of phonological awareness is supported when pre- and post-test results are analyzed (Erdos, 2011; MacCoubrey, 2003; MacCoubrey et al., 2004; Wise, 2014; Wise & Chen, 2010). The results also dispel the belief that FI students with literacy difficulties should exit the FI program in favour of an English program, as their needs cannot be met in a TL setting. Phonological awareness is a basic requirement for literacy in any language and as such, is both an effective assessment tool in L1, and as an intervention strategy in either L1 or TL.

One relative weakness present in much of the research (Erdos, 2011; MacCoubrey, 2003; MacCoubrey et al., 2004; Wise, 2014; Wise & Chen, 2010), which only Wise (2014) addressed,
was the changing lens of the FI student and family demographic. Many FI students do not necessarily come with English as their primary language spoken at home. This is a challenge that will need to addressed and considered when conducting PA assessment in English to FI students. The current research supports the direction of my research, around identifying the components (assessment, program delivery, effectiveness) of high-quality French immersion early literacy intervention. The importance of phonological awareness in early assessment and intervention for immersion students and the role that cross-linguistic transfer plays in language acquisition is frequently emphasized. The research provides an initial framework for how PA and cross-linguistic transfer can be used in early assessment and early intervention for literacy within a FI setting.

The Discrepancy between Research, Policy and Practice

As discussed in Chapter 1, French immersion has historically had the reputation of being an exclusive program and should only be considered for students who demonstrate strong academic abilities prior to entering the program. Wise (2011) discusses the repeated allegations that FI is only for the brightest students, attracting students from middle- to upper-middle-class backgrounds. Additionally, students currently enrolled in FI who are later identified as having learning difficulties are often encouraged to exit the program in favour of English language instruction. Unfortunately, this is the result of almost 50 years of program implementation based on assumptions that students with academic or learning difficulties are better off in public school programs where classes are instructed in English. Bourgoin (2014) argues, that “when students who experience learning difficulties refrain from enrolling in, or transfer out of French immersion, inequalities between immersion and English classes are oftentimes created. These inequalities can lead to the French Immersion Program being categorized as elitist” (p. 2).
However, the empirically supported evidence suggests otherwise (Cook & Schirmer, 2003; Cummins, 2014; Muhling & Mady, 2017). Muhling and Mady (2017) argue that, “exclusion of [students with special needs] is an ethical and legal issue in a publicly funded system, as all students should have equal access to all programs and equal support within each program” (p. 17).

A strong proponent for evidence-based French immersion practices, Jim Cummins, an English as an additional language professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, has been at the forefront of this pedagogical argument since the 1980s (Cummins, 1983). In his 1983 paper, Cummins identifies two key assumptions that have guided bilingualism and language acquisition practice. The first assumption being, “The Maximum Exposure Assumption.” This assumption postulates that in order to learn a language, one requires as much exposure to the language as possible. The second assumption, “The Linguistic Mismatch Assumption” suggests that learning challenges will arise if the home language is different from the school language. Although the second assumption is intuitively contradictory to the concept of French immersion education, the first assumption continues to guide FI policy and practice across Canada (Bourgin, 2014; Cummins, 1983, 2007, 2014; Genesee & Jared, 2008). Cummins (1983) explores research and practice, which provides evidence that refutes both assumptions.

Cummins (1983) argues in support of two theoretical principles, from which policy can be derived and can more effectively inform practice. The common underlying proficiency principle (CUP) theorizes that first- and second-language skills are interdependent, which, “Makes possible the transfer of cognitive/academic or literacy-related skills across languages” (p. 376). As a result, language instruction and proficiency in one language will transfer to another language, as long as there is enough exposure to and motivation for the second language, in this case, French. The second principle, the sufficient comprehensible input principle (SCI) states that target language
acquisition not only depends on exposure to said language, but access in a way that makes it more comprehensible, through language exposure that is clear and relevant. Cummins makes reference to Bruck’s 1978 findings, which include that L1 skills are predictive of academic skills in a TL, that immersion programs are not inappropriate for children with learning challenges, due to the cross-linguistic transfer, and finally, that children who exited FI did not perform better once enrolled in an English program. Almost 40 years later, the fact that referencing these findings continues to be necessary in rationalizing inclusivity in French immersion speaks to the deep-routed misconceptions that some parents and teachers continue to have regarding the suitability of French immersion for students with reading difficulty.

Cummins continues to present strong arguments challenging the lack of empirical evidence with regard to current French immersion practices (Cummins, 2007; 2014). In 2007, Cummins presented a call to action, in the Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics, encouraging educators to reconceptualise the rationales driving current immersion teaching practices. He stresses that target language teaching continues to apply a set of monolingual instructional assumptions deemed best practice, without being supported empirically. This is referred to as the monolingual principle (Cummins, 2007). This principle involves, “Three inter-related monolingual instructional assumptions” (p. 222). The three assumptions include that instruction is delivered exclusively in the TL, that no translation between L1 and TL should occur in the classroom, and finally, that L1 and TL instruction should be kept separate (the two solitudes assumption). Cummins maintains that these assumptions are “inconsistent with the instructional implications of current theory in the area of cognitive psychology and applied linguistics” (p. 221). Current research has provided strong evidence attesting to the benefits “of metalinguistic awareness that bilingual students experience as a result of processing two languages” (p. 229). Unfortunately, most French
immersion policy and practice still operate under the guise that the monolingual principle should be accepted as best practice.

Cummins (2007) argues that by following the monolingual principle in an immersion setting, opportunities to use a child’s L1 as a cognitive tool to enhance their TL are being overlooked. Engaging in prior understandings (accessing prior knowledge) in a student’s L1 can strengthen target language acquisition. Additionally, the use of L1 to support TL reading acquisition results in deeper conceptual and linguistic proficiency in the target language, which will promote interdependence and the transference of skills across languages.

Cummins (2007) concludes his paper by restating that the empirical evidence supports the use of a student’s L1 as a cognitive tool in learning the TL, and that there is “no empirical justification for any absolute exclusion of students’ L1 from TL instruction” (p. 227). He also lists the benefits of cross-language activities, including the promotion of TL acquisition, bi-literacy development, and confidence building.

Most recently, Cummins (2014) has looked specifically at the disconnect between research and practice within Canadian second language policies. He suggests that one underlying cause for this discrepancy is due to the fact that Canada has an international reputation as a “leader in the area of second language teaching, primarily as a result of the implementation of French Immersion Programs in the 1960s” (p. 1). As a consequence of this perceived international success, policy development at the federal and provincial level does not appear to have felt it necessary to align policy with empirically supported language teaching strategies. Monolingual instruction continues to be the preferred immersion program strategy, “despite the fact that there is overwhelming evidence for strong relationships between the development of academic skills in French and English” (p.3). Seemingly, the benefits of cross-linguistic transfer continue to be ignored.
In the two solitudes assumption, L1 and TL instruction are kept completely separate (Cummins, 2007). This is common current practice within a French immersion setting, where French language and English language are taught as completely separate entities. This has a number of consequences, outlined in Cummins’ work (2014). Students are unable to see the relationship between French and English languages and as a result, do not make use of cross-linguistic transfer abilities to support their learning. There are very few opportunities for students to showcase their dual-language skills, which is unfortunate, as bilingualism between the two official languages in Canada is something that should be encouraged and celebrated. The two solitudes assumption prevents collaboration between dual-language learners and discourages cross-language curriculum planning for educators.

Researchers continue to advocate for more instructional flexibility when it comes to the use of more than one language in a French immersion setting. Current research notes that this style of educational instruction promotes the “transfer of morphological and broader literacy skills across French and English in the Canadian context [and] has produced promising results” (Cummins, 2014, p. 4). It is also essential that French immersion teachers are provided with professional development opportunities in the area of language acquisition, in order to best meet the diverse needs of their students.

**Cross-Canada French Immersion Inclusion Policies**

This section provides a summary of recent detailed analyses that have been conducted of the specific policies in place across Canada (Bourgoin, 2014; Cummins, 2014; Muhling & Mady, 2017; Wise, 2011). Additionally, it will also make reference to the Ministry of Education documentation currently available to support inclusive practices within the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario.
In general, provincial and territorial inclusion policies all stem from the following statement:

Citizens of Canada who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province, have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province. (*Canadian Charter, 1982, s 23(1)(b)*)

However, there are notable differences when comparing policies between ministries, and discrepancies between published policies and actual practice.

As mentioned earlier, FI should be considered a suitable program for students with learning difficulties. Various studies conducted by Cummins and Genesee (as cited in Bourgoin, 2014, p. 3),

found that students at risk for learning difficulties (i.e. low academic ability and/or limited first language skills) experienced no greater disadvantage in French immersion in terms of their English language development and overall academic achievement. Studies have also found that these students would face the same academic challenges if they were enrolled in the English program. (p. 3)

Bruck (as cited by Bourgoin, 2014, p. 3) also noted that those students who exited the FI program and experienced successes in an English classroom environment tended to be receiving extra support which was either not provided or unavailable to them in FI. Although past research on why students exit FI programs seems inconsistent, Genesee (as cited by Bourgoin, 2014, p. 4) indicates that “much of the research on the issue of transferring programs is based on people’s own interpretation, and as such, may not be considered evidence-based in determining the suitability of
French immersion for students at-risk for learning difficulties” (p. 4). Unfortunately, as Bourgoin observed, peoples’ own interpretation continues to drive both policy implementation.

**Cross-Canada policy review.** Renée Bourgoin (2014), of the University of New Brunswick, conducted a literature review of inclusionary practices in Canada, in order to determine how research and the literature is informing practice. Bourgoin looked at factors such as accessibility of FI across Canadian provinces, how inclusion is being promoted, and how closely the policy and practice related to the research on FI suitability. Her findings were that most provincial governments acknowledge through general discussion that diversity and individual differences are present in FI classrooms. It was also noted that most governments address inclusion and special education in a FI context to varying degrees and through various means. Again, in most provincial documentation, there were examples and strategies mentioned to support FI inclusion through instructional practices, such as explanations around scaffolding, explicit instruction, modeling, and classroom environment. However, the provincial documentation varied as to how each province addresses specific questions relating to inclusion in a French immersion context, but Bourgoin notes that it appears that efforts are being made to advocate for students with exceptionalities in FI.

When it comes to linking policy to research, it appears as though efforts have been made, but to varying degrees:

[All ministries of education] have considered and integrated the research pertaining to the suitability of immersion for students at risk for learning or academic difficulties when defining their position on inclusion and accessibility to French immersion for all interested students. However, the way, and the extent, in which they do so vary. (p. 5-6)
From her findings, Bourgoin identifies two main gaps in current practice, which are acting as barriers towards providing fully inclusive FI programming. The first gap involves teacher professional-development and access to resources. FI teachers must be provided with opportunities for growth and development through professional learning opportunities, school-based collaborations, and access to resources and tools that are target-language specific in order to promote inclusive policies and practices in FI. Additionally, it is important to highlight for teachers that teaching strategies designed to support students with learning difficulties are closely aligned with strategies associated with target language acquisition.

The second gap identified in Bourgoin’s literature review was lack of access to effective resources that allow for early identification, assessment, and intervention of FI students who may be at risk for learning disabilities. It is important to note that early assessment and effective intervention is critical in order to reduce attrition rates from FI programs. Bourgoin also noted that learning support teachers working in FI contexts should consider both assessment in English and in French to get a more complete picture of a student’s potential challenges, and that intervention should include phonological awareness and decoding, with the use of direct, explicit instruction in phonological awareness.

Jim Cummins’ (2014) paper also argues that there continue to be discrepancies between research evidence and the instructional policies and practices with regard to teaching French in Canada. He looked at a number of variables, including core and immersion programs, immigrant backgrounds, heritage-language teaching, and the education of Deaf and hard-of hearing students. For the purposes of this study, only policies and practices pertaining to core and French Immersion Programs will be discussed.
One of the main reasons for discrepancies, Cummins argues, is due to the fact that “education falls under provincial jurisdiction, different policies and provisions in relation to language teaching exist in different provinces” (p. 1). He also points out that many programs currently being implemented are inconsistent with the empirical evidence regarding effective practice, especially the role that cross-linguistic transfer of language and literacy skills can play in supporting academic skill development in FI. According to Cummins, “there has been little attempt within French Immersion Programs to teach for transfer across languages. This is because monolingual instructional assumptions have dominated practice within immersion” (p. 3). Sadly, due to traditional assumptions surrounding “full immersion,” most students are not given the opportunity to access cross-language learning efficiencies within a FI context (Cummins, 2014).

More recently, Muhling and Mady (2017) performed an extensive document analysis of the policy and resource documents available through each Ministry of Education. The purpose was to investigate how inclusive education is being implemented for students with special needs within a French immersion context. In their work, they refer to students with special needs as students with special educational needs (SSEN) and are referring to all French as a Second Language (FSL) programs available to public school students in Canada. Two rationales were put forth for the analysis. The first being that the state of inclusion in Canadian FSL programs needs to be improved. Secondly, in order to support FI teachers with developing inclusive classrooms, there is a need to identify certain teaching strategies currently being outlined in order to inform teacher and administrator practices.

Documents from all provincial and territorial Ministries of Education (excluding Quebec) were reviewed to identify whether or not the following four categories were addressed; FSL Curriculum, Special Education, Inclusion, and FSL-specific inclusion. Based on the extensive
analyses, Muhling and Mady (2017) observed that there were definite discrepancies between provincial and territorial published policies and what was, in fact, put into practice. They noted that “varying policies on inclusion are based in divergent understandings of learning disabilities rather than in a coherent understanding of second language learning” (p. 16). Some general themes were uncovered, particularly with respect to barriers for inclusion, including a lack of specific policies that pertain to inclusion in FSL, School Board policies outlining characteristics of good candidates for FI (intentional or otherwise), and finally, lack of support provided to SSEN in FSL programs.

Based on their findings, all provinces, except Prince Edward Island (PEI), had documentation addressing equity, inclusion, and program access, but only two provinces included statements suggesting that all programming is available to all students, even when programming is optional, as is the case with FI. Special Education policies for all provinces and territories were examined only two provinces (Ontario and PEI) mention or provide examples of FSL-specific modifications or accommodations. The very limited number of examples of how to accommodate and modify lessons for FSL students with diverse learning needs supports the notion that teachers do not have the resources they need to promote inclusive classrooms within a French context. With regard to FSL Curriculum documents, approximately half the provincial and territorial FSL curriculum documents referenced the policies on inclusion mentioned in the inclusion documents, including British Columbia (BC). It is important to note that BC does not have FSL-specific inclusion documents, but describes differentiation strategies with respect to environment, instruction, presentation, assistance, and assessment. Unfortunately, these strategies are only located in the Core French Integrated Resource Package (IRP), are not included in the Français
Langue IRP. Additionally, access to IRP documentation is buried deep within the BC Ministry of Education Website, as they are not connected to the New BC Curriculum.

In summary of Muhling and Mady’s (2017) work, it can be noted that provinces and territories have general policies of inclusion that support access to education for students with special needs. Unfortunately, the overarching policies may not be applied to FSL in all areas. It does not explicitly state that inclusion should apply to all choice programs in all provinces and territories. Their recommendations include revision of policy language to explicitly state equal access to all programs; FSL-specific policies outlining how programming is accessible to all learners; additional curricular documents with detailed strategies and support to allow teachers to move towards more inclusive classrooms; and finally, professional development for teachers and administrators, in order to build awareness around policy change and to build capacity. This final recommendation is supported through a literature review conducted by Lapkin, Mady, and Arnott (2009), which found that FSL teachers feel underequipped with support and pedagogical knowledge in order to effectively teach students with learning disabilities. FSL Teachers also expressed a desire for more information through professional development on how to support diverse learning needs in their classrooms (Carr, 2007; Mollica, Philips, & Smith, 2005).

In 2011, Nancy Wise conducted a critique of the policies in place and accessibility and equality in Ontario (Wise, 2011). Wise feels strongly that there are a number of factors at play explaining why the Ontario Public School System has fallen short in terms of providing accessibility and equality for all students wishing to enroll in FI.

In her critique, she notes that FSL teachers may encourage exclusion due to their belief that FI is an enrichment program. This misconception is due to the fact that FI teachers have been ill-prepared to meet the diverse needs of special education students. Additionally, appropriate special
education programs and services are rarely provided and parents are often advised to switch their children to the regular English stream in order to more easily access a larger assortment of supports. Both of these factors are based on misinformation that the educational needs of exceptional students will be better met in the English program, which has never been substantiated, and that provincial funding model does not permit a full range of special education programs and services in the FI context, which is false.

She also argues that the inaction regarding addressing such inequality issues may be intentional on the part of certain member groups of the FI community. However, French immersion is a publicly funded program and as such, taxpayers should expect that the needs of exceptional students will be accommodated within the program. Cummins (as cited in Wise, p. 182) states that “students with special needs can acquire an L2 in the immersion setting as long as there is appropriate support available to them. In many such cases, there is no apparent reason to deprive them of the benefits of a bilingual education” (p. 182).

**Provincial ministries of education documentation.** During the review of the literature, it became apparent that it was important to determine what direction and support was being provided from the top down to support inclusion in a FI program. As such, Ministry of Education websites for the Governments of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario were visited, in order to locate information pertaining to supporting students with special needs in a French immersion context.

**Alberta ministry documentation.** The Alberta Ministry of Education has compiled a handbook for FI administrators (Alberta Ministry, 2014), with an entire chapter devoted to inclusion titled *Inclusion of Students with Diverse Needs in French Immersion*. The chapter

outlines the supports available to different members of the FI community, including students, parents, and teachers. The document speaks to the accessibility of the program when it states that,

Students with language or reading difficulties or a learning disability can often thrive in French Immersion. As these difficulties are pervasive (i.e., they will exist regardless of language of instruction and in all languages learned by the student), the student may not struggle more in French Immersion than they would in an English-only program. (p. 80)

However, the document tends to use subjective language, including statements such as “generally speaking,” “can often,” and “may not.” It is as though they are attempting to keep their options open in terms of what sort of advice they provide to families. Additionally, the document does not provide teachers with a lot of practical strategies, opting for more general statements about strategies and differentiation through suggested readings and resources.

**Saskatchewan ministry documentation.** Similar to Alberta, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education has created a handbook for leaders in FSL (Saskatchewan Ministry, 2015). Though not having a specific chapter on inclusion, there are a number of places within the document that outline the supports and practices available for students with special needs in FI. They address the suitability of FI and how inclusion is being implemented through “the design of Saskatchewan curricula and the expectation that the adaptive dimension be integrated into instructional planning for all students who require adaptations, [making] the program suitable for almost any child” (p. 15, para. 1). They also speak to the empirical evidence that supports inclusive practices in FI:

Researchers have found that early immersion students with difficulties, such as learning disabilities and behavioural problems, will do as well academically in the French program as they would in a regular English program provided that they receive the same assistance as they would in the English program. (p. 15, para. 3)
Additionally, the handbook indicates appropriate testing and diagnostic services for FI students experiencing learning difficulties, as well as identifies appropriate resource programs. The assessments available to support students in the FSL program are also listed. Finally, the handbook includes a valuable section for parents, with an explicit list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), which can be accessed when considering the suitability of the FI program for their children.

**Manitoba ministry documentation.** The Manitoba Ministry of Education also provides an extensive handbook for French immersion school leaders (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2007). In addition to the complete in-depth chapter, *Inclusion in the French Immersion Program*, inclusion and support for students with special needs is referenced in various chapters throughout the handbook. The handbook begins with identifying the research that supports and explains the benefits of FI, and similar to Saskatchewan, provides an extensive list of FAQs. One specific questions asks if FI is for all children, to which Dr. Obadia (1996) replies,

> [s]tudies have shown that there is no reason why immersion programs should not be suitable for any child… [C]hildren with learning difficulties will experience some problems in trying to cope with the French immersion curriculum — the same problems they would encounter in the English-stream program. Learning assistance should be provided to them, whether they are in immersion or in the regular English program. These children (except in rare instances) should not be denied the satisfaction and pride that come from becoming bilingual. (p. 1-17)

The handbook also outlines specific requirements for support services in a FI context, and describes the policies on access and equity, which include inclusiveness of the FI program through
support for students with special needs, as well as access to equivalent testing and student services as are available in other programs.

**Ontario ministry documentation.** The Ontario Ministry of Education has taken it a step further and has created the complete handbook, *Including Students with Special Education Needs in French as a Second Language Programs* (Ontario Ministry, 2015), as a companion resource to the document released in 2013 entitled, *A Framework for French as a Second Language in Ontario Schools: Kindergarten to Grade 12* (Ontario Ministry, 2013). The purpose of the document is

[T]o promote discussion among various stakeholders about issues related to the inclusion of all students, particularly students with special education needs, in FSL programs. It is also intended to serve as a resource for school boards, educators, and other stakeholders as they embrace diversity and work to ensure that schools are places where all students are welcomed and respected, and where all students can succeed. (Including students, p. 3, para. 1)

This extensive resource reviews the research, discusses policies and practices, and provides guidance, support and strategies on how to create inclusive classroom environments in a FI context.

**British Columbia ministry documentation.** Finding concrete description and direction was most difficult when navigating the BC Ministry of Education Website. There appears to be no easily accessible “handbook for FI leaders,” as was available in all other provinces investigated. In fact, there was no interconnectedness between French Immersion and Special Education policy. However, three areas within the website should be noted:

*French immersion program.* Within in the French Immersion Program documentation (British Columbia [BC] Ministry, 1996), the only reference to inclusive practices is found in the
Policy in Full, which specifies that “school districts should provide equitable learning resources, library books and student services in the same manner they are provided for in regular English programs” (BC Ministry, French Immersion - Learning Resources and Pupil Services section, 1996).

*Special education*. Within the Special Education section of the BC Ministry website (BC Ministry, 2006), there is a more complete statement on inclusion:

British Columbia promotes an inclusive education system in which students with special needs are fully participating members of a community of learners. Inclusion describes the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs. The practice of inclusion is not necessarily synonymous with full integration in regular classrooms, and goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others. (BC Ministry, Special Education - Inclusion section, 2006)

*Inclusive education resources*. Finally, there was an additional section on Inclusive Education Resources (BC Ministry, n.d.) providing access to resources describing support for students with various special needs. This section opens with a statement indicating that “all students should have equitable access to learning, opportunities for achievement, and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs” (para. 1).

However, the content covered in this section appears closely connected to what was available in the Special Education section (BC Ministry, 2006), with no real additional resources. As well, there is no specific indication or reference to how teachers can implement these strategies and support students with special needs in a French immersion context.
Based on the review of Ministries of Education online resources to support inclusive education in a FI context, it is clear that the BC Ministry of Education is lacking in top-down support for inclusive educational practices. Without clear policies and supports in place, it will continue to be challenging to encourage FI teachers to align their educational practices with what is supported by the empirical evidence.

**Direction of Current Research Study**

As is apparent from the literature, there are certain areas of French immersion that have been researched and analysed in-depth, such as the cross-linguistic transfer of language and literacy skills and the importance of early assessment and intervention for reading difficulties. However, the pedagogical practices have been slow to move from policies based on historical tradition and assumptions to educational practices driven by empirical research findings (Cummins, 2007; 2014; Bourgoin, 2014). In British Columbia, there is not much top-down direction or literature to support inclusion for exceptional students within a French immersion framework. As a result, student attrition continues to be a challenge for the French Immersion Program, as families feel that their children’s learning needs will be better addressed in an English learning environment. Without clear direction and guidance from the Ministry of Education, school districts and school sites are left to figure out what the best course of action should be on a case-by-case basis, often through the support of educators who have little to no training in French immersion special education. The literature explains that early assessment and early intervention are key features in supporting literacy development in French (Bournot-Trites, 2008; Wise & Chen, 2010), and that phonological awareness ability in a student’s L1 is a good predictor for possible reading difficulties in the Target Language (Erdos, 2011; MacCoubrey et al., 2004; Wise,
2014). This is at odds with current practices guided by the assumption that instruction must be delivered exclusively in the TL (Bourgoin, 2014; Cummins, 2007).

In order to retain students in the French Immersion Program, their learning needs must be identified and supported in a timely manner (Bournot-Trites, 2008; MacCoubrey et al., 2004). This descriptive study hopes to identify what, in fact, current practices for French immersion early reading assessment and intervention actually look like in the Metro/Coast Region of the British Columbia Public School System. By surveying special educators who work with French immersion students, the study will identify the consistencies and discrepancies of FI early literacy educational practices, and will investigate how well practice is aligned with the current empirical evidence. The findings, based on educator perceptions, can help identify the steps required to promote inclusive French immersion classrooms, and possibly reduce attrition rates at a school, district, and provincial level.
Chapter 3 – Methodology and Methods

Research Question

The goal of the study was to inquire into the following question:

What do Learning Support Teachers believe are the components (assessment, program delivery, effectiveness) of high-quality French Immersion early literacy intervention?

Methodology

In order to address the research question, a Mixed Methods Research (MMR) approach was used. MMR involves conducting both qualitative and quantitative research, and integrating the components of both in order to strengthen the findings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). Mertens (2007) argues that such integration allows for divergent thinking and room for growth within the scope of the research. It is placed centrally on the positivist/constructivist continuum, with an emphasis on pragmatic ontology and epistemology (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013). In Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007), Creswell defines MMR as “a research design (or methodology) in which the researcher collects, analyzes, and mixes (integrates or connects) both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a multiphase program of inquiry” (p. 119). For the purposes of this study, an intra-method mixing MMR approach was used, meaning, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected within one method. Specifically, through the use of an online questionnaire that included both open- and closed-questions (Appendix A). The closed questions allowed for quantification of various attributes of early French immersion assessment and intervention. For example, it was able to identify and summarize levels of educator experience and training, types of program implementation, as well as specific aspects of the assessment and intervention practices, such as language and grade level of delivery. The relevance of the open-ended (qualitative) questions was
to provide an opportunity for educators in a French immersion (FI) learning support (LST) role to share their personal experiences as to what constitutes effective literacy intervention. This allowed for analysis of the opinions of educators in the Metro/Coast Region of the BC Public School System, in order to gauge whether or not there are any current trends in sentiments. By combining the data from the quantitative and qualitative responses, a more complete and precise picture was created of the current state of early French immersion assessment and intervention practices in the geographic area. Comparison between current practices and empirical evidence allowed for recommendations for program direction at a school, district and provincial level.

Participants

Characteristics. Participants were of any gender and ranged in age from 23-65. They were all qualified teachers, meeting the teaching requirements of the BC Teacher Qualification Service. Levels of experience included new teachers, mid-career teachers, or late-career teachers. Participants worked with primary (K-3) French Immersion students within a Learning Support context and identified whether or not they had qualifications in either French Immersion instruction or Special Education training. All participants lived within a two-hour’s commute to their place of employment. Participants worked as learning support teachers within a French Immersion school setting within the public school system of the Metro/Coast region of British Columbia.

Recruitment. A database of the French immersion elementary schools within the Metro/Coast Region was created. Permission was requested from each of the 10 School Districts in the Metro/Coast region of BC to distribute the online survey to French immersion learning support teachers (FI LSTs). The researcher contacted the Superintendent (or appropriate contact person) of each school district, detailing the purpose and requesting permission to conduct research
in a particular school district. Of the 10 school districts approached within this region, eight school districts approved the research, and two school districts declined participation.

For the school districts where approval was provided, the researcher then reached out to the specific contact person or persons, as identified through approval process, to ask that the introductory letter and consent to contact link be distributed to FI LSTs. Any FI LSTs who were interested in participating submitted contact information via the consent to contact e-form. Once the researcher received contact information from participants, a follow-up email was sent reiterating the purpose of the research and providing the link to the online survey. Over the duration of the study, two reminder emails were sent out to the participants requesting their voluntary survey completion.

**Ethical issues.**

*Researcher/participant relationship.* One of the school districts involved in the study was the researcher’s school district of employment, where, at the time of the study, the researcher worked as a Vice Principal at a French Immersion elementary school. As a result, there was a risk of a perceived power relationship between the researcher and the participants within this particular school district. To mitigate any possible issues around perceived power relationships between the researcher and participants, the introductory letter and online survey emphasized the voluntary nature of the survey, allowed participants to opt out at any time, and explained the steps taken to ensure participant anonymity.

*Conflict of interest.* There was the potential for a perceived conflict of interest, as the survey included questions pertaining to the participants’ experiences working within the district where they are employed. In order to minimize this perceived conflict of interest, confidentiality of participants was ensured and survey questions were carefully written in order to maintain their
objectivity. Any responses that provided identifying information were addressed accordingly. Participants were reminded of the possible risks, assured confidentiality of their responses, and were reminded that they could opt out at any time during the completion of the online survey. The recruitment process helped to ensure that consent was free and clear that participation was on a voluntary basis.

**Coercion or undue influence to participate.** The participants might have felt required to complete the online survey, as in some districts, the introductory letter and consent to contact e-form was distributed by the researcher via the District Administrator of Student Support Services, or through a School Administrator. This might have been perceived as a power relationship (employer-employee). Again, to mitigate this perceived sentiment, the introductory letter clearly stated the nature of the research, the voluntary participation, and the opportunity to withdraw consent at any point. Additionally, only those who completed the consent to contact e-form were provided with the actual link to the online survey by the researcher.

**Consent.** The researcher sought consent from the participants themselves, in addition to consent from each school district to distribute the online survey to French immersion learning support teachers within a particular school district. The researcher communicated with the appropriate contact within each school district, based on each application process, to request that the introductory letter and consent to contact be distributed to all educators working in French Immersion Learning Support roles. The online survey included a “consent section” at the beginning of the survey that the participants were required to complete. It was stated in the consent section of the online survey that participants were free to withdraw their consent to participate, and the data they provided, from the research at any time, and need not offer any reason for doing so, by not submitting the survey. It was also specified that once the survey has been submitted,
participants may withdraw consent at any time, up until a specific date by contacting the researcher.

Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. Participant privacy, confidentiality and anonymity based on the responses they provide were maintained. The personal identity of participants and the responses connected to them were kept confidential. Any responses that provided identifying features of participants, students, specific schools, or school districts were also kept confidential. All participants and their information was coded by the researcher. Any information that identified specific students, schools, districts, and/or colleagues was removed from the products of the research. Participants were also asked to refrain from including information in their responses that might identify their school or school district.

Based on the responses given to open-ended questions from the online survey, direct quotes were sometimes used and included the findings of the research. The researcher used the code assigned to the participant being quoted to maintain confidentiality. Consent for use of quotes was indicated and explained in the introductory section of the online survey. Any identifying information found in the participant responses that may risk confidentiality has been stripped out of the research.

Risk of mental distress. It was possible that some participants might experience distress when responding to the online survey questions. The online survey clearly stated that participation was voluntary and that participants may respond with as much or as little detail as they would like. Participants feeling uncomfortable with any question were able to skip specific questions as needed. Participants were able to complete the online survey at any time, in any location, and on any form of electronic device which supported the online survey platform with access to the internet, so there was minimal risk of discomfort, stress, or embarrassment.
Risk of harm to a community, an institution, or a social group. Due to the nature of the survey, it was possible that some information on district-mandated practices might be included in participant responses. As a result, the research may have involved some risks to schools and school districts. Additionally, there was only a small cohort of educators who fell within the French Immersion Learning Support Teacher assignment within each school district. As such, there was the potential risk that participants could be indirectly identified through their responses.

In order to mitigate these risks, a statement was included in the consent section of the online survey, stating that information concerning specific schools or school districts was not to be provided by participants. The researcher also removed any unintentional identifying details from the findings.

Online survey platform. The online survey platform, SurveyMonkey, hosted the FI LST questionnaire. All Canadian SurveyMonkey users have their surveys hosted on American data servers. As a U.S.-based entity, SurveyMonkey is subject to adherence to the Patriot Act that would require records to be turned over to the U.S. Government, upon request. In such a circumstance, there continues to be the potential for individuals in the U.S. Government to connect responses with participant identities. However, the nature of the questions in the survey did not pose adverse risk to respondents.

Data Collection

Types of data. An online survey hosted by SurveyMonkey collected French Immersion Learning Support Teacher responses describing their current practices for literacy assessment and intervention for French Immersion students (Appendix A). Participants were asked to provide responses to both quantitative (closed-) and qualitative (open-ended) questions. The survey questions were developed based on information gathered through the literature review. The survey
incorporated some multiple-choice components, and also allowed for “open” response options to accommodate unique responses.

**Applicability of data to research question.** The quantitative data provided insight into some of the statistics associated with FI LSTs from the Metro/Coast Region, such as experience and training in both FI and LS. It also provided information regarding the specific assessment tools and intervention programs that are available and used by FI LSTs.

Qualitative data provided information pertaining to personal/professional teaching beliefs regarding the components of high-quality FI learning support. Participants had the opportunity to share their experiences and opinions on the current status and direction of early literacy assessment and intervention within a French immersion context.

**Data collection instruments.** The online survey platform, SurveyMonkey, hosted the FI LST questionnaire. The researcher shared the link to the online survey with educators who expressed interest in participating. The survey was available to participants for one month and the data collected was analyzed in order to find patterns and preferences amongst the respondents for their perceptions on what constitutes high-quality and effective assessment and intervention for French immersion students.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Due to the descriptive nature of this study, survey responses were analyzed and interpreted in order to gain a better understanding of the current practices being implemented in the Metro/Coast region of British Columbia (BC) to support FI students with their literacy development. The survey responses provided a picture of who is currently filling the FI LST assignments, what assessments and intervention strategies are used, what the strategies look like in practice and when the intervention takes place. Additionally, conclusions could be drawn
regarding consistency and continuity of these roles within school districts and the Metro/Coast Region of BC.

Interpretation and reflection were ongoing throughout the study, as one of the biggest challenges was actually getting the online survey into the hands of potential participants. This process took much longer than anticipated, as each school district had a slightly different process when accepting research proposals. In fact, some descriptive information was gathered by the researcher prior to survey completion, based on email communications with various district personnel.

**Theoretical framework of analysis and interpretation.** Currently, there is limited research and literature available in British Columbia investigating early-literacy assessment and intervention practices for French immersion students. Consequently, many educators who find themselves in the role of FI LST are required to work in isolation with little opportunity to collaborate or share resources with colleagues. Additionally, the ministerial language surrounding inclusive policies for FI students is often vague and open to interpretation (Muhling & Mady, 2017). The purpose of this study it to collect responses from FI LSTs within the Metro/Coast Region of BC, in order to identify what assessment and intervention practices are currently being used, whether or not FI LSTs feel supported in their roles, and to determine if current practices in this region align with inclusive policies as outlined by the BC Ministry of Education and are empirically supported.

Findings in the literature indicate that, in general, educators working with students with special needs in FI feel underqualified and that they lack the training, tools, and resources to support students with special needs (Bourgoin, 2014; Muhling & Mady, 2017; Wise, 2011). Additionally, the direction and policy development for inclusive education from a Ministry of
Education standpoint is vague and subjective, as outlined on the BC Ministry of Education website (BC Ministry, n.d.). As a result, educational perspectives on “best practices” vary from school to school, between districts, and are often based on teacher misconceptions (Bourgoin, 2014; Cummins, 2014; Wise, 2011).

**Strategies and tools.** Quantitative data was collected from each participant and summarized to provide context for a variety of aspects from the sample (i.e., training, qualification, experience, program delivery, levels of confidence, etc…). Responses from different quantitative questions from each participant were also compared in order to observe and identify possible trends. Qualitative data was reviewed and analyzed, in order to identify themes or general sentiments between participants. A summary of the survey responses was created using descriptive statistics. Due to the small sample size (N=6), the summary and analysis was conducted manually by the researcher and through analysis software embedded in the SurveyMonkey platform.

**Issues arising.** There were two main issues that arose over the course of the study; the first issue was the result of attempting to conduct the study within 10 school districts in the Metro/Coast Region of BC, and the second issue being small sample size. The lofty goal of survey distribution within 10 school districts posed a number of challenges, as each school district had a slightly different application process when requesting to conduct research within their schools. Consequently, the extended timeline for each district’s research approval and ensuring that the survey reached its intended potential participants proved somewhat challenging. Unfortunately, access to the survey had to be extended into the dates for Spring Break in the region. The aforementioned factors most likely contributed to low participation and a small sample size (N=6).
Requests for survey participants at this time of year (just before spring break and during report card writing time) proved less than ideal.

One final issue that should be noted was that participants may have misinterpreted the survey questions, or provided responses that lacked specificity. Every effort was made to ensure that questions being asked were explicit and easy to understand, but there were still a few survey responses that needed to be omitted due to their ambiguity.

Types of findings possible. Possible findings included an overall scope/picture of the current situation for French immersion LSTs in early literacy French immersion assessment and intervention in the Metro/Coast Region of British Columbia’s Public School System. Through participant responses, the findings outlined the various challenges associated with early French immersion literacy support. The data also identified trends in teacher qualifications, and experience, within a FI LST setting. The findings distinguished which FI learning support assessment tools, and intervention processes are being implemented and at what frequency. Finally, the findings helped to identify whether or not participants felt there was a perceived presence or lack of support and what factors may or may not influence their sense of support.

Application of Understandings

As mentioned in the previous section, the information and findings gathered from the survey responses provided a snapshot of the current practice of French immersion learning support teachers within the Metro/Coast Region of the BC Public School System. This information and overview was then compared to the current research in order to determine to what extent current research and empirical evidence are influencing pedagogical practice in early literacy French immersion assessment and intervention in this geographic area. Additional application also included the collection of information on the assessment and intervention resources that are
currently available and in use by Learning Support Teachers in BC, who work with French Immersion elementary students. These understandings will be used to inform my own teaching practices, which will benefit the students I work with at my school site. The knowledge acquired from the findings will also be used to make recommendations at the district level and even provincial level, in order to implement effective early French immersion assessment and intervention strategies district-wide and within BC.

Limitations

An initial limitation to the research study is the fact that the research questions were designed by the lead researcher. As a result, the questions were constructed based on underlying understandings, beliefs, values, and perspectives of the lead researcher. The research study was also limited by the quality and quantity of the survey responses received. The survey question structure was important, in order to elicit quality responses to the open-ended questions and to ensure that the closed questions provide meaningful quantitative data. The question responses were also limited by the fact that participants were being asked to self-report, which must also be considered. Finally, the overall findings were limited to the number of participants who actually completed the survey. Of the 10 school districts originally contacted, only six participants completed the online survey.

Significance

The findings are significant to the researcher’s personal/professional practice, as they will inform the assessment and intervention resources and program implementation being conducted at a school-based level. It will also be significant at a district level, as the findings will be shared with colleagues who work in a French Immersion setting. Recommendations will be made to increase the intentionality, consistency and validity of the support provided to FI students. The
overall picture of what early French immersion literacy assessment and intervention looks like in practice within the Metro/Coast Region of British Columbia is also significant, as comparisons can be made to the current research. Based on the outcome of these comparisons, recommendations can be made based on the evidence that could potentially elicit policy reform in order to support students’ retention by establishing strategies and supports that will promote more inclusive French immersion classrooms.
Chapter 4 – Findings and Results

Historically, French immersion (FI) has been viewed as a program for the academic elite (Bourgoin, 2014; Eaton, 2002; Wise, 2011). Parents of children with academic challenges are often discouraged from enrolling in FI in favour of an English educational stream better equipped to support diverse learning needs (Bourgoin, 2014). It is also the case that students enrolled in FI who are identified as having a learning disability are often encouraged to pursue other academic options outside of a FI context (Wise, 2011). These traditionalist perspectives are doing a disservice to students and to the quality of FI programming being delivered. French immersion is a choice program available to families within the public school system. As such, families are entitled to access to the same supports regardless of the language of instruction.

This study set out to determine what assessments and interventions are currently being practised in the Metro/Coast Region of British Columbia. By gathering information from educators who are currently working in a French immersion Learning Support context, trends and discrepancies within the support being provided to FI students can be identified. The research question asked:

What do Learning Support Teachers believe are the components (assessment, program delivery, effectiveness) of high-quality French immersion early literacy intervention?

Through the participant responses, recommendations can be suggested and supports implemented to ensure that students and educators within the FI program in the Metro/Coast Region of British Columbia are supported, resulting in a stronger FI program within this region, with reduced attrition rates.
Sample

After approval by the Vancouver Island University Research Ethics Board, an application to conduct research was completed for the 10 school districts located in the Metro/Coast Region of British Columbia. Permission to conduct research was given in eight of the 10 school districts. Access to the online survey was circulated within each school district to a total of 53 French immersion schools offering early French immersion as a choice program within the region. Six French immersion learning support teachers (FI LSTs) opted to participate in the study and completed the online survey. Due to online survey anonymity, confirmation of school district participation cannot be identified. However, more than one school district is represented in the participant responses. Both single- and dual-track FI schools were represented by participants.

Teaching experience. Almost all of the participants had more than five years’ of teaching experience and four out of six found themselves in their first two years in a learning support role (Table 1). The implication is that participants are generally experienced teachers, but most do not have much experience in their current FI LST roles.

Table 1. Years of teaching experience and years in current assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Years of teaching experience</th>
<th>Years in current assignment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
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<td>Participant 2</td>
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<td>Participant 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
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French immersion & special education training and qualifications. All participants indicated past training and qualification to support their roles within a FI setting. Three participants completed their teacher pre-service in French immersion. One participant completed an “adaptation scolaire diplôme” (special education diploma) in French, while another completed a Masters in “Français Langue Étrangère / Seconde” (French as an additional/second language). Only one participant indicated limited training in FI Pedagogy, citing “Professional development with a focus on French Immersion” as their only training within a FI context.

Five out of six participants indicated that they had completed either a Masters or Diploma in Special Education. The other participant indicated professional development and on the job training and mentorship as their current level of training. Additionally, two participants also noted their participation in ongoing professional development with a focus on Special Education.

Program delivery confidence. Participants were asked how confident they felt in their ability to identify and support literacy challenges in a French immersion context (Table 2). Participants rated their confidence levels on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “not confident” and 5 being “very confident.” All participants scored their confidence levels as 3s or 4s, with the weighted average being 3.67, indicating that all participants feel somewhat confident in their ability to support literacy challenges in a French immersion setting.

Table 2. Program Delivery Confidence of FI LSTs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>1 not confident</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 very confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>Participant 2</td>
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<td>Participant 3</td>
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<td>Participant 4</td>
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<td>Participant 5</td>
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<td>Participant 6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Primary French Immersion Literacy Assessment

In all instances, participants identified that literacy assessment takes place at all primary grades (Kindergarten to Grade 3), which is consistent with what is supported by research. Kindergarten assessment practices are fairly well-aligned across participant responses, which indicates that in all cases, the importance of early assessment of literacy and language skill development is recognized. For the other primary grades, however, the assessment practices are less-aligned. Language of assessment also varied (Table 3). A variety of assessment tools are being used at all primary grade levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Language of Assessment Delivery.</th>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>Participant 3</td>
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<td>Participant 4</td>
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<td>Participant 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
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(E = English, F = French, B = Both).

Kindergarten assessment. As mentioned above, the structure of the assessments being conducted at the Kindergarten level were fairly consistent across participant responses. In all cases, assessments were conducted after the Christmas break (somewhere between January and March), and were mandated by the school district. Additionally, one participant noted three assessment intervals (fall, winter, spring) were required based on the assessment tool being used, and two participants indicated follow-up assessments being conducted in the spring, one of which indicated that assessments only take place for students who were flagged during the winter assessment.
In terms of the assessment tools being used at the Kindergarten level, all but one participant indicated using a district-mandated assessment tool. One participant also indicated using teacher-developed letter knowledge assessments in addition to more standardized assessment tools. In all cases, the primary focus of the assessment was early literacy skills such as phonological awareness and early reading readiness. Overall, six assessment tools were identified, two of which were district-developed resources:

- Test of Phonological Awareness (TOPA): Assesses a student’s ability to isolate individual phonemes orally and understand the relationships between letters and (Bryant & Torgesen, 2004). The assessment is conducted in English.

- Indicateurs dynamiques d'habiletés précoces en lecture (IDAPEL): Assesses early literacy skills in French through phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy and fluency with connected text, and text comprehension (Dufour-Martel & Good, 2017). IDAPEL is the French equivalent to DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills).

- The Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 2002, 2005, 2016): A standardized assessment tool used in Reading Recovery® to assess emergent literacy skills, such as letter identification, reading and writing vocabulary, print concepts, phonemic awareness, and text reading. Although the Observation Survey is an English standardized test, the participant indicated that it is conducted in French.

- Jolly Phonics (Lloyd & Wernham, 2005) and/or Jolly Phonique (Molzan & Lloyd, 2001): Participant was unclear as to whether or not the assessment was conducted in French or in English. Each program supports literacy development through explicit work with phonics.

- Early Learning Profile (ELP) (district developed): Assessment used to identify early reading readiness and early numeracy skills. The assessment is conducted in English to
identify current level of reading and math readiness. The assessment is conducted in English.

- Kindergarten Early Literacy checkPoint (KELP) (district developed): Identifies early literacy skills: letter/sound recognition, production, segmenting, and blending. The assessment is conducted in English.

Participants indicated that the TOPA, ELP, The Observation Survey, Jolly Phonics and KELP were used to identify any students who might be experiencing difficulties in early reading skills, such as phonological awareness. One participant indicated that the intention was to use IDAPEL as a follow-up for any students flagged during the initial assessment. Additionally, the same participant indicated a school-wide objective of building classroom teacher capacity around Tier 1 assessment following a Response to Intervention (RTI) model. The participant expressed that this has been challenging as many staff are used to a pull out model of assessment and support.

**Grade 1 assessment.** It is at the Grade 1 level where some differences in assessment protocols begin to be apparent. Participants indicated that assessments at the Grade 1 level were conducted either in French, or in a combination of both French and English. In all cases, assessments were conducted at the start of the year (baseline), and again at the end of the year (summative), and most participants indicated that assessments were also conducted in the second term (between January and March). However, not all participants indicated that assessments were required of all students within the grade cohort. In one case, the participant expressed that students were only assessed if they were referred to the School Based Team by the classroom teacher. It is also at this grade level where we begin to see a shift away from district-mandated assessments to more school-based and teacher-selected assessment tools.
A number of the same assessment tools used in Kindergarten are also being utilized at the Grade 1 level. In addition to the phonological awareness assessments, participants identified assessment tools that support other aspects of a balanced literacy program, such as decoding, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Below is a list of the assessment tools being used at the Grade 1 level:

- **Kindergarten Early Literacy checkPoint (KELP) (district developed and district-mandated):** The KELP assessment is re-administered to students who were flagged in Kindergarten, to determine if there continue to be challenges in these areas and whether or not intervention is warranted. The assessment is conducted in English.

- **Grade 1 District Screener (district developed and district-mandated):** A list of six phonetically-regular French words that students must sound out and spell. Each word is scored out of six based on a “Developmental Scoring of Invented Spelling” rubric provided by the district. The screener is conducted with the entire grade cohort in Term One and again in Term Three. Any students who fall below the district-determined score are brought up to School Based Team for further assessment.

- **Early Learning Profile (ELP) (district developed and district-mandated):** One participant indicated that the ELP is conducted throughout all primary grades for all students in English and in French district-wide. The assessment is conducted in English.

- **The Tile Test (Norman & Calfee, 2004):** The Tile Test is an assessment tool that measures phoneme awareness, letter-sound correspondences, decoding, spelling, and sight-word reading and application in English. One participant indicated using the Tile Test format in French letter identification, letter names, letter sounds, decoding consonant-vowel (CV) and consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) sounds, spelling and metacognition.
Coffret D’évaluation en Lecture GB+ (Clay, n.d.): The French equivalent of the “PM Benchmark Reading Assessment Resource,” which assesses students’ instructional and independent reading levels in French.

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) (Good & Kaminski, 2010): An assessment tool that measures the acquisition of early literacy skills in English.

As mentioned earlier, there is more school-based and teacher autonomy when it comes to the literacy assessments that are conducted at the Grade 1 level. Learning Support Teachers appear to have more discretion as to the assessment tools they choose to use. They are also required to be more reliant on classroom teachers to identify possible literacy challenges within their classrooms.

**Grade 2 assessment.** There are quite a few consistencies between the Grade 1 and Grade 2 assessments. Similar to what was seen with the Grade 1 assessments, in all cases, the assessments at the Grade 2 level are conducted in French only, or a combination of English and French. Participants also indicated that the assessments take place at the beginning of the school year in the first term as a baseline and again in the third term as more of a summative assessment. Again, all but one participant mentioned that literacy assessments are also conducted in the second term (between January and March). The same shift away from district-mandated assessment towards more school-based and teacher-driven assessment options is also present at the Grade 2 level.

In terms of literacy assessment tools for Grade 2, participants identified use of the following resources:

- Grade 2 District Screener (district developed and district-mandated): An extension from the Grade 1 District Screener, providing a list of 10 phonetically-regular French words that students must sound out and spell. The first six words are the same words students were assessed on in Grade 1, and the same scoring rubric (Developmental Scoring of
Invented Spelling) is again used to score each word out of six. All Grade 2s are assessed in Term One and again in Term Three, with flagged students being referred to School Based Team.

- Early Learning Profile (ELP) (district developed and district-mandated) (conducted in English)
- Coffret D’évaluation en Lecture GB+ (GB+) (conducted in French)
- DIBELS (conducted in English)

Five out of six participants indicated that they use GB+ (the French equivalent to the PM Benchmarks) as their primary assessment tool for Grade 2 students. However, it appears that the assessment protocols and practices differ between participants in terms of assessment frequency, administration and scoring. Additionally, participants noted that many assessment tools being used with students are created or selected at the discretion of the teacher.

**Grade 3 assessment.** With regard to literacy assessments conducted at the Grade 3 level, there was a slight increase in the prevalence of English literacy assessment tools within participant responses. This is likely the result of English language instruction being introduced at Grade 3 in some, but not all, school districts. Participants noted the same timeline for assessment; all participants indicated that assessments take place at the beginning and end of the school year and five out of six participants indicated that additional assessment could occur in the second term (between January and March). Interestingly, it appears that for all participants, decisions surrounding French literacy assessment are made at the discretion of the school or teacher, but that school districts continue to encourage the use of specific English literacy assessment tools. The rationale for this most likely lies in the fact that English literacy assessment tools are being used by all schools within a school district, not just French immersion schools, so perhaps there is more
district-wide accountability and follow-up. Below are the assessment tools for Grade 3 as indicated by participants:

- Early Learning Profile (ELP) (district developed and district-mandated) (conducted in English)
- GB+ (conducted in French)
- DIBELS (conducted in English)
- Phono-Graphix Reading Instruction and Intervention Program (McGuinness, McGuinness, & McGuinness, 1996). Phono-Graphix screener is used with students who have been referred to SBT for reading challenges and is conducted in English.
- Corrective Reading Placement Test (Engelmann, 2007). Assessment used with students who have been referred to SBT for reading challenges to determine their participation in the Corrective Reading Program and is conducted in English.

Participants mentioned a number of assessment tools that are in use at their school sites. As noted above, all but one of these assessment tools are conducted in English. Additionally, many of the assessment tools are generally used once a student has been brought up to School Based Team.

**Primary French Immersion Literacy Intervention**

Information gathered based on current intervention practices was less consistent between participants. Participants were asked to indicate language of instruction, frequency, duration, and overall length of intervention delivery. Tables 4-9 provide a summary of participant responses.
Table 4. Literacy Intervention Components Participant 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 1</th>
<th>Language of instruction</th>
<th>Duration (minutes)</th>
<th>Frequency (sessions/week)</th>
<th>Length of intervention (months)</th>
<th>Intervention model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E F B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2-9</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2-9</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2-9</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(E = English, F = French, B = Both, PI = Push In, PO= Pull Out)

Table 5. Literacy Intervention Components Participant 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 2</th>
<th>Language of instruction</th>
<th>Duration (minutes)</th>
<th>Frequency (sessions/week)</th>
<th>Length of intervention (months)</th>
<th>Intervention model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E F B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(E = English, F = French, B = Both, PI = Push In, PO= Pull Out)

Table 6. Literacy Intervention Components Participant 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 3</th>
<th>Language of instruction</th>
<th>Duration (minutes)</th>
<th>Frequency (sessions/week)</th>
<th>Length of intervention (months)</th>
<th>Intervention model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E F B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>PI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>PI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>PI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>PI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(E = English, F = French, B = Both, PI = Push In, PO= Pull Out)
Table 7. Literacy Intervention Components Participant 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Language of instruction</th>
<th>Duration (minutes)</th>
<th>Frequency (sessions/week)</th>
<th>Length of intervention (months)</th>
<th>Intervention model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(E = English, F = French, B = Both, PI = Push In, PO= Pull Out)

Table 8. Literacy Intervention Components Participant 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Language of instruction</th>
<th>Duration (minutes)</th>
<th>Frequency (sessions/week)</th>
<th>Length of intervention (months)</th>
<th>Intervention model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>no intervention provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>PI/PO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(E = English, F = French, B = Both, PI = Push In, PO= Pull Out)

Table 9. Literacy Intervention Components Participant 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Language of instruction</th>
<th>Duration (minutes)</th>
<th>Frequency (sessions/week)</th>
<th>Length of intervention (months)</th>
<th>Intervention model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>PI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>One term</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>One term</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>One term</td>
<td>PO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(E = English, F = French, B = Both, PI = Push In, PO= Pull Out)

In general, participants indicated through their responses that the intervention supports being implemented were fairly consistent and systematic between grades. All but two participants
followed a pull-out model for all grade levels for intervention support, where students meet with the LST outside of the classroom to work on specific literacy skills. All participants indicated that the length of intervention could be fluid and determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on the needs of the students within the intervention group. One participant expressed a desire to move towards more of a push-in model of intervention support, through building classroom teacher capacity around tier 2 interventions within the RTI model. In all cases, intervention is being delivered multiple times per week. Although all participants responded that literacy intervention took place at all grade levels, two participants indicated that literacy intervention from the LST does not occur at the Kindergarten level. The language of intervention delivery varied between English, French, or a combination of both. As with the language of assessment delivery, the decisions around language could be influenced by how confident the participants felt with their own French language skills.

Participants were asked to identify the intervention programs and tools that they used with their primary students. Based on their responses, it was apparent that finding and access to effective resources is one of the main challenges FI LSTs face. In general, participants indicated that they put together intervention programs, resources, and supports themselves, based on what items are available to them. As such, it is difficult to identify the effectiveness of a teacher-created intervention program. Participants would indicate that they often base their intervention on the content being delivered by the classroom teacher. One participant expressed frustration that even through efforts made by their school and school district, they have been unable to locate a comprehensive literacy program for French immersion students. Identified below is as an overview of the objectives and teacher-developed strategies being implemented at each grade level, as well as a brief summary of any comprehensive programs being used by participants.
**Kindergarten intervention.** All participants indicated that in general, the focus of the intervention strategies at the Kindergarten level is on phonological awareness and exposure to language. To address these skills, participants noted that students participated in lessons involving sound games, rhyming activities, syllable practice, and games using student names and the names of people they know. For the participants who indicated a push-in model of delivery, intervention involved additional support for reading and writing skills based on the classroom teacher direction for whole-class.

One comprehensive program identified by a participant is Launch into Reading Success (Bennett & Ottley, 2011). Launch into Reading Success is a reading intervention program aimed at supporting young students who appear to be experiencing some difficulty learning to read. The program focuses on phonological awareness and is conducted in English. Another participant identified using the Reading Recovery®, Tiny Treasures program. Tiny Treasures are a collection of levelled early readers written in English. One final comprehensive program that was identified is Les Alphas (Huguenin & Dubois, 2006). Les Alphas is a reading program that provides concrete strategies for students to learn the alphabetic principle in French. Each sound is a “hero,” with specific characteristics and details connected to the letters that form that sound. One participant indicated that Les Alphas is currently being implemented not as a small-group intervention strategy, but for use with the whole Kindergarten cohort. Early observations indicate that the program is proving to be highly engaging and successful for students. The same participant indicated that they are planning to use Les Alphas in their intervention program at the primary grades moving forward, to align with what is being taught in the classroom.

**Grade 1 intervention.** At Grade 1, there continued to be a focus on phonological awareness through rhyming and syllable work. In addition to these fundamental skills, participants
identified work on phoneme blending, segmenting, and manipulation; single- and double-letter French sound and symbol recognition; the beginning stages decoding; and the development of French vocabulary as lesson objectives. Activities to develop these skills included printing and spelling practice with white boards, listening to audio-recordings in French, literacy stations, as well as French guided reading strategies using levelled readers in French. The participant using a push-in model of delivery, noted that intervention involved additional support for reading and writing skills based on the classroom teacher direction for whole-class.

The comprehensive reading programs noted for Grade 1 involved a few English programs, with some adaptations for French, and identified two levelled reading programs available in French. One participant indicated using the Phono-Graphix Reading Intervention Program, and delivered the intervention in English. Phono-Graphix is an intervention program, which focuses on the fundamental literacy skills including decoding, encoding, auditory processing, code knowledge and sequencing (McGuinness et al., 1996). Another participant indicated using Orton-Gillingham strategies in French to support students demonstrating dyslexic characteristics. The French levelled readers mentioned by participants included Alpha-Jeunes and Alizé.

**Grade 2 intervention.** The details provided for French literacy intervention at the Grade 2 level were somewhat more limited. Participants indicated that they included the review of phonological awareness, and French phonics with a focus on sound/symbol recognition of more complex phonemes in their programs. Additionally, blending, segmenting, sight words recognition, fluency, vocabulary development, reading comprehension and printing practice were also important aspects of the intervention programs being delivered. Strategies to support the development of the aforementioned literacy skills included reading practice, word work on white boards, teacher-created sound games, listening to audio recordings in French, and continued use
of literacy stations. One participant noted that there was an increased focus on speaking in French, and that specific aspects of the intervention were determined based on responding to the needs of the students, as well as aligning the intervention focus with what was being taught in-class by the classroom teacher. Using Orton-Gillingham strategies in French was again identified as a tool for intervention support. Alpha-Jeunes and Alizé were also mentioned as good options for guided reading practice.

**Grade 3 intervention.** The focus for Grade 3 intervention appears to build on the supports provided at the Grade 2 level, however, more participants mentioned using a push-in strategies for intervention support at this grade level than in the younger grades. There also appeared to be more of a separation between reading and writing supports. Intervention focus for reading includes review of some complex phonemes, decoding, blending, segmenting, fluency, sight-word recognition, development of French vocabulary, and reading comprehension strategies. The writing intervention mentioned included support with spelling, grammar, and paragraph writing. Additionally, push-in support around planning and organizing written work, as well as strategies to help with researching, proofreading and editing was also identified as a focus for intervention.

The comprehensive programs indicated at the Grade 3 level were for support with reading in English. Phono-Graphix was mentioned as an intensive reading intervention program for those students who appeared to have not responded to previous intervention. The Corrective Reading Program was also indicated as a comprehensive program to support decoding skills in English, for those students who might need some additional intervention.

**Support for the French Immersion Learning Support Teacher**

Participants were asked whether or not they felt supported and connected to other French immersion learning support teachers. Based on participant responses (Table 10), it is fair to say
that FI LSTs feel that there are few opportunities to connect, collaborate, and share resources with their FI LST colleagues at other schools and in other districts.

Table 10. Feelings of support and connectedness with other FI LSTs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1 = not at all supported or connected, 5 = very supported and connected)

As a follow-up question, participants were asked what changes could be made to create more opportunities for FI LSTs to connect with one another. A number of ideas were suggested by participants.

Opportunities to collaborate with other FI LSTs was viewed as very important. Suggestions to promote collaboration included making time a priority to meet and connect with other FI LSTs, from not only a teacher point of view, but through support from the district and between districts. Collaboration between FI LSTs on intervention program selection, style, and challenges unique to BC, the sharing of resources, and ensuring that the types of services being provided from one site to another are consistent were also ideas that were suggested. The creation of an online network for FI LSTs to collaborate and share resources was another suggestion to support collaboration between colleagues. One important request was the opportunity to discuss with other FI LSTs how to address situations with parents who are considering removing their children from a FI program in favour of English language instruction. Particularly, how those conversations could and should be approached by the FI LST.
Closely tied to collaboration is support from school districts. Participants would like to see district support initiate collaborative opportunities with other FI LSTs as mentioned above. A suggestion was made requesting that clear protocols and policies for intervention and student retention goals are established at a district level within a French immersion context. Additionally, financial support from districts utilised to ensure that FI LSTs have access to comprehensive and up-to-date intervention programs was also suggested.

One participant noted that the concept of learning support for FI students is still fairly new and, as a result, the FI LST role might take some time to get used to. “I taught FI for over 20 years and there was never learning support in French over those years. This new for everyone.” All participants indicated their interest in being part of a French Immersion Learning Support Teacher network to allow for collaboration and professional development opportunities.

Additional Points for Consideration

As mentioned in the introduction, 10 school districts and 53 French immersion schools were approached requesting their participation in the study, but only six educators chose to complete the online survey. This will be discussed further in the limitations in Chapter 5. However, during the recruitment phase, information shared with the researcher provided evidence to the importance of gaining a better understanding of the current assessment and intervention practices of FI LSTs. One district declined to participate due to the fact that there had been quite a bit of turnover in their French immersion schools in recent years. Within school districts that agreed to participate, there were a few schools who declined participation for a variety of reasons. In one case, there was only one FI LST for the entire school district. An administrator from another school district mentioned that the school did not have a French speaking language support person and that the English speaking LST working at the school only worked with FI students for a small amount
of time. In a separate case, the FI LST had recently resigned from their position and at another school, the LST responsible for providing support to FI students only had a small portion of their FTE going towards their FI caseload. A limited amount of FTE being dedicated towards supporting FI students was a theme seen throughout many schools and most likely a factor in attracting participants for the research.

**Summary**

There were several themes and trends that were apparent in the participant responses. In terms of Kindergarten assessment practices, all participants had a clear and district-supported process in place to identify if fundamental literacy skills are being developed. However, the assessment practices at the Grade 1, 2, and 3 levels were less consistent between participants and varied in terms of assessment format and language of delivery. Assessment practices within a school appeared to be more influenced by the FI LSTs level of confidence and less supported by empirical evidence. This trend may be due in part to the fact that in some cases, there appeared to be less support and follow-up from a district-level for assessments for French immersion students at these grades. In many cases, student assessment occurred only for those students identified by the classroom teacher, and who were referred to the School Based Team.

Based on participant responses regarding intervention practices, it is clear that participants felt that there are not many comprehensive resources available to support literacy development for French immersion students. In most cases, participants were having to use and/or modify English intervention programs and apply them in a FI context. Participants were also in agreement about the necessary components of their intervention programs at each grade level, all of which are important aspects of a balanced literacy program. The intervention format and delivery model that participants chose to adopt varied between participants. All indicated the importance of close
collaboration between the FI LST and the classroom teacher, regardless of the delivery model, in order to strengthen student skill acquisition and understanding.

The general sentiment of participants was that they don’t currently feel connected to other colleagues in similar assignments at other schools and in other districts. There was a definite desire for collaborative opportunities with other FI LSTs, both within district and out of district, in order to align practices and share resources. Participants indicated that in order to feel more connected and supported, there needs to be more consistent alignment, direction and guidance from a district level.
Chapter 5 – Conclusion

The purpose of this descriptive study was to gather information on the current practices surrounding early assessment and intervention for primary French immersion (FI) students in the Metro/Coast Region of British Columbia. Due to the doubly-isolated nature of a FI Learning Support assignment, the objective of the study was to collect a summary of strategies and resources currently being used, and to determine what steps are needed to strengthen and support FI LSTs in this region. The trends and themes that arose involved the status of FI literacy assessment over the primary years and its alignment with empirical evidence, how intervention strategies and resources are being created and implemented, and the need for system revisions and recommendations to ensure that FI LSTs feel more supported in their roles.

Analysis of the Findings

Through careful analysis of participant responses, a number of themes emerged under the concepts of assessment, intervention, and support for the FI LST.

Assessment. Through their responses, all participants clearly understood the pedagogy around early assessment and intervention for FI students (Bournot-Trites, 2008; Wise & Chen, 2010). The findings show that for all participants, the early literacy assessments conducted at the Kindergarten level were consistent with what is supported by empirical evidence. A reminder that although students are in FI programming, results on English assessments on phonological awareness (PA) and letter-sound knowledge will provide strong indication of literacy challenges in French due to the cross-linguistic transfer of language and literacy skill acquisition (Andrews, 2010; Erdos, 2011; MacCoubrey, 2003; MacCoubrey et al., 2004; Wise & Chen, 2010; Wise, 2014). Consistencies between assessment practices and research could be attributed to the fact that in all cases, Kindergarten assessments tools and measures were mandated at a school-district level.
However, there was a trend towards less continuity both in terms of assessment tools, and alignment with empirical evidence with regard to assessment practices at Grades 1, 2, and 3. At these grade levels, more school-determined assessment tools and practices were being utilised, and there appeared to be less accountability and guidance from a district-level. Additionally, there were some inconsistencies in terms of language of assessment delivery. In some cases, it seemed as though the language of assessment protocols being used were determined based on the FI LSTs level of experience with their own French language skills, or the assessment tool was required for all schools (English and French) within the school district. The FI LST level of comfort with French language is important when conducting literacy assessments at the later primary grades, as there should be options for initial assessment delivery in French. As students develop a stronger foundation in their French language and literacy skills, assessments should align with the language of instruction with the availability of English assessments as required (Erdos, 2011; MacCoubrey et al., 2004).

One assessment tool that was frequently mentioned by participants was *Coffret d’Évaluation en Lecture GB+* (GB+). It appears that it is the most readily available French reading assessment tool used by teachers in this study. However, it does come with some criticisms. It is only an effective year-round French literacy assessment tool beginning at Grade 2, as it doesn’t provide overall assessment at the appropriate level for all students at the beginning of Grade 1. Additionally, it is important to note that participants indicated that this assessment tool was being implemented with limited training and using varying protocols. Participants also noted that many assessment tools being used with students were created or selected at the discretion of the classroom teacher or the FI LST. With this in mind, it became clear that participants felt it was
difficult to ensure that consistent assessment and support were being provided to students in different classes and/or different grades.

**Intervention.** In all cases, the goals and objectives of the intervention programs described by participants took into consideration the components of early literacy skill development and aspects of a balanced literacy program. Aligning intervention practices with the research and literature was considered in some cases. Conducting intervention in both English and French would definitely take advantage of the cross-linguistic transfer of language and literacy skills (Andrews, 2010; Erdos, 2011; Cummins, 2007, 2014; Wise, 2014; Wise & Chen, 2010). This approach was used in all cases at the Kindergarten level, but not necessarily considered as a viable option at the other grade levels.

In general, participants indicated that they tended to create their own framework for the intervention programs being delivered to students. This was due in part to a lack of accessibility of comprehensive French reading intervention programs. Participants explained that the components of their program were established using English reading intervention tools, strategies and resources they were familiar with, or that were already available to them at their school or in their resource room. Teacher-created resources can be very strong, as they can pick and choose based on the specific needs of the students. Additionally, participants indicated that they intentionally tried to establish a structure and framework for their intervention lessons in collaboration with the classroom teacher, in order to align and reinforce instruction that was taking place in the classroom. This occurred on a case-by-case basis, and depended on the desired involvement of the classroom teacher. However, having to create resources on one’s own is time-consuming and difficult to ensure effectiveness.
Support for the French immersion learning support teacher. The responses provided by the participants in terms of their perceived sense of support was indicative that although they all feel confident in their ability to provide and implement high-quality assessment and intervention processes, they feel a sense of isolation and disconnect between themselves and other FI LSTs. Additionally, participants also indicated through direct responses and their open-ended comments that they don’t feel as supported in their assignments for a variety of reasons. They provided a number of valuable suggestions as to ways in which they could feel more supported from a school and district-level. Some of their suggestions included alignment of assessment policies and protocols across the district, and opportunities to connect and collaborate with other FI LSTs within their school districts. All participants were responsive to the idea of creating a regional educator network to support FI LSTs.

Conclusions

Based on the findings from this descriptive study, a number of themes became apparent. Participants felt confident in their abilities to provide effective assessment and intervention practices for students with learning difficulties in French immersion. They also understood the importance of early assessment and intervention, as indicated in the literature (Bournot-Trites, 2008; Wise & Chen, 2010).

By delivering assessments with a focus on phonological awareness and letter-sound knowledge at the Kindergarten level, practices are well-supported by the research (Erdos, 2011). Conducting assessments in English at various grade-levels makes use of the cross-linguistic transfer of language and literacy skill acquisition (Andrews, 2010; Erdos, 2011; MacCoubrey, 2003; MacCoubrey et al., 2004; Wise & Chen, 2010; Wise, 2014), but runs the risk of producing less-reliable assessment results if reading assessment tools are not in the same language as the
language of reading instruction being provided to the student (Erdos, 2011; MacCoubrey et al., 2004). Continuity and use of standardized assessment practices were also inconsistent at Grades 1-3.

Intervention practices described by participants included goals and objectives aligned with empirically proven effective practices (Bournot-Trites & Denizot, 2005; Bournot-Trites, Lee, & Séror, 2003; Engelmann, 2007; Erdos, 2011; Huguenin & Dubois, 2006; Lloyd & Wernham, 2005; MacCoubrey, 2003; McGuinness et al., 1996; Molzan & Lloyd, 2001; Wise, 2014; Wise & Chen, 2010). Lack of accessibility to comprehensive reading intervention resources has led to the implementation of teacher-created resources, which have the benefits of intervention alignment with whole-class instruction through possible collaboration with the classroom teacher, but come at a cost of time and are dependent on the FI LST’s pedagogical beliefs, training, and experience.

Finally, although confident in their ability to provide high-quality assessment and intervention, participants expressed an on-going desire to feel more supported and connected. Access to collaborative opportunities with other FI LSTs, and through more streamlined processes and explicit policies were suggested as ways to enhance and strengthen their current practices. This need for further training in supporting inclusive education in French immersion and more explicit ministerial policy have been echoed by educators across Canada (Bourgoin, 2014; Cummins, 2014; Muhling & Mady, 2017; Wise, 2011).

**Significance**

The findings from this descriptive study are significant for a number of member groups within the French immersion community. The knowledge gained is significant from a FI LST perspective, as it shows that there is a clear want for networking and collaboration opportunities with colleagues. The findings are important at a school-level, as current assessment and
intervention practices can be reflected upon to determine if any changes are warranted. The significance of the findings from a district perspective is to acknowledge the importance of district-support and accountability, as well as ensuring that assessments are consistent across the district and relevant to a FI context. Finally, the significance from a BC Ministry of Education perspective is the need for more explicit top-down directives and supports, in terms of promoting and encouraging inclusive FI classrooms and the suitability of FI for all students.

The significance of the educational practices identified in this study should also be noted. Based on the information collected from participant responses, it is clear that a number of factors must be considered when determining the structure and function of the assessment or intervention being implemented at the primary grade levels in FI. The findings in this study reiterate the importance of thoughtful consideration regarding the language of delivery of an assessment tool or intervention program. It is important to take advantage of the benefits of cross-linguistic transfer of language and literacy skills, yet at the same time ensure that assessment criteria acknowledges the language of instruction at different grade levels. The findings also support the notion that collaborative opportunities can enhance educational practices.

In terms of knowledge contributions to the field of education and more specifically, to the field of French immersion special education, the findings from this study look at French immersion special education needs from an educator perspective within a region fairly removed from the vast majority of French educational research conducted in Canada. Based on participant responses, it is clear that FI LSTs are making good use of the pedagogical practices based on the empirical evidence and resources currently available to them. It is also clear that there continues to be issues with misguided information and advice provided to parents surrounding the suitability of FI for all
learners, which may be the result of un-clear and subjective messaging and misconceptions from the “top-down.”

Recommendations and directions for further research will be explored in depth later on in this chapter. However, the significance of the findings of this descriptive study will provide for recommendations not only at the FI LST level, but also at the school, district, and ministerial level. A focus for future research on ways to determine the effectiveness of the intervention strategies currently being utilized, as well as ways to foster more consistent assessment between grades and between schools could also be explored.

Limitations

It is reasonable to conclude that the knowledge acquired during this descriptive study does have some limitations to its applicability. Results were obtained through the online survey were based on participant responses and their own personal beliefs and experiences. Additionally, the responses provided could have been misinterpreted, through misinterpretations of the questions being asked by participants, or through the researcher misinterpreting the participant responses. However, the primary limitation to this study is the small sample size of participants. Although 10 school districts were approached, the online survey was only completed by six participants. As mentioned in the results, due to the anonymity requirements of the study, participant responses were not linked to specific school districts. Consequently, the knowledge acquired by the six participants is limited to their own experiences and should only be applied to the Metro/Coast Region of BC with caution.

There are two rationales that could be used to explain the limited number of participants. Firstly, the geographic scope for the study was too large (10 school districts), resulting in difficulty reaching potential participants due to different district research application processes. The different
research approval processes forced the timeline for the study to be pushed back further into the school year, resulting in the second rationale for lower participation. Invitations to participate were distributed to possible participants beginning mid- to late-February, meaning teachers were being asked to complete the online survey during report card writing time for Term Two and over the final few weeks before Spring Break. It is fair to assume that the voluntary participation in an online survey was a low priority for educators at this point during the school year.

Regardless of the limitations, the sentiments expressed by the participants were consistent with findings from other surveys that have been conducted across Canada (Bourgoin, 2014; Muhling & Mady, 2017; Wise, 2011) and should be considered as a starting point for further investigation in this area within the Metro/Coast Region of BC.

**Value of the Study**

Mixed Methods Research is grounded in its central position on the positivist/constructivist continuum, with an emphasis on pragmatic ontology and epistemology (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013). By using such an approach for questions included in the descriptive survey, both quantitative data and qualitative data could be used and analyzed. Consequently, a more complete picture of what is taking place for FI LSTs in the Metro/Coast Region of BC could be derived. This methodology’s central location on the positivist and constructivist continuum allowed measurable facts related to the participants to be identified, yet also considered the socially constructed reality and beliefs for each individual participant.

This descriptive study is of value to the field of education as it investigates issues pertaining to inclusive French immersion practices in a particular geographic region of Canada. In can be stated that FI LSTs work very isolated assignments with little opportunity to connect with other colleagues in similar roles. The results of this study confirm certain sentiments being expressed by
FI LSTs, as well as provide insight into current resources and strategies being used in the Metro/Coast Region of BC. The application of the results are also of value to other FI LSTs when considering assessment and intervention strategies they are wanting to implement at their school and with their students. The findings can be referenced as a starting point to inform current FI LST practices with this region, supported through evidence. Additionally, the findings are also of value within a larger scope, and could be utilized as the groundwork for policy and practice reform at school-, district- and ministerial-levels.

As mentioned earlier, it is important to reiterate that the findings from this survey come from a small sample size (N=6). However, it is still reasonable to assume that similar sentiments are being experienced by other FI LSTs in the Metro/Coast Region of BC. With the difficulties experienced in such a populated region of BC, it is certainly realistic to think that the same challenges exist for FI LST in more remote regions and school districts within the province.

Issues for Further Investigation

The findings from this descriptive study provide a starting point for a number of inquiries in the field of French Immersion Special Education. Two general trends were uncovered. Research on assessment and intervention framework, and ways to promote and support inclusive FI education are both areas that require further investigation, especially in British Columbia.

An exploration into the source and rationale of “district-mandated” assessment tools could be very insightful. As mentioned in the results, the assessment tools being used by participants at the Kindergarten level tended to focus on similar aspects of early literacy assessment and intervention. With that in mind, why is there a perceived preference by districts to use “district-created” assessment tools, in lieu of the more formal standardized testing that is available? A closer investigation on Grade 1 assessment tools for FI students would also provide valuable information.
Additionally, there continues to be much debate over the format of intervention delivery. Most educators agree that collaboration and building capacity are essential tools in supporting students with diverse learning needs. Some questions to consider are how can FI LSTs support classroom teachers and their ability to assess and provide tier 1 and 2 interventions in the classroom? Or, what is the most effective way to balance push-in and pull-out supports in a FI context?

There continues to be subjectivity in terms of accessibility to and availability of supports in a FI setting. Over the course of the study, it became clear that there were varying degrees of support made available for FI students in terms of full-time equivalent (FTE) allotment. It would be interesting to determine what sort of FTE allotment was being provided at different schools, within different districts, and then compare the FTE amounts to what is available for students in English programs. Finally, this study looked at English and French as the only two options for assessment and intervention delivery in a FI context. The literature tells us that we must also consider the needs of our multi-lingual and immigrant learners when determining the best ways to implement assessment and intervention practices in a French immersion setting (Cummins, 2014).

What does support for English language learning (ELL) students look like in a FI context? What role does the FI LST play in collaboration with the ELL specialist?

Finally, based on conversations had with special education and French immersion colleagues during this study, there continues to be mixed messaging surrounding the suitability of FI as an inclusive program accessible to all students. The advice parents are receiving appears to differ, depending on the role and experiences of the person giving said advice. The messaging around this type of conversation continues to be inconsistent between schools, different district personnel, and between school districts, something that should most definitely be addressed.
Recommendations

The responses from this descriptive study provide the foundation for a number of recommendations aimed at better supporting FI LSTs within the Metro/Coast Region of BC. Some of the recommendations are teacher-specific and school based, while other recommendations could be considered at a district- and ministerial-level.

Assessment practices. FI LSTs are encouraged to work with their school teams to streamline the literacy assessment processes within their school and ensure consistent assessment practices between classes and across grades. Policies and practices should be clear to all school team members (FI LST, admin, classroom teacher) to remove unnecessary subjectivity. Outside of Kindergarten assessments, where French language and literacy skills aren’t yet adequately developed to assess, initial literacy assessments at the primary grades should be delivered in French to all students, as French is the language of instruction. Conducting English assessments at this point will not provide accurate scores, as no reading instruction has currently been conducted in English (Erdos, 2011). If and when students are flagged on initial French assessments, further assessment could take place in English, when the focus is on phonological awareness and French letter sounds are taken into consideration. Finally, training on accurate assessment techniques for the FI LST and all primary teachers conducting assessments will be essential to ensure that students have access to the supports they might need.

Intervention practices. Application of the cross-linguistic transfer of language and literacy skills should be utilized and encouraged for all primary grade intervention programs. This is not to say that intervention should be conducted in English, but that FI LSTs should take advantage of the fact that language and literacy skills will transfer from a student’s L1 to the target language (French) when building their intervention programs. FI LSTs are also encouraged to
collaborate with the classroom teacher, in order to ensure consistency between classroom learning and the intervention program. Not only can a FI LST align their program with what is being taught in the class, but can also share their expertise on literacy skill acquisition with the classroom teacher to support building capacity in the classroom in this area.

**Network for French immersion learning support teachers.** It is clear that there is a general need for collaborative opportunities between FI LSTs. To support this need, school districts (and the FI LSTS within each district) are encouraged to create a cross-district network of FI LSTs to initiate conversations around FI Pedagogy, share resources, and in general, provide support for one another. For the purposes of this study, the region selected might be too big to create an effective network for already-busy educators. As such, it is recommended that a small cohort of 1-3 school districts in close proximity to one another be approached first to promote this unique networking opportunity.

**Reform within ministry policy language.** Based on participant responses and a review of the literature, it has become apparent that the language used at a provincial level by the British Columbia Ministry of Education could use some revision in order to better support and promote inclusive French immersion classrooms. The policy language and supporting resources and documentation need to be more explicit, in order to support teachers and eliminate misinformation due to subjectivity. With stronger policy language in place at the provincial level, there will be a trickle-down effect within school districts. By advocating for new language that is more explicit, consistent messaging can be promoted by educators within BC. Consider this not just a recommendation, but a call to action from educators in the field for reform around French immersion inclusive education practices.
References


Muhling, S. & Mady, C. (2017). Inclusion of students with special education needs in French as
a second language programs: A review of Canadian policy and resource documents.

*Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 183, 15-29.*


Appendix A: Online Survey Questions

Purpose

I am a student in the Master of Education in Special Education at Vancouver Island University (VIU). My research, entitled “Shedding a Light on French Immersion Research, Policy, and Practice: A British Columbia Perspective,” is a mixed-methods research project intended to identify the current practices for early assessment and intervention of literacy skills for French Immersion students and how they align with the current research.

Description

The following survey questions are intended to determine the current literacy assessment and intervention practices being implemented by learning support teachers working with French Immersion primary students. As French Immersion learning support is somewhat of a niche assignment within education, participant responses will provide information on areas of strength and areas where future growth is required.

Risk of harm to participants

The information collected from the survey will be uncontroverisal, and thus the research poses only a very small risk of harm to participants. Every effort will be made to anonymize the data, however, due to small sample size and open-ended questions, there is a risk that participants may be indirectly identifiable. Participants are asked to not include information that might reveal their school or district.

SurveyMonkey will be the platform used to house the online survey. As a U.S.-based entity, it is
subject to adherence to the Patriot Act that would require records to be turned over to the U.S. Government, upon request. In such a circumstance, there is the potential for individuals in the U.S. Government to connect responses with participant identities. However, the nature of the questions in the survey poses no adverse risk to respondents.

*Management of Research Information/Data*

Data from individual survey will be collected, coded, and analyzed. Upon completion of the research, the respondent’s individual survey will be deleted from SurveyMonkey. Data will be stored on a password protected laptop computer for a period of up to two years, whereupon data will be deleted.

*Use of Research Information*

The results of this study will be published in my Master’s thesis, and may also be used for conference publications, presentations, and published in peer-reviewed journals.

*Participation and withdrawal*

By completing this survey, you are consenting to provide data/feedback that will aid in identifying key features and areas for improvement with regard to literacy intervention practices for French Immersion students. Your responses will describe your experiences within a French Immersion Learning Support context and the resources and supports available for literacy assessment and intervention.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Only completed survey results will be used in this
study. You may choose to discontinue participation at any time while completing the survey. The incomplete data is not saved. However, due to the anonymity of the survey, once the survey has been submitted, there is no way for participants to withdraw from the study after this point.

Consent and Conditions of Consent

I have read and understand the information provided above, and understand that by responding YES to Question 1, I have explicitly consented to participate in this research. I also understand that by responding YES to Question 2, I have explicitly consented to the possible use of quotes from my survey responses in the study, but that any identifying features will be coded, in order to limit the amount of personal data shared.

Consent survey questions:

1. *I explicitly consent to participate in the research:* (YES checkbox)

2. *I explicitly consent to the researcher using direct quotes from my survey responses in the products of the research.* (YES or NO checkboxes)
Section 1: Teaching Qualification and Experience

3. How many years have you worked as a teacher
   - 0-5 years
   - 6-10 years
   - 11-15 years
   - 16-20 years
   - 20+ years

4. How many years have you worked in your role as French Immersion Learning Support Teacher
   - First year in assignment
   - 1-2 years
   - 3-5 years
   - 6+ years

5. Is your current assignment as a French Immersion Learning Support Teacher at a single- or dual-track French Immersion School? (2 responses)
   - SINGLE-TRACK
   - DUAL-TRACK

6. Describe any French Immersion training and/or qualifications that you have (CHECK BOXES select all that apply)
   - Teacher pre-service conducted in a French Immersion context
• Professional development with a focus on French Immersion
• No training and/or qualifications in French Immersion
• Other – Please specify: ______________

7. Describe any Special Education training and/or qualifications that you have (click all that apply)
• Diploma in Special Education
• Masters in Special Education
• Professional development with a focus on Special Education
• No training and/or qualifications in Special Education
• Other – Please specify: ______________

8. In your opinion, how confident are you in your ability to identify and support literacy challenges for at-risk French Immersion students (Likert Scale: 1 = not confident, 5 = very confident)

Section 2: Literacy Assessment in a French Immersion Context

9. At which of the following primary grades does literacy assessment take place for French Immersion students (CHECK BOXES select all that apply)
• Kindergarten
• Grade 1
• Grade 2
• Grade 3
The following questions pertain to literacy assessments that take place at the Kindergarten level.

If literacy assessments do not take place at this grade level at your school, please proceed to Question 14.

10. In what language are the Kindergarten literacy assessments conducted?

- English
- French
- Both English and French
- Other (please specify) _________________________

11. At what point(s) during the school year are the literacy assessments conducted? (CHECK BOX – Select all that apply)

- Fall (Term 1)
- Winter (Term 2)
- Spring (Term 3)
- Other (please specify) ______________________________

12. Who mandates the assessment tool?

- District
- School
- Neither
13. Please describe in detail the components of the assessment tool (i.e., name of assessment tool, what it assesses, whether different assessment tools are used over the course of the year, what the students are required to do, what is the follow up for students who are flagged as “at-risk”)

(OPEN-ENDED TEXT BOX)

The following questions pertain to literacy assessments that take place at the Grade 1 level. If literacy assessments do not take place at this grade level at your school, please proceed to Question 18.

14. In what language are the Grade 1 literacy assessments conducted?

- English
- French
- Both English and French
- Other (please specify) _________________________

15. At what point(s) during the school year are the literacy assessments conducted? (CHECK BOX – Select all that apply)

- Fall (Term 1)
- Winter (Term 2)
- Spring (Term 3)

16. Who mandates the assessment tool?

- District
17. Please describe in detail the components of the assessment tool (i.e., name of assessment tool, what it assesses, whether different assessment tools are used over the course of the year, what the students are required to do, what is the follow up for students who are flagged as “at-risk”)

(OPEN-ENDED TEXT BOX)

The following questions pertain to literacy assessments that take place at the Grade 2 level. If literacy assessments do not take place at this grade level at your school, please proceed to Question 22.

18. In what language are the Grade 2 literacy assessments conducted?

- English
- French
- Both English and French
- Other (please specify) ____________________________

19. At what point(s) during the school year are the literacy assessments conducted? (CHECK BOX – Select all that apply)

- Fall (Term 1)
- Winter (Term 2)
- Spring (Term 3)
20. Who mandates the assessment tool?
   - District
   - School
   - Neither

21. Please describe in detail the components of the assessment tool (i.e., name of assessment tool, what it assesses, whether different assessment tools are used over the course of the year, what the students are required to do, what is the follow up for students who are flagged as “at-risk”)
   (OPEN-ENDED TEXT BOX)

The following questions pertain to literacy assessments that take place at the Grade 3 level. If literacy assessments do not take place at this grade level at your school, please proceed to Question 26.

22. In what language are the Grade 3 literacy assessments conducted?
   - English
   - French
   - Both English and French
   - Other (please specify) _________________________

23. At what point(s) during the school year are the literacy assessments conducted? (CHECK BOX – Select all that apply)
24. Who mandates the assessment tool?

- District
- School
- Neither

25. Please describe in detail the components of the assessment tool (i.e., name of assessment tool, what it assesses, whether different assessment tools are used over the course of the year, what the students are required to do, what is the follow up for students who are flagged as “at-risk”)

(OPEN-ENDED TEXT BOX)

Section 3: Literacy Intervention in a French Immersion Context

26. At which of the following primary grades does literacy intervention take place for French Immersion students (CHECK BOXES select all that apply)

- Kindergarten
- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Grade 3
The following questions pertain to the Tier 2 literacy intervention (conducted/supported by the Learning Support Teacher) that takes place at the Kindergarten level. If literacy intervention does not take place at this grade level at your school, please proceed to Question 33.

27. In what language is the Kindergarten literacy intervention conducted?

- English
- French
- Both English and French
- Other (please specify) _________________________

28. Please describe the duration and frequency of the intervention (length of each lesson in minutes, and number of lessons per week)

- Duration of lesson: _______ (minutes)
- Weekly Frequency: ________ sessions per week

29. Please describe overall length of the intervention (specify weeks or months)?

- Length of Intervention: ________________  (TEXT BOX)

30. What type of model does the intervention delivery follow?

- Push-in model (intervention takes place in student’s enrolling classroom)
- Pull-out model (intervention takes place in space outside of the classroom – i.e., Learning Support Room)
- Other: Please specify ______________________________ (TEXT BOX)
31. Please describe in detail the components of the Intervention program (i.e., name of intervention program, the area(s) of focus of the program, the tools and resources used, the skills the students are developing, any other pertinent details)

(OPEN-ENDED TEXT BOX)

32. Who mandates this intervention program?

- District
- School
- Other: Please specify ______________________________ (TEXT BOX)

The following questions pertain to the Tier 2 literacy intervention (conducted/supported by the Learning Support Teacher) that takes place at the Grade 1 level. If literacy intervention does not take place at this grade level at your school, please proceed to Question 39.

33. In what language is the Grade 1 literacy intervention conducted?

- English
- French
- Both English and French
- Other (please specify) ______________________________

34. Please describe the duration and frequency of the intervention (length of each lesson in minutes, and number of lessons per week)

- Duration of lesson: ________ (minutes)
- Weekly Frequency: ________ sessions per week
35. Please describe overall length of the intervention (specify weeks or months)?

- Length of Intervention: ____________________ (TEXT BOX)

36. What type of model does the intervention delivery follow?

- Push-in model (intervention takes place in student’s enrolling classroom)
- Pull-out model (intervention takes place in space outside of the classroom – i.e., Learning Support Room)
- Other: Please specify ____________________________ (TEXT BOX)

37. Please describe in detail the components of the Intervention program (i.e., name of intervention program, the area(s) of focus of the program, the tools and resources used, the skills the students are developing, any other pertinent details)

(OPEN-ENDED TEXT BOX)

38. Who mandates this intervention program?

- District
- School
- Other: Please specify ____________________________ (TEXT BOX)

*The following questions pertain to the Tier 2 literacy intervention (conducted/supported by the Learning Support Teacher) that takes place at the Grade 2 level. If literacy intervention does not take place at this grade level at your school, please proceed to Question 45.*
39. In what language is the Grade 2 literacy intervention conducted?
   - English
   - French
   - Both English and French
   - Other (please specify) _________________________

40. Please describe the duration and frequency of the intervention (length of each lesson in minutes, and number of lessons per week)
   - Duration of lesson: _______ (minutes)
   - Weekly Frequency: _______ sessions per week

41. Please describe overall length of the intervention (specify weeks or months)?
   - Length of Intervention: ________________  (TEXT BOX)

42. What type of model does the intervention delivery follow?
   - Push-in model (intervention takes place in student’s enrolling classroom)
   - Pull-out model (intervention takes place in space outside of the classroom – i.e., Learning Support Room)
   - Other: Please specify _________________________ (TEXT BOX)

43. Please describe in detail the components of the Intervention program (i.e., name of intervention program, the area(s) of focus of the program, the tools and resources used, the skills the students are developing, any other pertinent details)
44. Who mandates this intervention program?

- District
- School
- Other: Please specify ______________________________ (TEXT BOX)

The following questions pertain to the Tier 2 literacy intervention (conducted/supported by the Learning Support Teacher) that takes place at the Grade 3 level. If literacy intervention does not take place at this grade level at your school, please proceed to Question 51.

45. In what language is the Grade 3 literacy intervention conducted?

- English
- French
- Both English and French
- Other (please specify) ______________________________

46. Please describe the duration and frequency of the intervention (length of each lesson in minutes, and number of lessons per week)

- Duration of lesson: _______ (minutes)
- Weekly Frequency: _______ sessions per week

47. Please describe overall length of the intervention (specify weeks or months)?

- Length of Intervention: ________________ (TEXT BOX)
48. What type of model does the intervention delivery follow?

- Push-in model (intervention takes place in student’s enrolling classroom)
- Pull-out model (intervention takes place in space outside of the classroom – i.e., Learning Support Room)
- Other: Please specify ____________________________ (TEXT BOX)

49. Please describe in detail the components of the Intervention program (i.e., name of intervention program, the area(s) of focus of the program, the tools and resources used, the skills the students are developing, any other pertinent details)

(OPE-N-ENDED TEXT BOX)

50. Who mandates this intervention program?

- District
- School
- Other: Please specify ____________________________ (TEXT BOX)

Section 4: French Immersion Learning Support Teachers – Collaboration and Support

51. In your opinion, how supported and connected do you feel to other French Immersion Learning Support colleagues? (Likert Scale: 1 = not connected or supported, 5 = very connected and supported)
52. Please describe in what ways you could feel more supported and connected to other teaching colleagues in French Immersion Learning Support roles (Open-ended text box _________)

53. Would you be interested in having your contact information included in a French Immersion Learning Support Teacher Network/Database, for possible future collaboration and professional development opportunities? (YES or NO)

Should participation in a French immersion learning support teachers' network be of interest to you, please contact lead researcher, Kirsten Dixon, directly at kirsten-dixon@shaw.ca.

Thank you for participating in this online survey!